



Portrait of Françoise de Graffigny by Pierre-Augustin Clavareau



Bust of Olympe de Gouges, at the National Assembly (installed 2016)



Portrait of Émilie du Châtelet by Maurice Quentin de La Tour

French 401: Studies in Early Modernity **Tuesday, Thursday: 2-3:20 PM**

Trois femmes du dix-huitième siècle

In this class, we will study the works, and to a certain extent the lives, of three major women thinkers of the Enlightenment period: Émilie du Châtelet (1706-1749), a great mathematician and philosopher, Françoise de Graffigny (1695-1758), an esteemed playwright and novelist, and Olympe de Gouges (1748-1793), a revolutionary and author who penned the *Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne*. We will use our exploration of these women's writings as a point of entry into some of the great debates and questions of the period, including the relationship between nature and culture, how to understand gender identity, and how to define and enact a just society, among many other topics. We will also use this opportunity to study in some depth the works of three authors whose thought not only shaped their era but in certain respects outstripped or undercut some of its defining tendencies. Students will have the chance to design a research project that will take as its focus a specific eighteenth-century woman author (including but not limited to the three listed above). This class is designed to engage students as readers, independent thinkers, and researchers, with an emphasis on close study of a historical period and its key debates, which continue to resonate with those of our own time. This course is taught in French.

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