

GOV 355M
FOUNDATIONS OF CONSERVATISM AND RADICALISM:
MONTESQUIEU AND ROUSSEAU
The University of Texas at Austin

Instructor: Professor Gilmore

Form: In person

Classes: Tuesday and Thursday, 12:30-2:00 p.m.

Office Hours: Thursday, 2:15-4:15 p.m.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Enlightenment took many forms in many places, but to speak of the thing itself is to speak of eighteenth-century France. There the hopes of a new world, a better world, a brighter world, a world free from ignorance and barbarism, a scientific age, even a perfect human order, a perpetual peace, flourished, and France's boughs reached so high that its culture not only touched but dominated the rest of Europe.

In the twenty-six years from 1789 to 1815 the French Revolution then executed those hopes on the grandest scale, with all the achievement and all the terror and abuse that meant. The ideas behind the Revolution remain with us today because we remain the Enlightenment's children.

The purpose of this class is to study two of the French Enlightenment's four greatest thinkers. We study these two, study Montesquieu and Rousseau, because they are the most complex. They climbed higher than all other eighteenth-century French thinkers, and in doing so they found doubts and dangers that the others either ignored or refused. They express Enlightenment thought perfectly, and for that reason they critique it. We are as interested in Montesquieu's and Rousseau's doubts as we are in their perfect expressions.

The theme we will use to frame our discussions is conservatism and radicalism. What are the conservative and the radical currents in each author? How do those currents mix? How do they play out today? Could our own conservatives be more radical than they wish to admit? And our radicals—could they be more traditional or conventional than they believe? To think with Montesquieu and Rousseau is to think in paradoxes. To think this way may not please everyone, but pleasing everyone is not the only reason to act.

UNFORTUNATE ADDITION

This August I must undergo an unexpected surgery. As a result, I plan to take the semester's first two weeks for sick leave. We will not have our normal class during those weeks. As a result, we will lose one class, and we will make up the three others in two ways: (1)—Introductory class—I will record our introductory class on Zoom before the semester begins and post it to Canvas. This introduction will discuss the class's form, content, and purpose.

(2)—Make-up classes—in October and November I will hold two make-up classes on two Fridays (probably around Noon, so they don't interfere with your ordinary classes). Attendance is required for those

who can make it, but I understand some of you can't. For those who can't, I will audio-record the lectures and post them on Canvas.

Finally, I must warn you that if I suffer complications from my surgery, I may need to file for a semester's sick leave and cancel my classes. This is unlikely, but you should know that it is possible.

REQUIRED TEXTS

The translations listed are the translations that each student is expected to have and to use both in class and on all assignments. You must have the assigned text, but you can use older editions of the assigned text if you want. Additional readings may be provided online via Canvas. All texts listed below will be available at the University Bookstore, but they can be purchased elsewhere.

Montesquieu. 1973. *Persian Letters*. Trans. C.J. Betts. New York: Penguin.

Montesquieu. 1989. *The Spirit of the Laws*. Trans. and ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1992. *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. Trans. Charles E. Butterworth. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1997. *The Discourses and other early political writings*. Trans. and ed. Victor Gourevitch. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1997. *The Social Contract and other later political writings*. Trans. and ed. Victor Gourevitch. New York: Cambridge University Press.

OPTIONAL TEXTS

You and I are not Margaret Atwood. Since we are not Margaret Atwood, we can improve our writing (as Atwood herself has done every day for sixty years). To improve your writing, you need teachers who know how to write well. Luckily, good writers like writing books.

Cook, Claire. 2003. *Line by Line: How to Edit Your Own Writing*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
Cook will teach you how to slice the fat off of your essays. More technical than the others; best read after them.

Garner, Bryan. 2013. *Garner on Language and Writing*. Chicago: American Bar Association.
Especially handy for those of you interested in law school; chapters one and five, however, will appeal to everyone.

Garner, Bryan. 2016. *Garner's Modern American Usage*. New York: Oxford University Press.
The modern author's usage bible, written by a genius. Also available in App form.

Norris, Mary. 2015. *Between You and Me: Confessions of a Comma Queen*. New York: W.W. Norton. Light, informal, and often hilarious. Just what you'd expect from a copy editor at the *New Yorker*, right?

Trimble, John. 1975. *Writing with Style: Conversations on the Art of Writing*. Englewood: Prentice-Hall. Trimble is Garner's BFF here in Austin and a man who took teaching as a vocation; aristocratic and witty.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Read bravely; write well.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Grade:

Participation	30%
Midterm Paper (1500-2100 words)	30%
Final Paper (2100-2750 words)	40%

Due Dates:

1st Essay due: October 13

2nd Essay due: December 1

COURSE GUIDELINES

Participation: If you show up every week and participate at least once most classes, you've secured a B- for participation. Miss some classes, or don't speak, and you'll go lower; speak well, ask questions, fight the text with all that ferocity you're famous for down here in Texas, and you'll go higher.

But if speaking in class isn't your style, you can still ace participation: I count coming to office hours or emailing me questions as participation. So do that weekly, and thoughtfully, and you'll be on your way to easy points.

