BAM 70500-01/HIST 71200
Class # 39117/41617

Madame de Staël and Napoleon

3 Credits, Thursdays 2:00 PM- 4:00 PM, Fully In-Person
Professor Helena Rosenblatt
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Office Hours: Skype/Zoom and in person by appointment

Course Description:

In this course, we will study the lives of two giants in the history of Western Civilization, whose riveting personal stories are inextricably entwined. Strangely, however one of them has been largely forgotten. While thousands of books and articles have been devoted to Napoleon a relatively minuscule number concern themselves with the woman who was one of his most powerful and persistent enemies.-We will explore this fierce battle of wills, which one contemporary called the battle between the mind and the sword and which, we will learn, helped to give rise to “liberalism” as we know it.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the course, students should

- Have a good grasp of the biographies of Mme de Staël and Napoleon and the times in which they lived.
- Understand the nature of Napoleonic rule
- Understand the origins and nature of “liberalism”
- Be able to identify and analyze ideas expressed in both primary and secondary sources in an articulate and persuasive manner, verbally and in writing

Requirements and Breakdown of Final Grade:

Careful reading of the assigned reading(s) and informed, regular, participation in class discussions 35%.

To spark discussion and debate of the assigned reading, each student will bring to the class (every week) three interesting things they learned from the assigned readings and three interesting questions for the class to discuss (20%). They will hand this written assignment to the instructor at the end of class (hard copy).
Each student will lead one weekly discussion. 20% A prior consultation with the instructor is recommended.

A book review of two biographies of either Mme de Staël or Napoleon, comparing them and evaluating their strengths and weaknesses. Students will present their reviews to the class if time permits. All written assignments must be typed, double-spaced, and in 12-point font Times or Times New Roman. 25%

**Schedule of classes**

1. August 31 Introduction to the course

2. September 7 The French Revolution
   Read sections up to and including the coup d’état of Napoleon, 1799, in one of the following: Jeremy Popkin, *A New World Begins*; Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution*; Christopher Hibbert, *The French Revolution*; William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*

3. September 14 Biography of Napoleon
   Read: David Bell, *Napoleon A Concise Biography*

4. September 21 Biography of Madame de Staël
   Read either Maria Fairweather, *Madame de Staël* or J. Christopher Herold, *Mistress to an Age: A Life of Madame de Staël*

5. September 28 Benjamin Constant and Madame de Staël
   Read: *Liberal Values: Benjamin Constant and the Politics of Religion*, pp. 34-36, ch. two and three (e-resource at the library) and an essay on Madame de Staël’s views of the Directory (to be provided)

6. October 5 Napoleon’s Reign
   Read: David Bell, *Men on Horseback. The Power of Charisma in the Age of Revolution*, chapter three (to be provided); Isser Woloch, *Napoleon and his Collaborators*, ch 7 & 8 (to be provided)

7. October 12 Napoleon’s Mind
   Read: Excerpts from *The Mind of Napoleon* (available as a library e-resource), *Ten Years of Exile*, and *Considerations* on the French Revolution.

8. October 19 Political views of Benjamin Constant
   Read: Excerpts from his *Political Writings* (to be provided)

9. October 26 Women under Napoleon
Read: June Burton, *Napoleon and the Woman Question. Discourses of the Other Sex in French education, Medicine, and Medical Law, 1799-1815*, chapters 1-6

10. November 2 Madame de Staël’s *On Literature*
   Read: Madame de Staël’s *Essay on Fiction, excerpts from On Literature* and *On Germany* (to be provided)

11. November 9 *Corinne* and *Delphine*
   Read: Either Madame de Staël’s novel *Corinne* or *Delphine*.

12. November 16 commentary on de Staël’s novels.
   Read: A number of articles (to be provided or available online.)
   Gutwirth, “Taking Corinne Seriously”
   Mona Ozouf, *Women’s Words*, chapter on Madame de Staël
   Glenda Sluga, “Gender and the Nation: Madame de Staël or Italy”

13. December 7 Legacies
   Read: David Jordan, *Napoleon and the Revolution*, Prologue, Entr’acte, ch XI, XII and Epilogue (pp. 1-10 and 228-295) (e-resource in the library); Andrew Roberts, *Napoleon A Life*, introduction (to be provided) and Glenda Sluga, “Madame de Staël and the Transformation of European Politics” 1812-1817

14. Conclusions and presentations.
   Watch: Besterman lecture at Oxford University
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vy2RW6ZbV_4