

The European Enlightenment

HI 215/PO 393/PH412

Spring Term 2018
MWF 9:05-9:55AM, Fuller 123
Office Hours: Monday 3-4:30; Wednesday 12:30-2

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This course offers an overview of the European Enlightenment. We will be exploring the transformation of European culture and society between the last decades of the seventeenth century and the end of the eighteenth century. While focusing primarily on issues in the area of intellectual history, we will also examine the political and social context of the Enlightenment, as well as its broader implications.

Readings will be quite diverse in their concerns, their style, and their approach. Texts assigned include political tracts, philosophical essays, theological treatises, coffee house broadsheets, 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).

Course Structure and Requirements

This semester I will be experimenting with “flipping” this course. In place of lectures, I have uploaded a series of thirty-five minute lectures (mostly by me, but in a few cases by others) to the course’s Blackboard site. You can either stream them from Blackboard or download them. If possible, listen to them before doing the reading, since they provide a context for the materials discussed in class.

There will be a mid-term examination on March 2 and a final exam is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, May 9 between 9-11 AM. 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. The questions for both exams will be written, in part, by students using the wiki that is available on the course’s Blackboard site.

Finally, I will be making use of Blackboard’s “Journals” function to give you a way to respond individually to the online lectures, assigned readings, and class discussions. Each week you will be asked to post brief reflections on what you see as the most important questions that we have been exploring (for more information on what is expected, see the “Research Journal” section of the Blackboard site)

The final grade for the course will be computer as follows: class participation and research journals 30%, midterm 30%, and final examination 40%

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.

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, 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 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.

Students with learning disabilities that require adjustments in course arrangements should contact me by February 2.

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).

Readings

The following books have been ordered from the Boston University bookstore.

Issac Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* (Penguin)
Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia* (University of Chicago)
Denis Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew and other Works* (Hackett)
Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Nathan the Wise: With Related Documents* (Bedford)

The total list price for new paperback editions comes to \$81.15, but used copies should be available for many of these items (in the case of the Diderot and Lessing texts, be sure to purchase editions from the listed publishers, since these editions contain additional material not found in other versions).

The remainder of the course readings can be accessed in the "Course Materials" section of the course's Blackboard site. Updates on reading materials and other matters related to the course will be posted to the Announcements section of the site. Please check it at least once a week.

Schedule of Lectures and Reading

Items marked with an asterisk are available on the Blackboard site.

Introduction & Course Overview

Lecture 1: The Question of Enlightenment

1/18 *What was the Enlightenment?*— A brief overview of the Enlightenment; Enlightenment as process and period; differing approaches.

Ernst Cassirer, "Enlightenment" in *The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* 547-552*
James Schmidt, "Enlightenment," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2nd Edition.*
Simon Schaffer, "Re:Enlightenment" ([4 minute YouTube video](#))*

I. The Political Context: Europe in the 1680s

Lecture 2: Europe in the 1680s

1/22 *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, "Benevolent Despotism" in Kramnick, 452-459 [Note: the title used in the Kramnick reader is anachronistic; it is preferable to refer to this its original title: "Essay on the Forms of Government"].

1/24 *Protestant Anxieties* — 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;

Louis XIV, "Revocation of the Edict of Nantes"*

Bayle, Selections from *Miscellaneous Thoughts on the Comet of 1680 & Philosophical Commentary on the Words of Jesus Christ, "Compel Them to Come In"* in Kramnick, 75-81

- 1/26 *The Glorious Revolution* — Locke on religion and politics; the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688 and its consequences.
- Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 395-404)
- Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 81-89)

II. Toleration, Heterodoxy, and Dissent

Lecture 3: Scientific Inquiry, Religious Controversy, and Political Dissent

- 1/29 & 31 *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, in Kramnick 97-100.
- Toland, Selections from *Christianity Not Mysterious**
- Anthony Collins, *A Discourse of Freethinking* (selections in Kramnick, 101-105)
- Rousseau, “Profession of Faith of a Savoyard Vicar” (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 134-139).
- Priestley, Letter to Dr. Horsley (in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 155-60).
- Paine, Selections from *The Age of Reason* (in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 174-180)
- Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, “On the Proof of the Spirit and Of Power,” in *Lessing’s Theological Writings* 51-56.*
- 2/2 *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.
- Anonymous, *The Treatise of the Three Impostors* (selections).*
- Julien Offray de la Mettrie, *Man, A Machine* (selection in Kramnick, 202-209).
- Baron D’Holbach, *Common Sense, or Natural Ideas Opposed to the Supernatural* (selections in Kramnick, 140-50)

