MALS 78500/ HIST 71000/ PSC 71902
Comparative Revolutions: From 1688 to the Arab
3 credits, Monday, 4:15 PM - 6:15 PM
Professor Helena Rosenblatt
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Office Hours: Skype/Zoom by appointment

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Course Description

What makes a revolution a revolution? Scholarship has recently moved away from social-scientific, Marxist-inspired explanations to approaches that explore how revolutionaries themselves understood what they were doing, how they interpreted their contexts, and how their ideas shaped their actions. With such questions in mind, we will look at and compare a number of revolutions, including the so-called “Glorious Revolution” of 1688, the American, French and Haitian Revolutions, the Revolutions of 1848, the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the recent Arab Spring. What characteristics did these revolutions share? What might they have learned and borrowed from each other? Is there something we can call a revolutionary “script”?

Learning Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to
- Display a grasp of the key theoretical questions involved in comparing “revolutions”
- Read texts critically and effectively
- Identify and summarize ideas in texts in an articulate and persuasive manner, verbally and in writing
- Display a grasp of the history of the revolutions studied over the course of the term.

Requirements:

- Regular class participation demonstrating careful reading of all assigned texts: 30%
- One to two paragraph summaries of the weekly readings, paying particular attention to the argument of the author as to the nature and/or course of the revolution in question. Paragraphs must be submitted to the instructor via email before 8 pm on the Sunday before class (TEN times over the course of the term)—your grade will be outstanding, very good, good, deficient. You may get two “deficients” without penalty if you re-write the summaries: 20%
- A 10 minute class presentation on a week’s reading—a virtual appointment with the instructor to discuss your presentation ahead of time is highly recommended: 20%
- Final paper: A 10 page paper (12 pt double-spaced Times Roman) comparing three revolutions, on the theme “Is there something we can call a revolutionary “script”?—a
virtual appointment with the instructor to discuss your paper before you begin writing it is highly recommended: 30%

PLEASE ASK INSTRUCTOR IF YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY FINDING THE READINGS

1. Introduction to the Course: Comparative History and Theories of Revolution (8/31)

The scholarship analyzing “revolution” from a theoretical perspective is vast. I will introduce you to some of what I regard as the most important perspectives at our first meeting. For those interested in pursuing the topic further there is a selection of recommended readings at the end of this syllabus.

2. The Glorious Revolution, 1688 (9/14)

Steve Pincus, 1688 The First Modern Revolution, Yale University Press, 2011.

3. The Age of Democratic Revolutions (9/21)


The Foreword by David Armitage, the preface as well as chapters 1-XIII.

NO CLASS ON 9/28. GC CLOSED.

4. The American Revolution (9/29) NOTICE DIFFERENT DATE

Jack Rakove, Revolutionaries, Mariner Books, 2010 or Bernard Bailyn The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, Belknap Press, 1992 (students will choose one.)

5. Impact of the American Revolution (10/5)


6. The French Revolution (10/12)


7. **The Terror (10/19)**

OR  

8. **The Haitian Revolution (10/26)**

C.L.R James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*.  

9. **The Impact of the Haitian Revolution (11/2)**

I will narrow this list down and we will divide them up and discuss in class. Each student will read three.

Articles in *Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, David Geggus ed., University of South Carolina Press, 2002:


10. The Revolutions of 1848 (11/9)


11. The Russian Revolution (11/16)


12. The French Revolution in Russia (11/23)

Albert Mathiez “Bolshevism and Jacobinism” (1920), available at https://www.marxists.org/history/france/revolution/mathiez/1920/bolshevism-jacobinism.htm#n1


13. The Arab Spring (11/30)


Recommended: Documentary: “The Square”

14. 1789 and 1848 in the Arab Spring (12/7)

Koert Debeuf, “The Arab Spring is far from over. Like the French Revolution, it could play out over decades and reshape the region.”

https://www.politico.eu/article/arab-spring-not-over-repercussions-for-middle-east-region-unrest/
Koert Debeuf, “The Arab Spring seven years on”  
https://www.hurriyetedailynews.com/opinion/koert-debeuf/the-arab-spring-seven-years-on-125371


David Bell, “Why We Can’t Rule out an Egyptian Reign of Terror: A Historian’s Look at Revolution and Its Discontents,” Foreign Policy, 7 February 2011.

Further Thoughts:

Rebecca Spang “How Revolutions Happen” (on Black Lives matter--and the possibility of revolution today in America):


Reading on Theories of Revolution:

Hannah Arendt, On Revolution (Viking, 1965)
Crane Brinton, Anatomy of Revolution
Martin Malia, History’s Locomotives, Revolutions and the Making of the Modern World.
Noel Parker, Revolutions and History Polity, 1999.


Theorizing Revolutions John Foran, ed., (London: Routledge, 1997.)