Papers: This is a writing-intensive class.

1. For each paper, I will send out a prompt, and you will write an answer to that prompt. I will grade you based on how well you answer the prompt—both the substance of your argument and how you say it, though the latter matters more for those in the *A* range than for those in the *C* range.
2. Papers must be submitted with the word count at the top of the first page.
3. All papers must use Chicago citation style. Use this link (<https://guides.lib.utexas.edu/c.php?g=539686&p=3694907>), then click “Chicago Manual of Style Online,” then “The Chicago Manual of Style Contents,” then section

- III, part 14, “Notes and Bibliography.” Your footnotes do not count toward the word count on your papers.
4. Late papers will suffer a three-point penalty for each day they are late. A paper that is two days late will be penalized six points; a paper that is three days late will be penalized nine points, etc. The maximum late penalty is 15%. Papers will no longer be accepted 10 days after the due date. This applies to all handed-in assignments.
 5. Papers above or below the word limit will suffer a three-point penalty for each 100 words they go over or under.
 6. No extensions will be offered without a physician’s certificate or demonstration of extenuating circumstances except in cases of religious observances.
 7. *Plagiarism is anathema. Read the University of Texas at Austin’s policy on plagiarism, summarized by the history department here: <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/history/about/academic-integrity.php>. When you submit your work, you agree that you are submitting work that belongs only to you. Submit another’s work, in any form, and you risk failure, suspension, and expulsion. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please ask me by email or in person at any time.*
 8. Be sure to keep both an extra hard copy and a spare electronic copy of your work in case your submission is lost.
 9. Since this is a seminar class, you may consult outside sources when writing your papers, but you do so at your own risk and for the moment I do not recommend it. You are responsible for your authorities’ errors if you rely on them. For now you should meet these texts as their authors intended them to be met: alone, with only your wits to defend you.

Writing Resources on Campus: What’s more fun than learning about editing from a book? Learning about editing in person. I encourage you to find information about the university’s writing center at <https://uwc.utexas.edu/>. Yes, some of the tutors there may disappoint, but it’s worth the risk: get a good one, it might change your life.

The University of Texas Accommodations: Students with disabilities may request academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities. I’m happy to work with them.

Recordings: Recording lectures without permission will result in a 10% penalty on the final grade; if you have a learning disability (hearing difficulties, vision deficiencies, injuries that prevent you from taking notes, mental health crisis, etc.), please see the above statement on accommodations.

COVID-19 Amendment: I will make audio recordings of our lectures. If you miss class due to COVID-19 exposure or illness, I will send you the recordings for the classes you miss.

COURSE OUTLINE

Note: I will adjust the readings as we go; I’ll let you know by email when I do.

Part I: Persian Letters

- 1.) Zoom Recording—Course introduction; Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, Dedicatory, Letters 1-9
- 2.) September 6—Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, Letters 10-26, 29-31, 34, 35, 37-9 (24)
- 3.) September 8—Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, Letters 40-3, 46-7, 53, 55, 58-9, 60-7, 69-71
- 4.) September 13—Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, Letters 75, 79-80, 89-90, 92, 96, 102-3, 117, 122, 141, 147-161

Part II: Spirit of the Laws

- 5.) September 15—Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, Author's Note, Preface, Books I-III
- 6.) September 20—Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, Books IV-VIII
- 7.) September 22—Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, Books IX-XI
- 8.) September 27—Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, Books XII, XIV, XV (selections), XVI (selections)
- 9.) September 29—Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, Books XVII, XVIII (selections), XIX
First Essay Assigned
- 10.) October 4—Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, Books XX-XXI, XXIII
- 11.) October 6—Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, Books XXIV-XXV
- 12.) October 11—Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, Books XXVI, XXIX, Preface (re-read)

Part III: Rousseau's Critique

- 13.) October 13—Rousseau, *Discourse on Arts and Sciences*, Frontispiece, Epigram, Preface, Discourse, Part I **First essay due**
- 14.) October 18—Rousseau, *Discourse on Arts and Sciences*, Part II
- 15.) October 20—Rousseau, *Preface to Narcissus*
- 16.) October 25—Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, Epigram, Epistle Dedicatory, Preface, Exordium
- 17.) October 27—Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, Part I
- 18.) October 28—Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, Part I (continued) **First make-up class**

19.) November 1—Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, Part II

Part IV: Freedom in Crisis

20.) November 3—Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Epigram, Notice, Book I

21.) November 8—Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book II, Chapters 1-8

22.) November 10—Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book II, Chapters 9-12; Book III, Chapters 1-8

23.) November 11—Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book III, Chapters 9-17 Second make-up class

24.) November 15—Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book IV, Chapters 1-3, 5-8 Final essay assigned

25.) November 17—Rousseau, *Reveries*, Walks 1-3

26.) November 22—Rousseau, *Reveries*, Walks 4-6

27.) November 24—Rousseau, *Reveries*, Walks 7-10

28.) November 29—Rousseau, *Emile*, selections (scan)

29.) December 1—*Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (scan) Final essay due