Introduction

The Rising of 1381 marked one of the largest mass movements in European history, with 100,000 peasants, artisans, and middle-class workers marching on London to protest oppressive legislation and an antiquated system of feudalism. But the Rising’s place in the history books is fraught with problems. How do we understand the documents of the rebellion? How did medieval chroniclers and how do contemporary historians put the chaotic events of 1381 into narrative form? A careful examination of letters, legislation, chronicles and poetry (Chaucer and Gower) will raise larger questions about rebellion and revolution and how we remember and write about it.

By looking at how writers of the French Revolution of 1789-90 remembered the Rising of 1381, this course will examine how historical events can be harnessed to political agendas, and how remembering the past can often be an important part of determining the future. We will examine the narrative strategies of Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine, and Robert Southey in their treatments of the medieval rebel leader Wat Tyler before moving on to some of the central documents of the French Revolution.

Finally, we will use our methodological findings from the earlier part of the semester to look at the contemporary protests of the Arab Spring/Summer. Students will be asked to engage in larger questions about the nature of revolution and rebellion, such as: How do protestors represent themselves or create a narrative of collective dissent? How do rebellions or protests use, affect, and transform collective narratives of nationhood? How do the stories of individuals figure into the story of a nation, group, or an era? How do protests effectively use the historical past to make assertions about the present?
Assignments

- **Two** informal 5-minute presentations on a text (5% each)
- **One** posting online **per week**, due at 10pm the night before class (10%)
- **One** Group Presentation (10%)

And total of six writing submissions (drafts + final papers), including:

- **Three** Essays (3-5 pages) (20% each)
- **One** Final Reflective Paper (2-3 pages) (10%)

With the exception of the Final Reflective Paper, all of these essays **must** be submitted in a series of at least two versions. Drafts will be worth 10% of the grade of the final version of each essay.

Course Objectives

This course is designed to teach you to read critically and write analytically. To this end, written work and class discussions will focus on the following interpretive and expository strategies:

- analyzing the thematic structure of literary works and historical documents through close reading
- making claims based on evidence
- translating critical reading into elegant and persuasive expository writing
- grounding your readings in historical contexts
- documenting sources and incorporating scholarship into original analytical arguments
- avoiding plagiarism and other academic violations
- gaining confidence in speaking as well as writing skills in a small seminar setting

Grading

Student papers will be graded according:

- **A** = outstanding; logically and mechanically flawless; creative
- **B** = very good; uses evidence and makes claims in a convincing way
C = needs significant improvement on organization, claims and evidence, and/or style and grammar

D = does not fulfill the basic requirements of the assignment; makes little attempt at introducing evidence or making new claims; needs significant work on organization, grammar, and style

F = does not fulfill the basic requirements of the assignment; does not incorporate any evidence or make clear use of the assigned texts; has little organizational structure; makes frequent grammatical errors

I = incomplete; students who do not complete assignments will be asked to meet with the instructor outside of class

**Attendance**

If, due to illness, emergency, or religious holiday, you cannot attend class, please be in touch with me directly as soon as possible so that you can be prepared for the next class. You will also need to get the notes for the day you missed from one of your classmates; once you've gotten the notes, I would be happy to meet with you and go over what you missed. Please be aware that more than two unexcused absences will affect your course grade.

**Class Participation**

Since this course is a seminar, each student should contribute to class discussion on a **regular basis**. This assumes that you will have completed the reading assignments for each day and synthesized your responses into valuable insights that should be shared with your peers. Remember that this is your class, and its success or failure depends largely upon what you invest in it. In rare cases, outstanding class participation that positively impacts the level of discussion and classroom atmosphere will be rewarded with an increase in the final letter grade by 1/3 (i.e. from a B to a B+). Failure to participate in class discussions will result in a lowered grade.

**Online Postings**

Students are required to make weekly postings on the Blackboard website. Postings should be at least 1 paragraph in length (about 75 words) and should aim to raise questions for discussion. Postings should focus on a particular passage from the following day’s reading and will use that passage to raise larger questions about the text as a whole. You must
quote or give the page reference of the passage you are using. Postings that are vague or that make no textual references will be discounted. The writing that you do for the postings will help you to think through the texts more carefully than if you had only read them. Postings are not essays; they are informal and serve as an important pre-writing activity that represents a “thinking and digesting stage” in a larger process. **Postings will better prepare you to contribute meaningfully to class discussion.** Excellent postings may serve as a testing ground for ideas for drafts, though you are not obliged to use any of the material you generate on Blackboard for your formal drafts and essays. **You may miss two weekly postings without penalty. Missing more than three will result in the reduction of your final grade by 1/3 of a letter (B to B-).**

**Individual Presentations**

Each student will be required to give two five-minute presentations over the course of the semester. Presentations are informal and should simply attempt a close reading of a passage in class and should raise a question for discussion. You may use your posting as a guide for the presentation.

**Group Presentation**

At the end of the semester the class will divide into 4 interest-based groups that will pursue a given topic on the Arab Spring/Summer. The group presentations will be no more than 30 minutes in total, should clearly summarize the main issue your group is examining, should present a short text, video, political cartoon, or other document for class analysis, and should raise larger questions for class discussion.