Lecture 4: Voltaire and the Campaign Against Fanaticism

- 2/5 *Voltaire in England* — Voltaire’s journey to England, how it influenced him, and how he used it to present an image of a different way to live.
- Voltaire, *Letters on the English* (aka *Philosophical Letters*) Letters I, V-XIV*
- 2/7 *Voltaire versus L’Infâme* — *The Philosophical Dictionary* and Voltaire’s campaign against fanaticism in general and Christianity in particular.
- Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*, articles on “The Ecclesiastical Ministry,” “Fanaticism,” “Religion,” “Sect,” “Superstition,” “Tolerance,” “Democracy,” “Equality,” “Fatherland,” (Kramnick, 115-131, 416-421)
- Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary* articles on “Enthusiasm,” “Faith,” “Fraud,” “Freedom of Thought,” “Morality,” “Prejudices,” “Theist,” “Virtue”*

- 2/9 *Voltaire and the Cause of Toleration* — The case of Jean Calas and Voltaire’s efforts on behalf of religious toleration
 Voltaire, Selections from *Treatise on Tolerance in Candide and Other Writings* (ed. Haskell M. Block) 357-372.*

III. The Public Uses of Reason

Lecture 5: Academies and the Quest for Useful Knowledge

- 2/12 *Academies and the Scientific Community* — The new prestige of science; the significance of academies in organizing and advancing scientific investigations
 Voltaire, [*Letters on the English \(or Philosophical Letters\)*](#) Letters XIII-XIV.
- 2/14 *Science and its Publics* — The public fascination with science in general and electricity in particular; Benjamin Franklin and the lightning rod
 Simon Schaffer, “Science and the English Enlightenment,” ([27 minute YouTube video](#))
 (Newton, “Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy (in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 43-47
 Franklin, Selections from *Experiments and Observations in Electricity**
 Priestley, *History and Present State of Electricity* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 69-73)

Lecture 6: Coffehouses and Salons

- 2/16 & 20 *Coffee Houses* — How coffee houses became the centers for reading and discussion, anti-coffee propoganda, the role of Addison and Steele, and the concept of “public opinion.”
 Lawrence Klein, “Coffehouse Civility, 1660-1714: An Aspect of Post-Courtly Culture in England” *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 59:1, 1996; 30-51.*
 M. P., *A Character of Coffee and Coffee-Houses* (1661)*
The Vertue of the Coffee Drinke (1670)*
A Broad-Side against Coffee; or, the Marriage of the Turk (1672)*
The Coffee House or News-Mongers Hall (1672)*
 Well-willer., *The Women’s Petition against Coffee* (1674)*
The Mens Answer to the Womens Petition against Coffee (1674)*
 Charles II, *By the King. A Proclamation for the Suppression of Coffee-Houses* (1675)*
 Charles II, *By the King. An Additional Proclamation Concerning Coffee-Houses* (1676)*
At Amsterdammable Coffee-House (1684)*
 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)*
- 2/21 *Salons* — The rise of salon society in France; the role of women in the management of the salons; Rousseau’s views of them; historical discussions of their importance.
 D’Alembert, “Portrait of Mlle. De Lespinasse”*
 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* (Kramnick, 363-9)
 Antoine Lilti, “The Kingdom of Politesse: Salons and the Republic of Letters in Eighteenth-Century Paris,” *Republic of Letters* I:1 (May 2009) 1-11*

Lecture 7: Secret Societies and the Clandestine Book Trade

- 2/23 *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”*
Margaret C. Jacob, “The Enlightenment Redefined: The Formation of Modern Civil Society,” *Social Research* 58:2 (1991): 475–495.*
- 2/26 & 2/28 *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.
- Voltaire, “Liberty of the Press” (in Kramnick, 421-424).
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).*
- 3/2 **Midterm Exam**
- 3/3- 3/11 **Spring Break**

