

YOUR MAJESTY

Second Edition (2023)

A card game for 2-6 players by Sam A. Mustafa.

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PREPARING THE GAME

The Table and Your Court

From two to six players sit around a table. The space directly in front of a player is called their **court**. This is where a player will keep philosophes, colonies, and reforms, face-up, in view of all other players. A card there is called “at your court.”

Other cards, not presently in anyone’s court, are placed in the middle of the table, and are called **unclaimed**. If a rule ever requires you to return a card “to the table,” it means: place it there.

Each player has a **kingdom**, meaning: your side / your country / you.

The Majesty Cards

The game has four types of cards: **action cards**, **philosophes**, **colonies**, and **reforms**. One set of cards is needed, no matter how many players there are.

Shuffle the philosophes into a deck, and place them face-down. Do the same for the action cards, but do **not** include the *Reshuffle* card. Each deck will have a space next to it for **discards** from that deck.

Spread out the colonies, face-up, in the middle of the table for all players to see. Do the same for the reforms.

Deal **four action cards** to each player, face-down. That is each player’s starting **hand**. Keep your hand concealed from all opponents.

Randomly select one player to be the first **active** player.



ACTION CARDS

Maximum Hand Size

At game start, everyone's **maximum hand size** is four, meaning: a player may never have more than four cards in their hand. The *Enlightened Despot* event can increase your hand size to five.

You may never take or draw cards into your hand if doing so would put it over the maximum. For example, let's say you played the *Espionage* event, leaving two cards in your hand. That event allows you to take several cards from one player. You could not take more than two, however, which would put you at your maximum of four.

You may never voluntarily discard cards. They must be played, in order to leave your hand.

Events and Campaigns

There are two types of action cards: **events** and **campaigns**.

An event has a text describing its effect upon the game if played. A campaign shows a famous commander, purely for historical interest. All campaign cards function in the same way: they are used to take an opponent's colony, or to defend one's own colony from an enemy campaign.

All action cards have a **randomizer** in the lower left corner. This is used when resolving an attempt to implement a reform.



ADJUSTING THE GAME FOR DIFFERENT NUMBERS OF PLAYERS

These rules assume a full game with six players. If you have fewer than six, prepare the cards before the game as follows: If you have five players, randomly remove every fifth colony card, and one philosophe from each muse. If you have four players, randomly remove every fourth colony, and two philosophes from each muse. If three players, remove every third colony and three philosophes from each muse. The number of reforms and action cards never changes, no matter how many players there are.



USING CARDS

Drawing vs. Choosing

Drawing a card means: taking one from the top of a stack face-down and unseen. Cards are often drawn from the action deck when resolving some action by a player or between players, or when drawing new cards to your hand.

Choosing a card means: you pick from cards whose faces you can see. For example, choosing a card from your hand to play, or choosing a colony to acquire, etc.

Playing a card means: regardless of how you acquired the card, you are now using it to perform some game action.

Your Hand vs. Your Court

Action Cards are kept in your hand, meaning: hidden from all other players.

Colonies and philosophes are kept at your court, meaning: face-up and visible to all other players.

Discarding

When you play an action card for any reason, it is placed face-up in the discard pile.

Discard vs. Remove

Philosophes and Action Cards that are discarded get placed beside their decks, face-up, as a discard pile. They will eventually be reshuffled back into their deck.

The colony cards are always face-up and visible to the players. If you must discard one of them, you are simply returning it to the table.

Reforms, once at a player's court, never leave that court.

If a rule says that a card is *removed* then place it somewhere off-table. It does not return to the game.

Reshuffle

When you first set up the action deck, do **not** include the *Reshuffle* card in it. Once somebody draws the last card from the deck, reshuffle the discards and include the *Reshuffle* card. From this point, whenever somebody draws the *Reshuffle* card in the action deck, you must pause the game. Take all the discards from the action deck, combine them with the remaining deck and the *Reshuffle* card, and reshuffle. That creates a new action deck.

If there are any discarded philosophes when *Reshuffle* is drawn, then do the same with the philosophe deck: the discards are reshuffled into the philosophe deck.

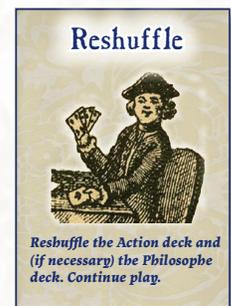
Then resume game play. This might happen in the midst of some action, such as needing two cards when there is only one left, in which case you draw the first, shuffle, and draw the second.

