The Indiana Center for Eighteenth-Century Studies announces its seventeenth annual Bloomington Workshop (May 10-12, 2018).

Protocol & Privilege

Today, as in the eighteenth century, privilege is under attack. The French Revolutionaries famously abolished privilege on the night of 4 August 1789, but then debated for years: Where did legitimate prerogative or honor end and illegitimate privilege begin? The protocols they established for distinguishing between the two rested on claims about property and appeals to universal human rights—liberal fictions of equal standing that quickly were (and still are) themselves subject to critique. In Haiti, the 1805 Constitution rejected white privilege with a new racial vocabulary that declared all Haitians “will henceforth be known by the generic denomination of black.”

As a law that applies to some but not others (from Latin privus-individual + lex-law), “privilege” suggests identity politics in an era long before that term was ever used. It is a hallmark of what Niklas Luhmann called “stratified” society, but not—supposedly—of a society organized by functional differentiation. Paired with “protocol” (from Greek prōtos-first + kolle-glue: “the original record of a transaction, negotiation, examination... forming the legal authority for any subsequent agreement” OED), privilege calls for consideration of origin stories and record keeping, transmission and transformation.

“Protocol & Privilege” encourages participants to focus on the precise details and specific mechanisms of power’s making and un-making in historical and fictional settings alike. Our theme calls for consideration of status and power differentials with special attention to their cultural logics, lived experiences, and quotidian practices. How did dynamics of command, control, deference, and coercion congeal into the routines of daily life? How did those then come to be called into question? Can privilege ever be abolished, or is its history instead a matter of replacing one fiction with a new, more credible one?

Possible paper themes include (but are not limited to):
- the politics of manners and the etiquette of politics
- prerogatives and exemptions
- private law and public ceremonial
- parliamentary procedure
- narrative protocols and the privileging of certain genres
- rules and regimens in voluntary and/or secret societies
- sovereign and diplomatic immunity
- birthright, inheritance, entitlement
- protocols of interdisciplinary communication
- privileged position of certain disciplines within Eighteenth-Century Studies
During the Workshop, we will discuss pre-circulated texts (due in mid-April) and perhaps have an occasional lecture or laboratory practicum. Expanded abstracts and/or entire papers will be published in the Center’s *The Workshop*, along with discussion transcripts.

Note: in a break with recent past practice, this year’s workshop is scheduled for Thursday-Saturday rather than Wednesday-Friday.

The application deadline is Tuesday, January 16, 2018. Please send a paper proposal (1-2 pages) and current brief CV (3 pages, max) to Dr. Barbara Truesdell, Administrator, Center for Eighteenth-Century Studies. We prefer that these materials be sent by e-mail to voltaire@indiana.edu. Dr. Truesdell can also be reached at the following postal address: Radio-TV Building #314; 1229 E. 7th Street; Bloomington, IN 47405; (tel.) 812-855-2856. We will acknowledge all submissions within a fortnight: if you do not receive an acknowledgment by January 31, 2018, please e-mail voltaire@indiana.edu or the Center’s Director, Professor Rebecca L. Spang (rlspang@indiana.edu).

Papers will be selected by an interdisciplinary committee. We cover most expenses for visiting scholars chosen to present their work: accommodations, travel (up to a certain limit), and most meals. For further information please see www.indiana.edu/~voltaire