

The European Enlightenment

HI 215/PO 393

Fall Term 2014
Tuesday & Thursday 2:00-3:30 - 2:00, Shaw 201
Office Hours: Tues 11:30AM-1:00PM &
Thurs. 3:45PM – 5 PM

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During the eighteenth century, Europe became modern. As a result of a transnational movement known as the Enlightenment many of the ideas, practices, and attitudes that have come to define what it means to be “modern” first began to take root in Europe and on the eastern coast of North America. This course explores how this change came about by tracing the transformation of European culture and society between the last decades of the seventeenth century and the end of the eighteenth century.

Readings will be quite diverse in their concerns, their style, and their approach. Texts assigned include political tracts, philosophical essays, theological treatises, as well as a few examples from the “literary underground” of the eighteenth century. They will draw rather heavily on a few major figures — Voltaire, Diderot, Condorcet, Lessing, and the Scottish moralists — but will also pay attention to important eighteenth-century figures who are sometimes overlooked in introductory surveys (e.g., Moses Mendelssohn, Richard Price, and Joseph Priestley).

Requirements and Grading Policy:

There will be a mid-term exam during class on October 21 and a final exam on Tuesday, December 16 from 3:00-5:00 PM. Both will consist of a combination of short answers and somewhat more extended responses. You can expect questions that call upon you to discuss central concepts, institutions, and individuals covered in the readings or lectures. Questions for both exams will, in part, be written by students using a wiki that is available on the course’s Blackboard site.

Throughout the semester, students in the course will also engage in a systematic review and revision of the Wikipedia’s entry on the “Age of Enlightenment” and related pages (e.g., the linked pages on particular figures or particular works). This project must be completed by December 2 (a detailed schedule for the execution of this assignment can be found at the end of this syllabus).

Finally, in addition to the work involved in the Wikipedia project, students are expected to make regular (i.e., two or three times a week) contributions to the “Discussion Forum” on the course web site. I will check the forum regularly and will respond to comments either online or in subsequent lectures.

The final grade will be computed as follows: midterm 30%, final examination 30%, Wikipedia project 30%, participation in class discussions and Blackboard discussion forum) 10%. More than two absences from classes will result in a lowering of your grade.

Academic Conduct and Incompletes

For the policy regarding plagiarism and other academic conduct matters, please consult the university’s Academic Conduct code: <http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/>. Particular attention should be paid to the exhaustive discussion in the section entitled “Plagiarism,” which reviews the variety of forms that plagiarism takes and provides clear examples of what each involves. Since past experience suggests that students are not always aware of the range of actions that fall under the term, it is imperative that you review Academic Conduct code: it amounts to nothing less than the fundamental rules that govern the work we do as scholars and, as such, they are, and ought to be, enforced.

Incompletes will be given only in cases of serious illness, family emergencies, and other matters of sufficient gravity to render you incapable of finishing the course. CAS rules require that I make arrangements with you for the completion of coursework *prior* to the issuing of an Incomplete.

Policy on Digital Devices, Mobile Phones, Information Overload Days, and other Matters

Students are welcome to use computers or portable digital devices for note-taking or for consulting the materials we are discussing. But be sure to mute any alarms or notification sounds. You should, of course, refrain from using these devices for tasks *other* than those connected with the course and your involvement with the screen on your device should never supplant your attention to the discussion taking place in the classroom (if I suspect that it is, I reserve the right to ask the devices be turned off. Mobile phones should, of course, be silenced.

While I would like for this class to be the most important thing in your life, I am aware that it is likely to have significant competition from other quarters. In recognition of that fact, I have adopted a policy pioneered by Ryan Cordell (Northeastern University) and allowing you to claim two “information overload” (“IO days”) days during the semester during which you will not be expected to participate in class discussions (you will, however, be expected to show up for class and may not use your IO days to supplement your two excused absences). You must notify me at the *start* of class if you plan to claim an IO day.

Should any questions involving issues not immediately related to the course materials arise (e.g., problems with the Blackboard site, familial obligations, scheduling of meetings), I am best reached by email (messages can also be left on my office phone, but I sometimes miss them). Questions involving points that arise in the readings, lectures, or discussions are best addressed on the Discussion Forums on Blackboard since it is likely that any questions you might have will be shared by at least some of your classmates (and they’ll be grateful to you for raising them).