Scandals

A scandal is a type of event that contains the *Scandal!* symbol. When you play the event, the scandal card is placed upon one player's court. (There is one scandal that must be placed at your own court.)

The scandal remains there until it is **erased**, meaning: moved to the discard pile. Each scandal at your court adds a cumulative +1 to the difficulty of attempting a reform.

Playing the *New Royal Mistress* event erases all scandals presently at your court. Other game actions might erase specific scandals. For example, the *Rinaldo et Armida* scandal can be erased if you implement the *Freedom of Expression* reform.





THE SEQUENCE OF PLAY

Turns and Actions

When a player is active, they are said to be playing their **turn**. In your turn, you may play **up to two actions**. You do not have to play any; you may “pass” your turn without acting at all. Or you may play only one action.

Rounds and Lingering Events

One “trip” around the table, in which each player plays one turn, is called a **round**. This can be important because some events **linger** for an entire round. (Lingering events have the clock symbol.) That means: you play the event, and keep the card face-up at your court until your next turn. Before starting that next turn, the card is discarded, its event is over, and you may now play your turn.



What are Actions?

There are six possible actions, as shown at right.

In your turn you may play up to two actions. You may choose any two, but you may not play the same action twice in one turn. For example, you might draw a philosophe and then host a salon. But you couldn't draw a philosophe twice, nor host a salon twice. You might play an event, and then a campaign, but you couldn't play two events, or two campaigns, and so on.

Each action will be described in detail in a subsequent section.

Refill Your Hand

If you choose Refill as an action, you may draw cards from the action deck to refill it to its maximum. You may not discard.

Playing Cards as a Passive Player

All players other than the active player are called **passive** players. A passive player occasionally has the ability to play a card in response to what the active player has done. For example: if the active player plays a campaign, in an attempt to take one of your colonies, you can play a campaign to prevent them from doing so.

There is no limit to the number of times in a round that you might play a card as a passive player (especially if everybody is picking on you).

No Trades

You may never trade cards of any sort with other players.

The Actions

- Choose a colony.
- Draw a philosophe.
- Play an event.
- Play a campaign.
- Host a salon.
- Refill your hand.

COLONIES

Choosing a Colony

You may acquire any number of colonies at your court.

Colonies in the center of the table, i.e. not at anybody's court, are called **unclaimed**.

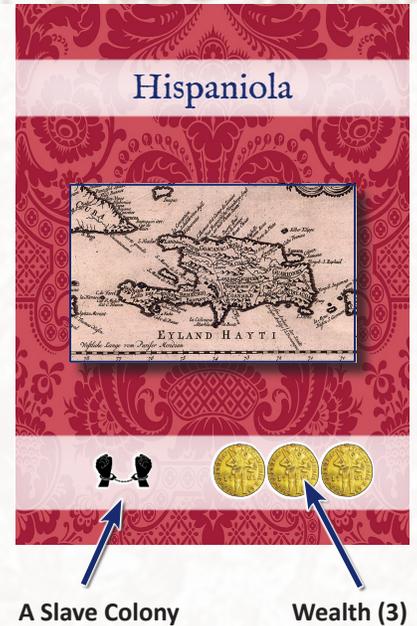
If you choose a colony as an action, you must **discard one card from your hand**. Any card will suffice. Then you simply pick any one unclaimed colony and move it to your court. Now that colony is yours.

Wealth

Each colony has a number of coin symbols, indicating its wealth. Your kingdom's wealth is equal to the total number of coin symbols from all of your colonies at court.

Slave Colonies

Some colonies have the slavery symbol. Each slave colony at your court counts as a -1 penalty against your prestige. When a player implements the *Abolition of Slavery* reform, this penalty is dropped for all players.



REFORMS

There are fifteen reforms. All begin the game unclaimed. There is no limit to the number of reforms you might implement.

In order to implement a reform, you must hold a successful salon. The reform is then moved to your court, where it remains for the rest of the game.

