



University  
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination  
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

**CHANDLER FREEMAN-ORR**

BA (Queen's University, 2016)

***“Et nous aussi nous sommes Citoyennes”*: Perceptions of Women's  
Political Activity in the French Revolution, 1789-1793.”**

Department of History

Wednesday, August 22, 2018

1:00 P.M.

Clearihue Building

Room B215

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Jill Walshaw, Department of History, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Rob Alexander, Department of History, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Sara Harvey, Department of French, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Mauricio Garcia-Barrera, Department of Psychology, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

## Abstract

This thesis explores the multiple ways women's capacity for political action was perceived, both by themselves as well as by others, in the early years of the French Revolution. By beginning with women's journey to Versailles in the October Days of 1789 and concluding with the National Convention's closure of all women's political clubs in October 1793, this thesis will suggest that women perceived themselves politically and as viable revolutionary participants, but that these identifications were grounded in and shaped by hegemonic eighteenth-century gender norms, and often demonstrated continuity with their pre-revolutionary identities. In many cases, both men and women's perceptions of women's appropriate political roles were influenced by idealized standards and gender norms, as exemplified by the fictitious character, Sophie, from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 1762 treatise, *Emile, or On Education*. The ways women rationalized their political inclusion and situated themselves within the developing revolution demonstrate a sense of compromise with the same norms and ideals which were increasingly used to justify their complete exclusion from political life. Through stressing revolutionary ideals such as equality and unity and by underscoring the importance of their complementary revolutionary contributions, women presented a view of themselves as necessary and viable participants in revolutionary politics in a way that, by late October 1793, increasingly seemed to threaten established societal views on the appropriate boundaries of female political life.