

POL485H1F/POL2027H1F

Rousseau's Constitutional Projects

Fall 2012, Tuesday 10 to 12, UC 148.

Rebecca Kingston, Associate Professor of Political Science

Office Hours: Wednesdays 3 to 5 or by appointment, Sid Smith 3117

Office Telephone: (416)946-0187

Email: rkingsto@chass.utoronto.ca

Objectives: There are two interrelated objectives to this course. As you may know, 2012 is being celebrated as the 200th anniversary of the birth of JJR. Part of the impetus in this context is to bring Rousseau's thought back down to earth, so to speak. The first objective is to help you, the student, develop a reading or interpretation of what might be considered to be a more practical side of the philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, by considering some of his better known works (esp. The Social Contract and Discourse on Political Economy) in conjunction with a couple of his lesser known works devoted to the constitutional design and functioning of modern republics (especially The Plan for a Constitution for Corsica and Considerations on the Government of Poland and on its Planned Reformation). The second objective is to juxtapose and show the value of interweaving three distinct approaches in textual interpretation: textual exegesis, recourse to relevant secondary sources, and recourse to relevant contextual considerations (both textual and practical).

Structure: The course will begin with a presentation of three recent but different attempts in the secondary literature to come to terms with the meaning of Rousseau's constitutional writings and to give them more solid political and institutional content. From this basis, we will revisit some of the key primary texts in these debates, looking for continuity and contrast in these writings. In the course of this work of textual exegesis, we will have a class in the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library in order to build into our investigation a sense of how we can deepen our understanding of the problems and framing of the texts and the concepts developed there through an examination of relevant juridical, political and literary 18th century texts and references. Lectures and discussion in the course will also be supplemented by short presentations by the students.

Course Requirements:

Conceptual paper (3-4 pp., instructions below) due October 23 rd	15%
Seminar Presentation on the week of your choice (10 minutes)	20%
Term Paper (Undergrads 15-20 pp., Grad students 20-25 pp.) due December 4th	50%
Participation	15%

Conceptual paper instructions: The purpose of this paper is to help you begin to build an understanding of a concept invoked in Rousseau's work as it was understood (or its competing meanings) in the 18th century context. Based on our work and the resources consulted in the Rare Books Library and through Eighteenth Century Collections Online (accessed through the U of T website) or Gallica (accessed through the site of the Bibliothèque nationale de France) as well as dictionaries of the time and perhaps L'Encyclopédie, you should select a concept that resonates in the work of Rousseau and research the meaning/s or uses of that concept in the 18th century through consultation with various references or textual sources in use in that century. This should give you a preliminary basis for judging the orthodoxy of Rousseau's use of juridical language in the writings we are studying in this course. Examples of possible terms to research include: law (*la loi, les loix*); natural law (*la loi naturelle*); censor/censorship; will (*la volonté*); government (*le gouvernement*); people (*le peuple*); sovereignty (*la souveraineté*), the state (*l'état*), equality, corruption. If you can read French then I would recommend doing your research at least partly if not thoroughly through the French sources. For this paper, please use a standard format of citation and document your sources fully. If you access your source online, then you also need to acknowledge that in your bibliography again in the proper format.

To proceed with the paper I would suggest following three steps: first, choose a term/concept to research that figures relatively often and is of fairly significant importance for the works of Rousseau we are studying here; second, look at a variety of sources and try to provide a relatively systematized account of how the concept was used and the meaning or meanings it conveyed in the general eighteenth century sources you survey; third, examine Rousseau's uses of the term and explore whether he used the term with the same general meaning (or meanings) or whether his use of the term was different.

Penalties for lateness are 2% a day including weekends.

Seminar Presentation:

Students will do a ten minute presentation on the week of their choice (apart from the week of when we will be having class in the Thomas Fisher Rare Books Library). This presentation is meant to serve as an opportunity for you to try out some of the ideas that will inform your final paper.