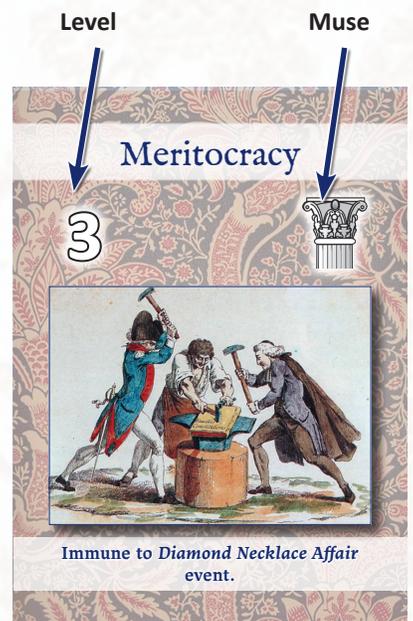
Each reform has a level (1, 3, or 5). This indicates the difficulty of implementing it, as well as the value of that reform in prestige.

Each reform also has one of the five **muses**. When hosting a salon to attempt a reform, you must have at least one philosophe at your court with that same muse.

Reform Levels

You may not attempt to implement a reform at a higher level, if you do not have a reform at the immediately lower level. (For example, you may not attempt a level-3 reform if you don't yet have a level-1 reform.)

There is one exception to the above: if half or more of the players have a reform at that lower level, then you may attempt a reform at the next-highest level. (For example, if at least half of the players have level-3 reforms, you may attempt a level-5 reform, whether or not you have any level-3 reforms at your court.)



PHILOSOPHES AND SALONS

Drawing a Philosophe

You may acquire any number of philosophes at your court.

To draw a philosophe as an action, you must **discard one card from your hand**. Any card will suffice. Then you draw the top card from the philosophe deck and move it to your court.

The Fate of Philosophes

Once at your court, a philosophe remains there unless/until an event causes their death (removal from the game permanently), or resignation from your court (discarded and returned to the table).

By playing the *A Place at Court* event, you can take another player's philosophe and bring it to your court. If the passive player also has that event and plays it, it cancels your attempt.

Prestige

Each philosophe has a prestige value, of either 1 or 2, as shown by the number of fleurs-de-lys in the upper-left corner.

Muses

Philosophes represent the great creative thinkers of the Enlightenment.

Philosophes are distinguished by having a symbol in the upper-right corner of their cards, representing which of the five muses they belong to: the Arts, Politics, Music, Science, or Literature.

Hosting a Salon

Hosting a salon is the way to implement reforms. Reforms are the most important way to gain prestige.

If you choose the action to host a salon, you must **discard one card from your hand**. Any card will suffice.

Then declare which unclaimed reform you wish to attempt. **You must have at least one philosophe at your court with the same muse** as shown on the reform that you have chosen.

Who May Attend the Salon?

Your kingdom's wealth is the maximum number of philosophes that may attend the salon. At a minimum, a salon must comprise **at least two** philosophes.

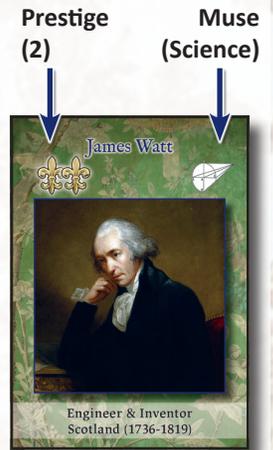
Any/all philosophes at your court may attend.

You may also invite up to one philosophe from each/all other players' courts, to attend your salon. Their attendance is at the discretion of their owning player. Other players are under no obligation to "loan" you their philosophes; this is a negotiation between the players.

Sophia

"Sophia" is the term we use to express the overall intellectual significance of the salon. Each philosophe present at the salon contributes **one** sophia. Each philosophe **with the same muse as the intended reform contributes two** sophia.

A philosophe's prestige has nothing to do with their sophia at a given salon.



PHILOSOPHES AND SALONS, CONTINUED

Resolving the Salon

Draw the top card from the action deck and consult its randomizer number. Add that number to the level of the desired reform. The result is the **difficulty** of implementing the reform.

If the sophia at your salon is greater than that difficulty, you have succeeded and implemented the reform. Move it to your court.

Regardless of the outcome, discard the action card you drew. Any visiting foreign philosophes return to their kingdoms.

The Effect of Scandals

Each scandal at your court increases the difficulty of a reform by 1.



Example of a Salon

You wish to implement the *Meritocracy* reform, which is currently unclaimed.

Its muse is Politics, and you have Mary Wollstonecraft at your court, so you are eligible to host a salon for the attempt at this reform.

Your kingdom's wealth is 4, so you can have a maximum of four philosophes attend the salon.

James Watt and F-J Haydn, both at your court, will attend.

