Roundtable Discussion: The Nature and Practice of Absolutism

Date: Thursday, September 29th.

In the midst of disorder, war, and famine during the Age of Crisis (1550-1650), a new form of centralized monarchs arose, claiming absolute sovereignty over all parts of society and further undermining the power of the traditional nobility in their respective countries. Political theorists attempted to justify or criticize these new “divine right” rulers. Now many of these rulers and a few political philosophers have been invited by the Sun King himself to discuss the philosophy of absolutism along with their own successes and failures in imposing their sovereign will on their people.

The scene is the Hall of Mirrors in the heart of Louis XIV’s France, 1690.

7 students will be playing major figures from the 17th and 18th centuries that wrote on and/or practiced the political theory of Absolutism.

Each assigned student will do the following in preparation for the round table discussion:

1. Research and write a 1.5 to 2-page essay with citations and a bibliography explaining your figure’s thoughts on why absolutism is the supreme form of government as well as his most significant accomplishments. If you have a political theorist, just focus on their arguments for (or against!) absolute monarchy.
2. **You MUST include a bibliography and citations to get credit for the paper.**
3. Prepare to clearly explain your position on the above topics and defend (or attack, if you are Locke!) the theory and practice of absolutism. \*(IN CHARACTER!)
4. Participants are required to wear either business casual (gents: oxford shirt, tie, and khakis/dress pants; ladies: blouse and skirt) OR period dress (DO NOT spend $, be creative if you do this).

**All** students will be graded on their participation (either as audience members or as fellow participants) in asking thoughtful, helpful questions to foster conversation among the panel and taking notes during the presentations.

**Cast:**

Louis XIV of France (ruler) Jakob Acres

James I of England (ruler) Maddie Fritz

Peter the Great of Russia (ruler) Cameron Bender

Frederick II of Prussia (ruler) Abigail Hensel

John Locke (theorist) Ben Andreasen

Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (theorist) Jenna Montierth

Thomas Hobbes (theorist) Emma Ramer