



## Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men: by Jean-Jacques Rousseau with Related Documents (Bedford Series in History & Culture)

By Jean Jacques Rousseau, Helena Rosenblatt

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A provocative essay that challenged the superiority of civilized society and modern government, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality* made him an outcast among fellow Enlightenment thinkers but stands today as one of the most important political texts in Western history. Helena Rosenblatt's new translation, introduction, and selection of related documents help students comprehend why Rousseau's criticisms of human nature, political hierarchy, and private property were so controversial in his time yet later were hailed as a foundation of democracy. The introduction explores life experiences that shaped Rousseau's philosophy, explains contemporary ideas about political authority and social order, and guides students through Rousseau's thought, including explanations of how his work anticipated theories about evolution and inspired leaders of the French Revolution. Related primary documents -- including a selection from Rousseau's *Social Contract* -- situate Rousseau's ideas in contemporary political and social thought. Questions for consideration, a chronology of Rousseau's life and work, and a selected bibliography enrich students' understanding of the man and his times.

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### About the Author

HELENA ROSENBLATT(Ph.D., Columbia) is a professor of history at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. A specialist in European intellectual history, she is the author of *Liberal Values: Benjamin Constant and the Politics of Religion* (2008) and *Rousseau and Geneva: From the First Discourse to the Social Contract, 1749-1762* (1997), and she is the editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Constant* (2009)."

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