And you have convinced another player to allow Thomas Jefferson to attend, from their court.

Jefferson and Wollstonecraft have the Politics muse, so they each contribute two Sophia. Watt and Hadyn each contribute one.

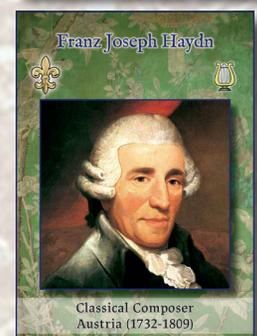
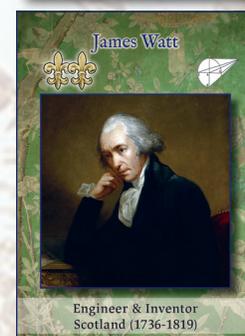
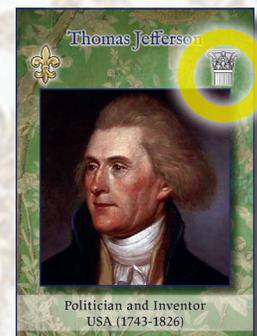
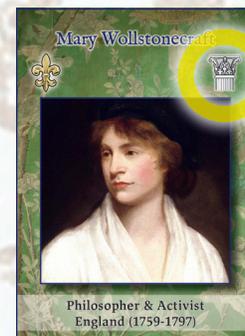
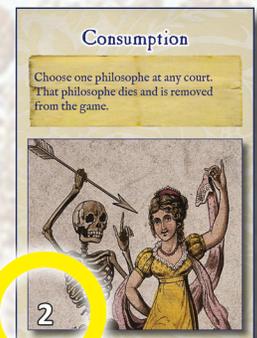
Your salon's total Sophia is: 6.

Meritocracy's level is 3. Draw an action card and add its randomizer. You drew *Consumption*, which has a randomizer of "2." The difficulty of implementing this reform is therefore: 5.

Your Sophia (6) is higher than the difficulty (5). Your salon succeeds, the reform is implemented. Huzzah, and praise the vague Unitarian deity!

But what if you'd had a scandal at court?

In that case the difficulty would have increased by one, meaning that with a Sophia of 6, versus a modified difficulty of 6, you would not have succeeded.





CAMPAIGNS

A card with the cannon symbol is a campaign card. The purpose of a campaign is to seize a colony from another player's court and move it to yours.

To play a campaign, indicate the colony and its present owner, and play your campaign card. Your opponent now has the chance — if they also have one — to play a campaign card. If they do so, your campaign is thwarted, and the colony remains in your opponent's court. Otherwise, your campaign seizes the colony.

All action cards used for the campaign(s) are now discarded.



PRESTIGE AND VICTORY

The aim of each player is to accumulate as much prestige as possible at their court. At the moment a player achieves **20 prestige**, the game ends immediately and that player wins. Prestige is calculated as follows:

- Each philosophe at your court is worth either 1 or 2, as shown on their card.
- Each reform you implement is worth a number of prestige equal to its level.

Each slave colony at your court applies a -1 deduction to your prestige. (It is possible to have negative prestige.) Once somebody implements *Abolition of Slavery*, this penalty is dropped for all players and all colonies.

It is possible, due to events, that two or more players might suddenly have 20 or more prestige at the same time. If so, the highest-scoring player wins. It is possible for two or more players to tie the game and share the victory.

SCANDALS

If you play an event with the *Scandal* symbol, that card is not discarded, but rather lingers at somebody's court. In most cases, you may choose which opponent to attach the scandal to.

Scandals remain at a player's court, and can accumulate. Each scandal at your court adds a +1 to the difficulty of trying to implement a reform.

If you play the *New Royal Mistress* event, all scandals at your court are erased, meaning: removed and discarded. Most scandals also have some event or action that is specific to removing them, if you meet the criterion. For example, the *Rinaldo et Armida* scandal can be erased if you implement the *Freedom of Expression* reform.





OPTIONAL RULES

Feaux Pas

Your Majesty employs an unusual game mechanic, in that you are usually dependent upon your fellow players to “lend” you their philosophes to attend your salons, even though there is no reason for them to do so other than you owing them a favor. This can be a lot of fun, but it also means that the game’s length depends upon how competitive your gaming group is. If you’re all a bunch of cutthroats, and never do anybody any favors, it can be a long, lonely game! On the other hand, if you’re all very civilized, it can make salons at the lower levels too “easy” and sometimes even an automatic success. If the latter bothers you, then this simple rule introduces an automatic failure result to any salon:

No matter how much Sophia you have, drawing a “6” randomizer means that the host of your salon has made an unforgivable faux pas. The salon fails.

