



Yeshiva University  
THE ZAHAVA AND MOSHAEL STRAUS  
CENTER FOR TORAH AND WESTERN THOUGHT

Yeshiva University

Spring 2015

## Comparative Political Revolutions

Instructor: Dr. Neil Rogachevsky

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Belfer Hall Room 507

This interdisciplinary course will examine and compare the seminal political ideas of two major events of modern times, the American and French Revolutions. The course will focus on the animating ideas behind these revolutions and the constitutional principles and practices put in place to advance them. Focusing on key primary documents of the French and American revolutions as well as important contemporaneous interpretations, the course aims to broaden students' understanding of key questions of modern political philosophy and politics. Themes considered will include: natural rights and their foundation, tradition vs. innovation, republicanism vs. monarchy, liberty and tyranny, the separation of powers, and the role of constitutions in modern politics. The goal of the course is for students to think through core ideas at the basis of our political-philosophical traditions and to think comparatively about the ideas as practiced in different political contexts.

Texts: Joseph M. Bessette and John Pitney, *American Government and Politics* (textbook)

Hamilton, Madison, Jay, *The Federalist Papers*

Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

William Doyle, *The French Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*

Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*

Michael Walzer Ed., *Regicide and Revolution*

Keith Michael Baker Ed., *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, Critical Texts.

Joseph de Maistre, *Considerations on France*

Benjamin Constant, *Political Writings*

Requirements:

- 1) Two Short Papers (6-8 pages) %20
- 2) Long Paper (15 pages) %30
- 3) Final Exam %40

4) Class Participation %10

Tuesday January 26:

### **Introduction**

Readings: Joseph M. Bessette and John Pitney., *American Government and Politics*, Chapter 1.

Thursday January 28:

### **The Declaration and the Constitution**

Readings: The Declaration of Independence, The Articles of Confederation, The Constitution, *American Government and Politics*, Chapter 2.

February 2:

### **Case against the Constitution**

Readings: "The Address and Reasons of Dissent of the Minority of the Convention of Pennsylvania to their Constituents" In *The Complete Anti-Federalist*

February 4:

### **Case for the Constitution I: Advantages of Union**

Readings: *The Federalist Papers* Introduction, Preface, numbers 1,2,6,10.

February 9:

### **Case for the Constitution II: Separation of Powers**

Readings: *The Federalist Papers* Numbers 47 – 49, 51

February 11:

### **Case for the Constitution III: The Federalist and Republican Government**



Reading: *The Federalist Papers*, Numbers 55, 57, 63, 70, 71, 78

February 16:

### **From America to France**

Reading:

*The French Revolution*, Chapters 1,2,3, Tocqueville "Introduction" to *Democracy in America*.

February 18:

### **1789**

Sieyes "The Third Estate," **Mirabeau's Speech on "Representative Government,"** *The French Revolution*, Chapters 4,5,6.

February 23: *Paper 1 due*

### **Natural Rights and France**

"Declaration on the Rights of Man and of Citizen," Constitution of 1791,

February 25:

### **The Trial of the King I**

Michael Walzer, "The Revolutionary Argument," in *Regicide and Revolution*, Speeches of Maihle, Morrison.

March 1:

### **The Trial of the King II**

Speeches of Paine, Robespierre, Condorcet, Marat, Saint-Just.

March 3:

## **Jacobin Thought**

Speeches of Robespierre, Vergniaud, Paine. Robespierre "Report on the Principles of Public Morality," Saint-Just: "Report to the Convention on Behalf of the Committee of Public Safety," "Proceedings from The Festival of the Supreme Being."

March 8: *Paper II Due*

### **Criticism: Burke on the French Revolution**

Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

March 10:

### **Criticism: Burke on the American Revolution and French Revolution**

Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

March 15:

### **Criticism: Burke on Liberty and Tradition**

Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

March 17:

### **Criticism: Burke on Constitutional Government**

Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

March 22:

### **Criticism: Burke on Party Government**

March 24: Purim, No class.

March 29:

### **Defense: Thomas Paine on the French Revolution**



Paine, *The Rights of Man*

March 31:

**Defense: Thomas Paine and Edmund Burke**

Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*

April 5:

**Defense: Thomas Paine on Natural Rights**

Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*

April 7:

**Defense: Thomas Paine on Constitutions**

Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*

April 12:

**Later Reactions I:**

Joseph De Maistre, *Considerations on France* (excerpts)

April 14:

**Later Reactions II:**

Benjamin Constant, *The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns*

April 19: *No Class – Long Paper Due April 21*

May 3: **Conclusion**

May 5: **Review**