History B356: French Revolution and Napoleon

The “Ancien” Régime
Questions raised by looking at the Revolution historiographically:

Was the French Revolution intentional?
Did anyone expect it to happen?
Was anyone in control?

Were there central idea(l)s that united people (Liberty, Justice, Equality) or did these divide people as much as they unified?
What do idea(l)s look like in practice?

To what degree did social position shape individuals’ role in and/or reaction to the Revolution?
How did this period change people’s perception of social categories?

How much did the Revolution change? What did it leave intact?
What changed in reaction to the Revolution, even if it wasn’t the sort of change that revolutionaries wanted or intended?

Where does this leave us? Questions for the rest of the semester.
What does “ancien régime” mean? When was it?

Old Regime: absolutism; social orders; Catholicism; elite versus popular culture.

Early-modern state making and Louis XIV’s France.
Controlling:
  fiscal administration
  army
  aristocracy
  other governing bodies
Increasing:
  tax revenues
  revenue from venality
  production of luxury goods
  size of the army
  size of France

How absolute was “absolutism”?

The “Ancien Régime”: Questions and Lecture Structure

“Feats of Skill and Strength Performed by the King, and by the Princes and Lords of the Court in the Year 1662”
France in the Early-Modern Period (1500-1789)

The “Ancien Régime”: When and Where
In 1700, the *ancien régime* was neither ancient, nor former, nor old. It was:

- government: absolutist
- society: structured by orders/estates
- culture: Catholic; distinction between elite and popular
The Very Model of an Absolutist Monarch

Two portraits of Louis XIV (oil paintings) by Hyacinthe Rigaud, 1701

Louis XIV, the “Sun King”
1638 born
1643 becomes “king”
1648-1653 aristocratic rebellions
1660s starts building Versailles
1670s-90s major wars
1715 dies
1774 great-great-grand-son becomes King Louis XVI

Louis XIV and the Absolutism
Absolutism in the 1600s and 1700s was not totalitarianism. It was:

- a response to crises of 1550-1650
- a process of state building

**Absolutism and State Making: Key Terms**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>state</td>
<td>political, administrative entity, formed through law and bureaucracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>nation</td>
<td>group of people believed to have something in common such as “ethnicity,” language, culture, history</td>
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Chaos and Civil War in France, 1550-1650

1562-1598 eight wars of religion in France between Catholics and Protestants (Huguenots)

1598 Henri IV (Henri of Navarre) converts from Protestantism to Catholicism; issues Edict of Nantes guaranteeing toleration for Protestants

1610 Catholic Ravaillac assassinates Henri IV; nine-year-old king, Louis XIII

1618-1648 Thirty Years War (involves nearly all of Europe); begins as a religious war, ends as a dynastic conflict

1635 France enters war on Swedish side and in opposition to Habsburgs

1643 Louis XIII dies; five-year-old Louis XIV
Chaos and Civil War in France, 1550-1650

1635-1648  French involvement in the Thirty Years’ War

1643  death of Louis XIII; Louis XIV crowned; Louis’s mother, Anne, and Cardinal Mazarin serve as regents

1648  First Fronde: opposition to wartime taxation turns into barricade fighting in Paris; Anne and Louis flee

1650-1653  Second Fronde: senior members of royal family oppose Anne and Mazarin, supposedly in aid of Louis; fighting ends with Louis’s coronation, age 15

Poerson, *Louis as Jupiter, Conqueror of the Frondes* (around 1655)
Absolutism in the 1600s and 1700s was not totalitarianism. It was:

a response to crises of 1550-1650

a process of state building by

Controlling:
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  army
  aristocracy
  other governing bodies

Increasing:
  tax revenues
  revenue from venality
  production of luxury goods
  size of the army
  size of France
Controlling and increasing

fiscal administration  *Intendants*

tax revenue  increased "direct" taxes on unprivileged
  new "indirect" taxes (on wine, goods brought into towns)
  paid by all

other revenue  venal offices

army *

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<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>1590s</td>
<td>80,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1650s</td>
<td>100,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1700</td>
<td>400,000</td>
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* includes creation of two new elite forces;
of “lieutenant-colonels” responsible for daily
discipline in regiments; of Ministry of War

Louis XIV at the siege of Valenciennes, 1677

Absolutism: Building the early-modern fiscal-military state
“Your majesty knows that along with magnificent acts of warfare, nothing more betokens the grandeur and spirit of princes than buildings; and that all of posterity judges them by the standard of those superb buildings they have erected during their lives.”

Chancellor Colbert to Louis XIV, 1663.
Gardens, Palace of Versailles (looking across the Grand Canal)
Fountain of Latona, Versailles

Absolutism: Control of Nature
The Apollo Pool, Versailles

Absolutism: Control of Nature
ceiling, Chamber of Apollo (throne room), Versailles

Absolutism: King as Center of Universe and Source of Light
How Absolute was Absolutism?

--stronger state, produced by co-opting and working with existing elites

--did not abolish institutions (such as *parlements* or provincial estates) but ignored them

--increased taxation and military recruitment had *some* small effect on general population of France

--sale of venal offices, court life at Versailles had an enormous effect on existing elites
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6. Hyacinthe Rigaud, *Louis XIV in his Coronation Robes* and *Louis XIV Commanding his Troops* (1701)
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