After two centuries, the historical period known as “the Enlightenment” remains a source of controversy. While regarded by some as the origin of the central ideals of modern liberal democracies, others see it as responsible for many of the maladies that plague the modern world. This colloquium explores some of the disputes about the nature, promise, and limits of “the Enlightenment” and examines the peculiar intertwining of philosophy, politics, and history that lies at the heart of these discussions.

We begin by examining a few influential eighteenth-century attempts to explain what enlightenment involves and, after sampling a few of the more influential responses to the French Revolution, will explore a few twentieth-century attempts to draw links between the Enlightenment and totalitarian forms of rule. The final part of the course will be devoted to a consideration of the treatment of the Enlightenment in the work of Jürgen Habermas, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Michel Foucault.

Requirements

The colloquium is intended for advanced undergraduates and graduate students. It will be quite demanding, both in the amount of reading and, in some cases, in its difficulty (there are few books more challenging than Dialectic of Enlightenment). Participants are expected to come to meetings prepared to discuss the readings and to call attention to those particular aspects of the readings where the argument is less than convincing.

For undergraduate members of the colloquium, the main written requirement will be a final paper, of fifteen to twenty-five pages (i.e., no more than 9,000 words) dealing with the questions we have been examining in the course in greater detail. As preparation for this paper, undergraduates of the colloquium will be required, beginning February 4 to keep, and send me, a weekly journal discussing the assigned readings and exploring possible themes for the final paper. The particular form that this journal can take will be discussed at our first meeting. A proposal for the paper (including a sketch of the argument, a discussion of its significance, and a bibliography of possible sources intend) will be due on April 22. Graduate students participating in the colloquium will be required to submit, by February 18, a preliminary sketch for a project (e.g., a seminar paper, an annotated bibliography of readings, a review essay, or a research proposal) that they propose to complete during the colloquium. All members of the seminar should make arrangements to meet with me to discuss the progress they are making on their projects.

Finally, on February 11, March 18, and April 18 all members of the colloquium will be asked to submit a two to three page summary of what they view as the most significant issues that are emerging from the readings and the course discussions.

I would prefer that the submission of the journals, summaries, and the final paper be made electronically in a nonproprietary file format (e.g., .pdf, .doc, etc.), but I am open to other alternatives (including, of course, paper).

In determining final grades for the colloquium, the final paper will count for 60%, the summaries and journals will count for a total of 30%, and participation in class discussions suggestions will count for the remaining 10%. For the policy regarding plagiarism and other academic conduct matters, please consult the University Academic Conduct code, which is available at: http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/.

Readings

The following books have been ordered from the Boston University Bookstore:

Condorcet, Political Writings (Cambridge)
Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France (Hackett)
Friedrich Genz, The Origin and Principles of the American Revolution Compared to the French (Liberty Classics)
Isaiah Berlin, Political Ideas of the Romantic Age (Princeton)
Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford)
Reinhard Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis* (MIT Press)
Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (MIT Press)
Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth* (MIT/Semiotexte)

Unfortunately, the list price of these books comes to approximately $181. In most cases, used copies can be found either at the BU Bookstore or other distributors. However, the older translation of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by John Cumming (Herder and Herder/Continuum) should be avoided, since it introduces new confusions into an already difficult book. Public domain versions of the texts by Condorcet, Burke, and Genz (which account for $56 of the total cost of the books) can be readily obtained.

**Schedule of Readings**

Note: Items marked with an asterisk are available on the BlackBoard web site for this course; items designated with an asterisk will be available through the Blackboard site.

I. *What is Enlightenment? Two Eighteenth-Century Answers*

Jan 28  Immanuel Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?,” in Schmidt, ed., *What is Enlightenment?* 58-64*
  Immanuel Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim”*
  Condorcet, “The Sketch,” in Condorcet, *Political Writings* 1-147

II. *Enlightenment and the French Revolution:*

Feb 4  Richard Price, “A Discourse on the Love for Our Country”*
  Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

Feb 11  Genz, *The Origin and Principles of the American Revolution Compared to the French*
  Immanuel Kant, “An Old Question Raised Again: Is the Human Race Constantly Progressing?” in Kant, *The Contest of the Faculties* *
  G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (selection)*

February 11  First Summaries Due

III. *Enlightenment and Totalitarianism*

Feb 18  Holiday: Class rescheduled to Wednesday, Feb 20


Feb 25  Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 94-172

March 4  Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis*

March 11, No Class — Spring Break

March 18  Berlin, *Political Ideas in the Romantic Age*

March 18  Second Summaries Due
IV. Habermas, Gadamer, and Foucault

March 25 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* 1-12, 14-103-151, 159-175, 236-250

April 1 Habermas, “The Classical Doctrine of Politics in Relation to Social Philosophy,” in Habermas, *Theory and Practice* 41-82*
Habermas, “Knowledge and Human Interests: A General Perspective,” in Habermas, *Knowledge and Interests* 301-317.*

Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action* Volume I, 143-153*

Jürgen Habermas, “A Review of Truth and Method” in *Understanding and Social Inquiry* edited by Fred Dallmayr and Thomas McCarthy pp. 335-363*

April 15 Holiday, Class rescheduled to Thursday, April 18

April 18 Michel Foucault, “The Order of Discourse,” in Robert Young, ed., *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader**
Michel Foucault, “Two Lectures,” in Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* *
Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” in Foucault, *Power* 326-348*

April 22 Third Summaries Due

April 22 Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity: An Unfinished Project,” in Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, ed. Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves and Seyla Benhabib, 38-55*

April 22 Paper Proposals Due

April 29 Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth* 41-120