For over two centuries, the French Revolution has been a crucial topic of both historical and historiographical debate. Its origins have been traced to low literature and high politics; its effects have been detected in everything from economic theory and hair styles to family dynamics and the map of Europe. From the Revolution, we get our contemporary notions of political Left and Right, as well as the word “terrorist”; from the Revolution, France got départements, the “rights of man,” and the metric system.

After an introductory section on eighteenth-century culture, politics, and society, this course will concentrate on the revolutionary 1790s. Metropolitan France will provide our primary focus, but we will also consider the meaning of revolution in France’s Caribbean colonies and across much of Western Europe. In April 1792, revolutionary France declared war against the kings of central Europe; war continued, almost uninterrupted, until 1815. To study the Revolution is to study ideas of liberty and equality; it is also to study practices of war and empire.

There are no prerequisites for this course and all required readings will be in English. Students who have not studied this period before are encouraged to attend the lectures for History B356 (“French Revolution and Napoleon”), which meets Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:20-1:10, in Ballantine 003.

Grading and Requirements. It is assumed that all students will do at least the required readings for every week and that they will participate actively in all sessions. Repeated absences will not be tolerated. Your final grade will be based on four components: Identifying, annotating, and circulating a relevant primary-source document (15%) Reviewing one book from the suggested further reading (20%) Participation in discussion (20%) Final project, the basic skeleton of a substantial research paper (45%)

Please note that I will only give a grade of “Incomplete” in the case of major illness or personal upheaval (divorce, bereavement). Because of the university’s calendar for examinations and final grades, I cannot accept work submitted after Monday, 2 May 2011.
Further notes on required work. I hope my comments below make my expectations clear. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask them, either before/after class, in office hours, or by e-mail. If you cannot make my office hours, I am happy to make an appointment to meet with you at some other time. I try to answer all e-mail within 24 hours, though circumstances sometimes make this impossible.

Primary-source document: once in the semester, you will be responsible for identifying a primary source (3-5 pp. minimum) relevant to the week’s discussion, annotating it, and circulating it in electronic format to the entire class. The text you circulate should be in English; if you want to translate a French text, you may, but this is not required. Your document should reach everyone 24 hours before class (i.e., at 5:45 on Sunday). You will be evaluated both on the appropriateness and the fruitfulness of the text you choose and on the quality of your annotations. I expect you to write a substantial introductory paragraph situating the document and its author(s) in historical context; you should also gloss any especially significant or difficult words/phrases in the text and identify any proper nouns mentioned. For example, if your text includes a reference to the Révolutions de France et Brabant you should write something to the effect of “radical weekly newspaper edited by Camille Desmoulins, published from Nov. 1789-July 1791; suppressed in the aftermath of the Champ de Mars massacre, it resumed publication in Oct.-Dec. 1792. Desmoulins later edited Le Vieux Cordelier (“The Old Shoemaker”) before being executed as an indulgent.”

Book review: once in the semester, you will be responsible for reviewing one of the books listed as “further reading” on the website. Your review should be approximately 1500-2000 words; you should assume that you are writing for a university-educated audience with a particular interest in French history and culture. In it, you should briefly summarize the work’s argument and purpose, but you should devote most of your time to placing the work in historical and historiographical context and highlighting the elements you think most deserving of scholars’ attention. Make sure to comment on both the book’s strengths and its weaknesses, paying special attention to sources and methodology. Your book review is due in class. You may submit it earlier, if you like.

Final project: Given our shared reading obligations, I cannot reasonably expect you to write a full research paper this semester. Moreover, linguistic limitations may constrain some students’ research. I expect, however, that you will be able to envision, plan, and begin such a paper in this period. Your final project (12-15 double-spaced pages, not including notes and bibliography) should at least include: a polished and engaging introduction; a statement of your research question and method; a concise and pointed overview of the relevant historiography; analysis of several primary sources; some tentative conclusions.

Class participation: I expect you to be fully prepared for all discussion classes. Students who attend without participating helpfully will receive a C+ for participation. Engaged involvement in discussion means both making your own points and inviting others to elaborate on theirs.
History H620  
The French Revolution  
http://www.indiana.edu/~frrevn/

Class Schedule and Required Readings
For further bibliographical suggestions, including guidance on locating primary sources, please see the course website.

10 January: The mother of us all?

17 January: no class (MLK Day)

24 January: The French Revolution and the Historians
Jean Jaurès, *Socialist History of the French Revolution* (1901), introduction and the chapter on the “Great Fear,” (online at marxists.org).

31 January: “High Ideas and Low Enlightenment”

7 February: The Problem of Origins (continues overleaf)


14 February: The Old Regime and the French Revolution

* Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, at least the preface; part 1; part 2, chaps 1-3, 6-9; and part 3, chaps. 1, 3, 8


21 February: Inventing the Revolution


28 February: A Bourgeois Revolution?


7 March: Becoming a Revolutionary, and Being One


SPRING BREAK

21 March. A French Revolution?


28 March. Equality’s contradictions
Ron Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews* (2001), chapter 5; available as an ACLS e-book via IUCAT.

4 April: The Republic in the Year II

11 April: Explaining the Terror

18 April: War and Peace

25 April: Thermidor and After