

The European Enlightenment

HI314/PO395

Fall Term 2008
Tuesday & Thursday 3:30-5, CAS 314
Office Hours: Tues. 12:30-2, Thurs. 1:30-3

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This course offers an overview of the European Enlightenment. It traces the transformation of European culture and society between the last decades of the seventeenth century and the end of the eighteenth century. Attention will be given both to material from the period and to subsequent discussions by historians. While the course will focus chiefly on issues in the area of intellectual history, we will also consider the political and social impact of the Enlightenment.

Readings for the course will be rather 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).

The goal of the course is to provide both an extended contact with the works of one particular historical period and to survey the differing ways in which historians have approached this period. While the primary emphasis will be on making sense of the Enlightenment, it is also hoped that you will come away with a better appreciation of the differing ways in which historians go about doing their work.

Requirements and Grading Policy:

There will be a mid-term exam during class on October 16 and a final exam on Saturday, December 20 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.

Four papers will be assigned during the term. Students will be asked to write any two of these papers, responding to the topics assigned for either September 23 or October 16 *and* the topics assigned for either November 13 or December 9. Papers should be no more than 2500 words (approximately ten double-spaced pages) and must draw on at least five articles that have appeared in scholarly journals or edited volumes within the last thirty years. Further information is available on the course web site.

Finally, students are encouraged to post comments regarding the readings or issues raised in lectures to the “Discussion Forum” on the CourseInfo 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%, papers 30%, final examination 40%. Unexcused or frequent absences from lectures will result in a lowering of your grade. Particularly insightful comments made in class or posted to the CourseInfo discussion forum will also be taken into consideration in assigning final grades.

The College of Arts and Sciences requests that I remind you that the University has a policy against plagiarism. For a discussion of plagiarism and how to avoid it, see the relevant sections of the History Department Undergraduate Writing Guide, available on the History department website. This may also be the appropriate place to mention that 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.

Readings

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

Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge University Press)
Isaac Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* (Penguin)
Voltaire, *Philosophical Letters* (Hackett)
Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew and other Works* (Hackett)
Lessing, *Nathan the Wise* (Bedford)

In addition to these five books, much of the material used in the course will be available in the “Course Documents” section of the CourseInfo web site (these readings are indicated by an asterisk on the reading list). Other readings (indicated by a dagger on the reading list) will be available in the “External Links” section of the CourseInfo site. 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

Introduction

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

Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* 1-10

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

Peter Gay, “The Unity of the French Enlightenment,” in *The Party of Humanity* 114-132*

Robert Darnton, “George Washington’s False Teeth,” *New York Review of Books* March 27, 1997, 34-38.*

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

I. The Context: Europe in the 1680s

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

Outram, *The Enlightenment*, 28-46

Duc de Saint-Simon, “The Court of Louis XIV” in *Internet Modern History Sourcebook* (available in the “External Links” section of the CourseInfo web site)†

Duchess of Orleans, “Versailles Etiquette,” in *Internet Modern History Sourcebook* (available in the “External Links” section of the CourseInfo web site)†

Frederick the Great, “Benevolent Despotism” (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 452-458)

9/11 *The Protestant Crisis and 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 offensive aimed at undoing the Reformation; Locke on religion and politics; the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688 and its consequences.

Louis XIV, “Revocation of the Edict of Nantes,” *Internet Modern History Sourcebook* (available in the “External Links” section of the CourseInfo web site)†

Bayle, *Miscellaneous Thoughts on the Comet of 1680* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 75-80).

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

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

Outram, *The Enlightenment* 109-125

Daniel Defoe, Selection from *Robinson Crusoe* 91-99*

Newton, Letter to Richard Bentley, in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 97-100

Toland, Selections from *Christianity Not Mysterious**

- Collins, *A Discourse of Freethinking* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 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.*
- 9/18 *Pantheism, Atheism, and the "Impostor" Theory* — A tour of some of the more radical varieties of religious heterodoxy, with a particular emphasis on the growing suspicion that organized religion may only be a tool for political oppression; the underground history of the *Treatise of the Three Impostors*, perhaps the most notorious book of its day.
- Anonymous, *The Treatise of the Three Impostors* (selections).*
- Julien Offray de la Mettrie, *Man, A Machine* (selection in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 202-209).
- Baron D'Holbach, *Common Sense, or Natural Ideas Opposed to the Supernatural* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 140-50)
- Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 150-155)
- 9/23 *Voltaire versus L'Infâme* — The career of François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire and his long campaign against fanaticism in general and Christianity in particular.
- Voltaire, *Philosophical Letters* 1-4, 15-50.
- Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*, articles on "The Ecclesiastical Ministry," "Fanaticism," "Religion," "Sect," "Superstition," "Tolerance," "Democracy," "Equality," "Fatherland," (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 115-131, 416-421)
- Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary* articles on "Enthusiasm," "Faith," "Fraud," "Freedom of Thought," "Morality," "Prejudices," "Theist," "Virtue"*
- Voltaire, Selections from *Treatise on Tolerance in Candide and Other Writings* (ed. Haskell M. Block) 357-372.*