Readings

Since much of the material we will be consulting is now in the public domain and available online, I have ordered only one book:

Diderot, *Rameau’s Nephew and other Works* (Hackett)

Most of the course readings can be accessed from links in the “Course Documents” section of the course Blackboard Site. As noted on the syllabus, a few items have been placed on Mugar Electronic Reserves. Updates on reading materials and other matters related to the course will be posted to the Announcements section of the website. Please check it at least once a week.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Readings should be completed prior to class. At the close of each class I will provide some pointers on the readings for the next sessions, including suggestions about which readings will serve as our point of departure for discussions.

Introduction

9/2 & 9/4 *Some Preliminary Answers to the Question “What is Enlightenment?”* — A brief overview of the Enlightenment and discussion of differing approaches to the period.

Moses Mendelssohn, “On the Question: What is Enlightenment?” in Schmidt, ed. *What is Enlightenment?* 53-7.

Immanuel Kant, “Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” in Schmidt, ed. *What is Enlightenment?* 58-64

[“The Age of Enlightenment”](#), Wikipedia

Ernst Cassirer, “Enlightenment” in *The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* 547-552

James Schmidt, “Enlightenment,” in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2nd Edition.

I. The Political Context: Europe in the 1680s

9/9 *Old Regime* — A sketch of the political and social structure of late seventeenth-century Europe; the relationship of politics and religion; conceptions of royal power.

Jean Domat, “On Social Order and Absolute Monarchy”

Duc de Saint-Simon, “The Court of Louis XIV”

Duchess of Orleans, “Versailles Etiquette”

Frederick the Great, *Essay on the Forms of Government*

- 9/11 *The Glorious Revolution* — A discussion of Protestant fears in the 1680's; why they saw the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the actions of James II as evidence of an international Catholic counter-attack on the Reformation; Locke on religion and politics; the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 and its consequences.
- Louis XIV, "Revocation of the Edict of Nantes"
- Locke, *Second Treatise* §§4, 6, 22, 27-28, 32-35, 87-90, 95-97, 123-125, 211-218, 221, 223-225, 241-243.
- Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration* pp. 35, 38 (starting at "The toleration of those ...")-43, 50 ("These Religious Societies ...")-53, 56 ("Thus far ...") – 61.

II. Toleration, Heterodoxy, and Dissent

- 9/16 *Deists and Dissenters* — How enlightened Europeans thought about religious questions in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries; the flourishing of dissenting strands of Protestantism in England. Lessing's critique of revealed religion.
- Isaac Newton, Letter to Richard Bentley, December 10, 1692.
- Toland, Selections from *Christianity Not Mystrious*
- Anthony Collins, *A Discourse of Freethinking* pp. 5-15; 32-42, 101-103
- Joseph Priestley, Selection from Preface to *Letters to Dr. Horsley* pp. v-xvii.
- Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, "On the Proof of the Spirit and Of Power," in *Lessing's Theological Writings* 51-56.
- 9/18 *Pantheism, Atheism, and the "Impostor" Theory* — A survey of some of the more radical varieties of religious heterodoxy, with a particular emphasis on the claims that organized religion may merely be a tool for political oppression; the history of the *Treatise of the Three Impostors*, one of the more notorious clandestine manuscripts of its day.
- Bayle, *Miscellaneous Reflections Occasion'd by the Comet which Appear'd in 1680* §§172-178 (pp. 349-168)
- Anonymous, *The Treatise of the Three Impostors* (selections).
- 9/23 & 25 *Voltaire versus L'Infâme* — The career of François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire and his campaign against fanaticism in general and Christianity in particular.
- XIV
- Voltaire, *Letters on the English (or Philosophical Letters)* Letters I, V-XIV
- Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*, articles on "Enthusiasm," "Democracy," "Equality," "Faith," "Fatherland," "Fanaticism," "Fraud," "Freedom of Thought," "Morality," "Prejudices," "Religion," "Sect," "Superstition," "Theist," "Tolerance," "Virtue"
- Voltaire, Selections from *Treatise on Tolerance in Candide and Other Writings* (ed. Haskell M. Block) 357-372.

III. The Transformation of Public Life

- 9/30 *Academies and the Scientific Community* — The new prestige of science; the significance of academies in organizing and advancing scientific investigations; the scientific and cultural significance of the lightning rod.
- Voltaire, *Letters on the English (or Philosophical Letters)* Letters XIII-XIV.
- Simon Schaffer, "Natural Philosophy and Public Spectacle in the Eighteenth Century," *History of Science* 21:1 (1983)
- Franklin, Selections from *Experiments and Observations in Electricity*
- 10/2 *Coffee Houses* — How coffee houses became the centers for reading and discussion, anti-coffee propaganda, the role of Addison and Steele, and the concept of "public opinion."
- Lawrence Klein, "Coffeehouse Civility, 1660-1714: An Aspect of Post-Courtly Culture in England" *The Huntington library Quarterly*, Vol. 59:1, 1996; 30-51.
- Richard Steele, *The Tatler* #268 (Tuesday, Dec. 26, 1710)

