

Class Notes
Week 1 Day 1
3 Sept 2026
HISTB226 Modern Europe, 1789-1915

Syllabus Exercise

Groups:

- (1) Participation and Discussion Lead**
- (2) Quizzes Section**
- (3) Response Papers and Final Paper**
- (4) Attendance Policy, Late Policy, and Managing an Inclusive Classroom**
- (5) Technology Policy**

Old Regime France:

What were the First, Second, and Third Estates?

The First Estate (Clergy)

- Status divisions within First Estate:**
 - Nobles at the top of church hierarchy living large**
 - Prominent Third Estate families filling out lower hierarchy, disgruntled by lavish spending of the hierarchy.**
 - Payments -**
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Second Estate (Nobility)

- 120,000**

- 1-2%, control 1/3rd to 1/4th of land
- Exempt from taxes
- More rights
- Possession of hunting rights
- “Robe nobility” = longstanding traditional aristocracy
- “sword nobility” = ‘new money nobles’
- Fill out administrative offices

Third Estate (Everyone Else)

- 95% of the population (75% were peasants)
 - Peasant hierarchy: landless peasants (day laborers), peasants who owned small amounts of land (often not enough to survive on let alone sell harvests); top of hierarchy: wealthier farmers: hire workers and higher social status but resented by many.
 - Urban Classes (including towns):
 - Paris (650K)
 - Urban: Unskilled workers (day laborers)
 - Skilled workers (in the guild system)
 - Bourgeoisie - growing professions; capitalists, merchants, lawyers, doctors;

What were the problems facing the French Monarchy on the eve of the Revolution?

- Administrative chaos of the state; not uniform;
- Wealth inequality
- Fiscal - The state is broke

Annette Timm & Joshua Sanborn, “Gender, Sex, and the Shaping of Modern Europe (2022):

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