**A Note on Plagiarism**

As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. **Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating.** For a full description of the academic integrity policy, please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website:

[www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html](http://www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html).
The Writing Center

For additional help with your writing, you can contact the Gallatin Writing Center at 1 Washington Place, room 423. For instructions on how to make an appointment, see: gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/undergraduate/writing/writingcenterappointments.html.

Required Texts

You can buy all our books at the NYU Bookstore. There will be links to all additional materials on our Blackboard site.

- *The Peasants’ Revolt of 1381.* Edited by R.B. Dobson. 2nd Edition. (Macmillan)
- Course Reader

*Note: No laptops or cellphones permitted in class.*

Schedule

**UNIT I: Theories of Revolution and Rebellion**

Week 1

September 4  Introduction to the Course

September 6  Revolution and Rebellion: Concept and Meaning


**Unit II: The English Rising of 1381**

Week 2

September 11  The Causes of Revolt I: Social and Economic Background
On The Black Death: Excerpts from Henry Knighton’s *Chronicle* (Dobson pp. 59-63), Norman F. Cantor’s *In the Wake of the Plague* (pp. 3-25)

September 13

The Causes of Revolt II: Social and Economic Background

On the New Economy: The 1351 Statute of Labourers, The Commons’ Petition Against Vagrants (1376), The Commons’ Petition Against Rebellious Villeins (1377) (Dobson pp. 63-78)

On the Troubled Monarchy: Excerpts from *Vita Ricardi II* (Dobson pp. 91-94)

Week 3

September 18

Chroniclers and the Revolt: Representations of the Outbreak of the Revolt

Excerpts from Thomas Walsingham’s *The Saint Albans Chronicle* (p. 131-134)
Excerpts from *Anonimalle Chronicle* (Dobson p.123-131)
Excerpts from Henry Knighton’s *Chronicle* (p.135-137)
Excerpts from Jean Froissart’s *Chroniques* (p. 137-144)

September 20

Chroniclers and the Revolt: Representations of the Rebels

Excerpts from Thomas Walsingham’s *The Saint Albans Chronicle* and the *Anonimalle Chronicle* (Dobson pp. 153-187)

Week 4

September 25

Literature of Protest

Letters of the Revolt; Excerpts from Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Nun’s Priest’s Tale* and John Gower’s *Vox Clamantis* (Dobson pp. 379-89)

September 27

WORKSHOP; Draft of PAPER 1 Due
Week 5

October 2 1381 and 1789: Remembering the Rising During the French Revolution


Excerpt from Southey’s *Wat Tyler: A Dramatic Poem* (online source)

October 4 Workshop; **PAPER 1 Due by 5pm on October 5**

Unit III: The French Revolution

Week 6

October 9 English Response to the French Revolution


October 11 Representations and Perspectives on Revolt


Grievances from the *Cahiers de Doléances* (March and February 1789) "Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen” (August 26, 1789)
October 16  No Class—Fall Break

October 18  New Revolutions: National and Colonial Changes

From The French Revolution: A Document Collection:
“Insurrection of the Blacks in Our Colonies” (October-November 1791)
Robespierre, “Discourse on War Delivered to the Jacobin Club” (1792)
J.-P. Brissot, “Third Discourse on the Necessity of War” (1792)
“The Marseillaise” (1792)
Anonymous “The Queen's Farewells to Her Darlings of Both Sexes” (1792)

DRAFT OF PAPER 2 DUE

Week 8

October 23  Women and Revolution; Workshop

From The French Revolution: A Document Collection:
Excerpts on the Women's March to Versailles (October 5, 1789): pp. 83-88
Olympe de Gouges, “Declaration of the Rights of Women” (September 14, 1791): pp. 109-113

October 25  Women and Revolution II; Workshop

Excerpt from Wollstonecraft’s A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792)

PAPER 2 DUE on Friday, October 26 at 5pm

UNIT IV: The Arab Spring: Theories And Documents Of Revolution And Mass Movement

Week 9
October 30  
Reflecting on the Causes of Revolution: Theoretical Approaches


Excerpt from Hamid Dabashi, *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcoloniality*, “Introduction”

November 1  
Theories of Political Violence, Rebellion and Revolution

Excerpt from Goldstone, pp. 36-63.
Excerpt from Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*
Excerpt from Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

Week 10

November 6  
BACKGROUND: Tunisia

“The Arab Spring: an interactive timeline of Middle East protests.” *The Guardian.*

VIDEO: *The Death of Fear.*

Excerpt from Beatrice Hibou’s *The Force of Obedience*

November 8  
BACKGROUND: Egypt and Revolution


Recommended:

Week 11
November 13  Egypt and The Role of Digital Media


“Meet Asmaa Mahfouz and the vlog that Helped Spark the Revolution.” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgJgMdsEuK

November 15  Yemen and the Role of Women

Tawakkol Karman, “Nobel Lecture”
Mohandas K. Ghandi, *Hind Swaraj* or *Indian Home Rule*

Week 12

November 20  Presentation Topics

November 22  Thanksgiving

Week 13

November 27  Presentation Topics: Narratives of the Arab Spring

Group 3 & 4 Presentations

November 29  Presentation Topics: Narratives of the Arab Spring

Group 1 & 2 Presentations

**Draft of Paper 3 Due**

Week 14

December 4  Workshop

December 6  Workshop, **Paper 3 Due on December 7 at 5pm**
Week 15

December 11  Workshop

December 13  Last Class

**Paper 4 Due on December 14 at 5pm**