- Joseph Addison, *The Spectator* #10 (Monday, March 12, 1711)
 Richard Steele, *The Spectator* # 49 (April 26, 1711)
 Joseph Addison, *The Spectator* #403 (Thursday, June 12, 1712)
 Joseph Addison, *The Spectator* #568 (Friday, July 16, 1714)
- 10/7 *Salons* — The rise of salon society in France; the role of women in the management of the salons; the impact of salons on the development of the Enlightenment in France; why Rousseau disapproved of them; questions about their importance.
- D'Alembert, "Portrait of Mlle. De Lespinasse"
 Antoine Lilti, "The Kingdom of Politesse: Salons and the Republic of Letters in Eighteenth-Century Paris," *Republic of Letters* 1:1 (May 2009) 1-11
 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses* (edited G. D. H. Cole) 136-141.
- 10/9 *Writers, Publishers, and Booksellers* — The revolution in reading; how a living could be made in the book trade. The "literary underground": political libels, philosophical pornography, pornographic philosophy, and other peculiar genres.
- James Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe*, Chapter 3 (pp. 81-122)
 Robert C. Darnton, "The Forbidden Bestsellers of Prerevolutionary France," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 43:1 (October 1989): 17-45.
 Jean-Baptiste de Boyer (?), *Thérèse philosophe* (selections in Robert Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* 249-53, 276-8, 280-289, 299).
- 10/14 No class (Monday Schedule)
- 10/16 *Societies and Secret Societies* — Social groups, both public and covert; reading societies, patriotic societies, and dinner societies; the Masonic movement and its role in fostering ideals of social equality and political participation.
- Lessing, "Ernst and Falk: Dialogues for Freemasons" in Lessing, *Nathan the Wise, Minna von Barnhelm, and Other Writings* 277-308.
 Margaret C. Jacob, "The Enlightenment Redefined: The Formation of Modern Civil Society," *Social Research* 58:2 (1991): 475-495.
- 10/21 **Midterm**

IV. Diderot and the *Encyclopédie*

- 10/23 *The Idea of the Encyclopédie* — Diderot, D'Alembert, and the struggle to produce the *Encyclopédie*; the theory of knowledge that underlies it; the ideal of the *philosophe*.
- D'Alembert, "Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia"
 Diderot, "The Encyclopedia" in *Rameau's Nephew and Other Works* pp. 277-307
 César Chesneau Du Marsais, "Philosopher"
- 10/28 *Politics and Society* — A brief survey of the political and social ideas of the *Encyclopédie*.
- "Political Authority" (Diderot)
 "Political Economy", in Rousseau, *The Social Contract and the Discourses* (ed. G.D.H. Cole) 208-242.
 "Natural Equality" (de Jaucourt)
 "Natural Rights" (Diderot)
 "Law of Nature or Natural Law" (d'Argis)
- 10/30 *Materialism and Morality* — Diderot's later career; the implications of Epicureanism; spider webs and bee swarms as models of the mind; how clavichords might learn to play themselves, hook up with other clavichords, and make baby clavichords.
- Diderot, "D'Alembert's Dream" in *Rameau's Nephew and Other Works* pp. 92-175.

- 11/4 *A Dialogue with a Madman* — An examination of one of the most remarkable books written in the eighteenth (and, for that matter, any) century: *Rameau's Nephew*.

Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew* in *Rameau's Nephew and Other Works* pp. 8-87.

V. Towards a Science of Society: the Scottish Moralists

- 11/6 *Self-Interest and Sympathy* — Bernard Mandeville argues that private vices can produce public virtues. Francis Hutcheson disagrees and, in the process, lays the foundation for what has come to be known as Scottish Moral Philosophy.

Bernard Mandeville, Selections from *Fable of the Bees*
Frances Hutcheson, Selections from "Remarks Upon The Fable of the Bees."
Frances Hutcheson, Selections from *System of Moral Philosophy*
Adam Smith, Selections from *Theory of Moral Sentiments*
- 11/11 *Economics, Politics, and History* — A sketch of the relationship between economics and political development in Scottish moral philosophy.

Hume, "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences," in Hume, *Essays*.
Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (selections).
Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (selections from Book III).
- 11/13 *Liberty in the Modern World* — Scottish moralists wrestle with the problem of what will become of public virtue in a world in which private interests have come to have greater and greater significance.