Note that this will increase the game’s length.

A Paycheck? How Gauche

Your prestige score is affected by the number of philosophes at your court, even though you might have so few colonies that you can’t possibly invite them all to a salon. Although it’s an improbable grand strategy, a clever player might even win the game with no reforms, simply by hoarding a bunch of unemployed philosophes. If this proves troublesome, here are two rules to adjust for it. Choose only one:

*No player may win the game, until they have **both** 20 prestige **and** at least one reform at the 3- or 5-level.*

-OR-

You may only count a number of philosophes toward your prestige value equal to your current wealth. (If your wealth is only three, then you may count the prestige of any three of your philosophes.) If you choose this rule, then lower the victory condition to 16, meaning: the first player with sixteen or more prestige, wins the game.



DESIGNER'S NOTES

The Philosophes

The 18th century is so rich with vivid, creative personalities that it was very hard to choose the handful of philosophes in each category of muse. I did, however, follow a few basic guidelines. I chose people that the player was more likely to have heard of, even at the expense of more prolific but lesser-known personalities (thus Samuel Johnson and Mary Wollstonecraft got into the mix, despite being out-produced by a number of other worthies). I left out great administrators like Yakaterina Dashkova or Jacques Necker, because they weren't known for contributing their own important original ideas. Speaking of Necker, just being a saloniere wasn't good enough, hence Madame Necker didn't make the cut, either, although she was a prolific organizer of salons. Philosophes were admittedly hard to categorize when they contributed to a variety of fields, as did David Hume, for example. And, in order to keep the deck both diverse and limited in size, there are some obvious and regrettable omissions. Adam Smith, for example, or Louis Vattel.

Cosmopolitanism was a hallmark of 18th century thought and philosophes were often willing to move around, given the right opportunities. Where possible, I chose people who were more cosmopolitan and less national in their outlook or creative work (thus no Robert Burns, for example, since he is unimaginable when taken out of the context of Scotland.) I was admittedly inconsistent when it suited my needs. Immanuel Kant, for example, lived his whole life in one smallish Baltic city, although his work was widely read and very influential.

Chronology was an issue. Originally I wanted to create two sets of philosophes, divided into Early and Late, so that you wouldn't have Isaac Newton rubbing elbows with Thomas Jefferson, or other jarring anachronisms. That, however, proved needlessly complex and it made no sense to me that we're willing to move people around geographically and culturally, but not chronologically. Thus all the philosophes are in the same vague present-tense. Others just barely didn't make the chronological cut-off point, which was the French Revolution (Beethoven is the best example). I decided that a philosophe had to make most of his/her contributions prior to 1800 in order to be in the game, thus no Goethe, David, or Goya, and so on.

The question of muses was also tricky, because most philosophes were polymaths. I tried to describe each one by the works they are most famous for, but I couldn't always line up muses, reforms, and philosophes. For example, G.E. Lessing was one of the 18th century's most outspoken voices on religious tolerance, but his muse is literature, and in the game the *Religious Tolerance* reform emphasizes the Arts. It was important to balance all the muses, reforms, and philosophes, and I couldn't fit everybody exactly where I wanted them to be.

The Colonies

I considered including colonies in Africa and Asia but due to limitations of space and card mix I eventually settled on the New World. I also avoided creating colony cards for any European turf that 18th century monarchs fought over (no Belgium, Croatia, and so on) because I wanted you to imagine yourself entirely fixated on the far-away New World, and not wondering why Atlantic hurricanes prevent you from taxing Wallachia.

During playtesting we tried a number of different models for colonies and taxation, including keeping a "treasury" and other things. "War" is deliberately as abstract as possible. *Your Majesty* is not a wargame. Several early playtest versions included famous generals and admirals and the players had national treasuries with which they paid for wars. I ended up stripping all of that out, since it was a lot of effort for a relatively modest outcome: the transfer of one card from your court to mine. I did preserve the most famous leaders, purely for biographical interest, in the campaign cards. Who knows, maybe there will be some expansion sets in the future like: *Your Majesty: Great Captains*, or *Your Majesty: War in Europe*, or somesuch.

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December, 2022.