Term Paper:

Please consult with me about your topic before starting your term paper. Your seminar presentation can also serve as an opportunity for feedback on your choice of topic. In general, I can suggest that you choose one of three possibilities for your paper. One possibility is to look into the historical circumstances of one of Rousseau's constitutional projects, looking at some of the debate among those knowledgeable at the time of the situation in either Corsica or Poland. If you choose to take this approach you can try to situate some of the arguments of Rousseau in relation to some of the debate at the time as it related to one of these cases. This may require some detective work and some second language skills as the materials related to these cases are not all readily available. A second possibility for this paper is to work within the writings of Rousseau alone, but focusing on a particular question or tension you perceive either within one of the texts studied in this course or between or among several texts. You should consult secondary sources for this approach looking for various ways interpreters have sought to solve or overcome the problem or tension you focus on. A third approach is to focus on a particular idea related to the question of constitutional design, such as 'representation', or 'legislative function', etc. and look at Rousseau's work studied in this course in relation to one or more thinkers of Rousseau's time, such as David Hume, Mably, Constant, etc. in order to compare two similar or competing views on this idea. You are not limited to one of these three approaches, but I offer them as suggestions for guidance in choosing your topic. You should consult with me about your topic by the middle of November.

Penalties are 2% a day, including weekends.

Required Readings:

Rousseau. The Social Contract and other later political writings, ed. Victor Gourevitch. Cambridge, CUP, 1997 (this is available second hand through abebooks.com) OR Rousseau. The Plan for Perpetual Peace, On the Government of Poland and other writings on history and politics. Vol. 11 of the Collected Writings of Rousseau. Ed. Christopher Kelly, Hanover, Dartmouth University Press, 2005. (This can also be ordered online although I suspect that you will have to buy it new through Amazon) [Please note, students who order the Gourevitch edition listed above will need to find an alternate source for Rousseau's work on Corsica, and students who order the Kelly edition will need to supplement with a good translation of The Social Contract and Discourse on Political Economy. I will try to post links to copies of available and reliable Internet sources in translation on the Blackboard site.]

Rousseau. Letters Written from the Mountain, copies to be provided.

[Please note that if you are planning to do further work on Rousseau I recommend that you work on his writings in the original French and for this the best existing edition is his Ecrits politiques, vol. 3 of Oeuvres completes, Bibliotheque de la Pléaïde, Paris, Gallimard, 1964 although you should also know that another definitive French edition of his collected works is being worked on and hopefully will be published shortly]

Ethan Putterman. Rousseau, Law and the Sovereignty of the People. Cambridge, CUP, 2010.

Joshua Cohen. Rousseau. A Free Community of Equals. Oxford, OUP, 2010. Please order a copy of this book online asap. We will be discussing it the third week of class (hopefully) and you will need to have read it by then.

Helena Rosenblatt. Rousseau and Geneva. Cambridge, CUP, 1997.

Course Outline and Weekly Readings:

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| Week 1 (September 11 th) | -Introduction. In the first few weeks I recommend that you reread the <u>Social Contract</u> if you have not done so recently so that you can remind yourself of some of the basic parameters of Rousseau's constitutional discussions. |
| Week 2 (September 18 th) | - Ethan Putterman. <u>Rousseau, Law and the Sovereignty of the People</u> |
| Week 3 (September 25 th) | - Joshua Cohen. <u>Rousseau. A Free Community of Equals</u> |
| Week 4 (October 2 nd) | - Helena Rosenblatt. <u>Rousseau and Geneva</u> |
| Week 5 (October 9 th) | - class in the Thomas Fisher Rare Books Library to discuss research with 18 th century sources |
| Week 6 (October 16 th) | - Rousseau's <u>Discourse on Political Economy</u> |
| Week 7 (October 23 rd) | - Conceptual Paper Due Today
- Rousseau's <u>Social Contract</u> |
| Week 8 (October 30 th) | - Rousseau's <u>Letter Written from the Mountain</u> |
| Week 9 (November 6 th) | - Rousseau's <u>Plan for a Constitution of Corsica</u> |

- Week 10 (November 13th) - no class (I am away)
- Week 11 (November 20th) - Rousseau's Plan for a Constitution of Corsica, cont.
- Week 12 (November 27th) - Rousseau's Considerations on the Government of Poland
- Week 13 (December 4th) - **Term Paper Due Today**
- Rousseau's Considerations on the Government of Poland, cont.