Adam Smith, Selections from *The Wealth of Nations*
Adam Ferguson, Selections from *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*.

VI. Exploring the Limits of Enlightenment

- 11/18 *Other Peoples, Other Customs* — Voyages of exploration and the issue of colonialism; travellers tell of peoples whose lives are quite different from that of Europeans; Diderot reflects on the implications of this for conventional notions of morality.

Abbé Raynal, Selections from *The Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies*
Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 164-178)
Diderot, "Supplement to Bougainville's *Voyage*" in *Rameau's Nephew and Other Works* pp. 179-228
- 11/20 *Racism and Slavery* — Eighteenth century theories of race; the campaign against slavery; racism and the Enlightenment.

David Hume, Extract from "Of National Character"
Montesquieu, Selections from *Spirit of the Laws* Chapter XV
"Negro (Natural History)," (Formey), *Encyclopedia*
"Negroes (Trade)," (Romain), *Encyclopedia*
Thomas Jefferson, Selections from *Notes on the State of Virginia*
Abbé Raynal, Selections from *The Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies*
Joseph Priestley, *A Sermon on the Subject of the Slave Trade*
- 11/25 *Women and the Enlightenment* — Not all members of the "Republic of Letters" were men; the implications of this for theories of education and notions of political rights.

"Woman (Ethics)," [Desmahis], (*Encyclopedia*)
"Woman (Jurisprudence)," [Boucher d'Argis], *Encyclopedia*

“Woman” (Anthropology), [Barthez], *Encyclopedia*
Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* Chapter IX (pp. 116-123).
Condorcet, “On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship.”
Olympe de Gouges, *The Rights of Women*

VII. Enlightenment & Revolution: Europe in the 1780s

12/2 **Revisions Due**

12/2 *France: Towards the Tennis Court* — Louis XVI calls the Estates Assembly to Versailles to resolve the problem of the French national debt. Looking for place to meet, the representatives of the Third Estate find their way onto the royal tennis court, while — back in Paris — the crowd around the Bastille turns nasty.

Selections from Abbé Sieyès, *What is the Third Estate?*
“Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen”

12/9 *Prussian Arguments about Enlightenment and Revolution* — In Prussia, various enlighteners offer diverging assessments of the relationship between Enlightenment and Revolution.

Johann Heinrich Tieftrunk, “On the Influence of Enlightenment on Revolutions,” in Schmidt, ed., *What is Enlightenment?* 217-224 [Mugar Electronic Reserves].
Johann Adam Bergk, “Does Enlightenment Cause Revolutions?” in Schmidt, ed., *What is Enlightenment?* 225-231 [Mugar Electronic Reserves].
Immanuel Kant, “An Old Question Raised Again: Is the Human Race Constantly Progressing?” in Kant, *The Contest of the Faculties* [Mugar Electronic Reserves].

12/4 *England: Building the New Jerusalem* — English friends of the French Revolution, surveying a world in which the prospect for liberty seems to be growing ever brighter, have visions of a New Jerusalem in England’s green and pleasant land. English enemies of the French Revolution make life difficult for them. After his laboratory is destroyed by a mob, Joseph Priestley seeks utopia in the wilds of Pennsylvania.

Richard Price, “Discourse on Love of Our Country.”
Edmund Burke, Selections from *Reflections on the Revolution in France*
Thomas Paine, Selections from *The Rights of Man*
Joseph Priestley, *Letters to the Right Honorable Edmund Burke* 69-73

Final Examination: Tuesday, December 16 from 3:00-5:00 PM

Schedule for the Wikipedia Revision Project

- Beginning September 9: post suggestions for revisions to the existing Wikipedia page “Age of Enlightenment” and linked pages (hereafter “Wikipedia Enlightenment pages”) as well as proposals for additional pages to the project wiki on the course Blackboard site.
- Before September 16: complete the Wikipedia Online Orientation @ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Training/For_students.
- Between September 16 – November 1: on the relevant Wikipedia “Talk” pages propose corrections and/or additions to at least five source citations on existing Wikipedia Enlightenment pages. If there are no objections, proceed to make these changes.
- By October 28: post a proposal for the revisions you plan to undertake as your course project to the “Wiki Projects” discussion forum on the course Blackboard site.
- Between October 29 and November 6, read and comment on your classmates’ proposals.
- On November 7 post a *brief* description of your proposed edits to the relevant Talk page on the Wikipedia and begin preparing a version of your project in your Sandbox.
- By December 1, move your revisions onto the relevant Wikipedia page.