Abstract
For my senior honors thesis, I am currently examining these cahiers to search for American influence, implicit or explicit, intentional or unintentional, that made its way across the Atlantic Ocean into the minds of common French citizens. I am seeking to answer the question, how were common French citizens influenced by the American Revolution, if at all? The most analogous sources for the American Revolution are various grievances delivered to King George III, culminating in the local declarations of independence that predated the national Declaration of Independence of July 1776. These state and local declarations detail the first generation of Americans’ grievances toward George III and their demands for a more just society. By studying these two sets of sources, I plan to explore convergences and divergences between the American and French Revolutions that go beyond the established trends in current history which focus on the influence of revolutionary leaders and shared Enlightenment philosophy. This study holds the promise of better understanding the ideology of common people and their relationship to the state by the close of the eighteenth century. By examining these similar sources, we can have a deeper appreciation for what the revolutions shared and what made them unique. Common people drove the French Revolution, and their grievances listed in the cahiers de doléances present our best hope for perceiving what, if any, influence the American Revolution might have had on the general French populace. Only then can we determine whether the late eighteenth century was truly an age of Atlantic revolutions.

Methodology
The methods for this study took place in two parts. Initially, I examined the historiography of both the cahiers and the state and local declarations to assess which set of documents was more “revolutionary.” This required me developing a definition of “revolutionary” through which I could make this assessment. By examining the scholarship on both documents, I was able to gain a sense of the most common grievances in both populations, the contexts from which the grievances emerged, and how representative both sets of documents were for the population at large.

The next step in my analysis was an original primary source comparison of the two sets of documents to explore if there was any noticeable American influence on the cahiers. As dozens of pamphlets made their way to France in the years between the end of the American Revolution and the start of the French Revolution, this was of particular interest. Additionally, I traced French military officers who served in the American Revolution back to their homes in France to see if they could have brought American ideas with them. I examined a sample of French port cities (a likely locus for trans-Atlantic revolutionary sentiment, rural districts, major cities, and French colonies. A sample was necessary due to the overwhelming number of cahiers compared to the smaller number of local declarations of independence. By examining this sample comparatively, I planned on exploring the possibility that American revolutionary ideas influenced common French citizens in their creation of the cahiers.

Conclusions
It is well known that the American Revolution had some influence on the French Revolution. Generally, this focuses on the role elites played in both revolutions. From studying the historiography of the local declarations and the cahiers it appears that the French cahiers were more revolutionary. This is due to the fact that the demands listed amount to a rejection of feudalism as propagated by the old regime. Additionally, there was surprising unity between the upper and lower classes in many of these cases such as the nobility’s willingness to forgo economic privileges. The local declarations, on the other hand, are less representative of the American people at the onset of the American Revolution as many citizens were unwilling to support independence and were content with the contemporary situation. Furthermore, the demands and grievances reflect a sentiment of lost rights that had to be regained rather than a desire for new rights as was the case for the French in the cahiers.

In terms of influence, it is difficult to ascertain direct influence from the Americans to the French by comparing the local declarations and the cahiers. While there are discussions of “liberty” on both sides of the Atlantic, it cannot be definitively proven that these came from America and not from general Enlightenment philosophy. There are two factors that do indicate some influence may have reached the cahiers; however: 1) French officers who fought in the American Revolution and then participated in the assemblies that produced the cahiers and 2) the vast number of pamphlets circulating in France before the time of the cahiers that specifically detailed the American experience and sometimes even replicated American documents such as state constitutions. However, this influence would likely have spread to nobles and literate members of the Third Estate rather than many common French citizens. If common French citizens did espouse American ideas, it is unlikely that they were aware of it.

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