

**HIS 308**  
**Britain and France in the Age of Revolution**

Satisfies: SBS+ [DEC: I]

**Thematic Categories:** Arts, Ideas & Cultures;  
Empires, Violence & Global Connections

Tu/Th, 10:00 – 11:30am

Professor Kathleen Wilson

This course examines the social, intellectual, cultural and political life of Britain, France and their overseas colonies from the Death of the Sun King to the Battle of Waterloo (1715-1815). Over the period, Britain and France were at war for over 75 years, their armies and navies clashing in Europe, America, India, Africa and the Caribbean. This period also witnessed the largest forced migration in history through the Atlantic slave trade; the intellectual revolution known as the Enlightenment; a demographic revolution doubling the size of the British population; the beginnings of industrialization; and three political Revolutions—American, French and Haitian—that changed the way humanity and rights were conceived thereafter. These currents and their role in inaugurating the modern world are the focus of the course. We examine them through the lenses of the representations, geo-politics and pluriversal perspectives of some of its most neglected, yet important participants: women, Indigenous peoples, enslaved and coerced laborers; ex-slaves and abolitionists; philosophes and peasants; printers and African-descended revolutionaries; to develop an understanding about the nature of social and political life in the *ancien regime* that can account for the ruptures of the French and Haitian Revolutions. The following topics will structure lecture and discussion: the nature of *ancien regime* states and societies; the impact of war and empire; women, race and public culture in the Enlightenment; Paris and London as global cities; exoticism and the arts of discovery; the emergence of popular radicalisms; and the transatlantic circuits of revolution.