IV. Denis Diderot: the *Encyclopédie* and After

Lecture 8: Diderot and the *Encyclopédie*

- 3/12 *The Idea of the Encyclopédie* — Diderot, d’Alembert, and the struggle to produce the *Encyclopedia*; the ideal of the *philosophe*.
- D’Alembert, “Reflections on the Present State of the Republic of Letters,” (in Kramnick, 7-17)
D’Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia* pp. 3-59, 106-128
[César Chesneau Dumarsais], “Philosopher” (in Kramnick, 21-3)
D’Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia* 1-59,
- 3/14 & 16 *The Systematization of Knowledge* — the ordering of human knowledge and the organization of the *Encyclopédie*
- D’Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia* 60-105, 143-164
Diderot, “The Encyclopedia” in *Rameau's Nephew and Other Works* pp. 277-307

Lecture 9: Dreaming Philosophers and Crazy Musicians: Diderot’s Later Career

- 3/19 *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.

- 3/21 & 23 *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 (you might also want to consult: Diderot, [Rameau's Nephew / Le neveu de Rameau: a multi-media bilingual edition](#))

V. Towards a Science of Society: the Scottish Moralists

Lecture 10: The Scottish Enlightenment and the Origins of Social Theory

- 3/26 & 28 *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, *Fable of the Bees* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 242-54).
- Frances Hutcheson, Selections from “Remarks Upon The Fable of the Bees.”*
- Frances Hutcheson, *System of Moral Philosophy* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 275-80).
- Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*(selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 280-87)
- 3/30 *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*.*
- Hume, “Of Luxury” (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 491-5).
- Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 378-80).
- Adam Ferguson, *Principles of Moral and Political Science* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 380-2).
- Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 505-515).
- Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (selections from Book III).*
- 4/2 *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* (selections from Book V)*
- Adam Ferguson, Selections from *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*.*

VI. The Limits of Enlightenment

Lecture 11: New Worlds, Strange Peoples, and Peculiar Customs

- 4/4 *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, Selections from *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* (Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 164-178)
- Diderot, “Supplement to Bougainville’s Voyage” in *Rameau's Nephew and Other Works* pp. 179-228

4/6 & 4/9 *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, Notes on the State of Virginia (selections in Kramnick, 657-668).
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**
Thomas Paine, “African Slavery in America” (selections in Kramnick, 645-48)

Podcast: Mary Wollstonecraft

4/11 *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.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* (selections in Kramnick, 568-579)
Catherine McCaulay, *Letters on Education* (selections in Kramnick, 591-601)
Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (selections in Kramnick 618-628)
Condorcet, “On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship.”*
Olympe de Gouges, *The Rights of Women* (selections in Kramnick, 609-618)

VII. Some Consequences: Europe in the 1780s

Lecture 12: The Enlightenment in Germany: Lessing and Mendelssohn

4/13 & 18 *Germany: Living the Enlightenment* — The friendship between Moses Mendelssohn and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and what it suggests about the prospect for the mutual enlightenment of Christians and Jews.

Mendelssohn, Letter to J. C. Lavater of December 12, 1769 in M. Samuel, *Memoirs of Moses Mendelssohn*. 48-67*
Lessing, *Nathan the Wise* 23-115.
Mendelssohn, “On Lessing,” in *Nathan the Wise* 148-151

Lecture 13: An Age of Revolutions

4/20 & 23 *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 is restless.

Beaumarchais, *The Marriage of Figaro* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable* 23-25)
Selections from Abbé Sieyès, *What is the Third Estate?**
“Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen,” (in Kramnick, 466-69)

4/25 & 27 *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.

Richard Price, “Discourse on Love of Our Country.”*
Thomas Paine, Selections from *The Rights of Man* (Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 469-73)

Joseph Priestley, "Of the Prospect for the Enlargement of Liberty, Civil and Religious, opened by the Revolution in France" (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 382-7*

Lecture 14: Legacies of the Enlightenment

4/30 & 5/2 *Contemporary Answers to the Question "What is Enlightenment?"* — A parting survey of a few of the ways in which eighteenth-century thinkers characterized their age, and some reflections on their hopes for ours.

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 Kramnick, 1-7)

Condorcet, *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Human Mind* (selections in Kramnick, 26-38).

Final Examination: Wednesday, May 9, 9-11 AM