First Paper Due

III. The Transformation of Public Life

- 9/25 *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.
- Outram, *The Enlightenment* 93-108
- Voltaire, *Philosophical Letters* 93-100.
- Newton, "Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy (in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 43-47.
- Condorcet, *Historical Picture of the Human Mind* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 64-69)
- Franklin, Selections from *Experiments and Observations in Electricity**
- Priestley, *History and Present State of Electricity* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 69-73)
- 9/30 *Coffee Houses* — How coffee became the Enlightenment's drug of choice, how coffee houses became the centers for reading and discussion, and what all this has to do with the concept of "public opinion."
- Outram, *The Enlightenment* 11-27.
- "The Character of a Coffeehouse"*
- 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)*
- 10/2 *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; what bothered Rousseau about them.
- D’Alembert, “Portrait of Mlle. De Lespinasse” (electronic text)*
 Readings on salons in the *Modern History Sourcebook* (available in the “External Links” section of the CourseInfo web site).†
 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 363-9).
 Dena Goodman, “Enlightenment Salons: The Convergence of Female and Philosophic Ambitions,” *Eighteenth Century Studies* 22:3 (Spring 1989) 329-350 [available through JSTOR in the “External Links” section of the CourseInfo web site].†
- 10/7 *Writers, Publishers, and Booksellers* — The revolution in reading; how a living of sorts could be made in the book trade. The “literary underground”: philosophical pornography, pornographic philosophy, and political libels.
- Voltaire, “On the Horrible Danger of Reading,” in *Candide and Other Writings* 462-4.*
 Voltaire, “Liberty of the Press” from the *Philosophical Dictionary* (in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 421-424).
 Robert Darnton, “The High Enlightenment and the Low-Life of Literature,” in *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* 1-40.*
 Jean-Baptiste de Boyer (?), *Thérèse philosophe* (selections in Robert Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* 249-53, 276-8, 280-289, 299).*
 Mathieu-François Pidansat de Mairobert (?), *Anecdotes About Mme la comtesse du Barry* (selections in Robert Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* 337-338, 351-366).*
- 10/9 *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.*
 Im Hof, *The Enlightenment* 118-149*
 Margaret Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* 143-161, 215-224.*
- 10/14 Monday Schedule - No Class
- 10/16 ***Mid-Term Examination***
 Second Paper Due

IV. Diderot and the *Encyclopédie*

- 10/21 *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, “Reflections on the Present State of the Republic of Letters,” (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 7-17)
 D’Alembert, “Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia” in *The Encyclopedia* (ed. Gendzier) pp. 1-43.*
 Diderot, “The Encyclopedia” in *Rameau’s Nephew and Other Works* pp. 277-307
 “Philosopher” (in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 21-3)
 Voltaire, “Philosopher” in *Philosophical Dictionary**
 Voltaire, “Of the Encyclopedia,” in *Candide and Other Writings* 482-4*

- Robert Darnton, “Philosophers Trim the Tree of Knowledge” in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Essays* 191-214*
- 10/23 *Politics and Society* — A brief tour of the political and social ideas of the *Encyclopedia*.
 “Political Authority” (Diderot)*
 “Political Economy” (Rousseau)*
 “Natural Equality” (de Jaucourt)*
 “Natural Rights” (Diderot)*
 “Law of Nature or Natural Law” (d’Argis)*
 “Luxury” (Saint-Lambert) *
- 10/28 *Materialism and Morality* — Diderot’s later career; his strange brand of materialist philosophy; 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
- 10/30 *A Dialogue with a Madman* — An examination of one of the strangest and most fascinating books from a century that was not lacking in them: *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

- 11/4 *The Battle of the Bees* — 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)
- 11/6 *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 on CourseInfo site).*
- 11/11 Veterans’ Day – No Class
- 11/13 *Liberty in the Modern World* — Scottish moralists wrestle with the problem of what will become of republican virtues in a world in which private interests have come to have greater and greater significance.
 Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*(selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 405-415)
 Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (selections from Book V on CourseInfo site)*
 Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (selections on CourseInfo site)*

Third Paper Due

VI. Exploring the Limits of Enlightenment

- 11/18 *Other Peoples, Other Customs* — Travelers bring back stories of people who behave differently than Europeans; the problem of colonies; Diderot reflects on the implications of this fact for conventional notions of sexual morality.
- Outram, *The Enlightenment* 47-59
 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* 424-430)
 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.
- Outram, *The Enlightenment* 60-76
 David Hume, “Of National Character” (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 629)
 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, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 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, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 645-48)
- 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.
- Outram, *The Enlightenment* 77-92
 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 568-579)
 “Woman (Ethics),” [Desmahis], (*Encyclopedia*)*
 “Woman (Jurisprudence),” [Boucher d’Argis], *Encyclopedia**
 Catherine McCaulay, *Letters on Education* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 591-601)
 Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 618-628)
 Condorcet, “On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship.”*
 Olympe de Gouges, *The Rights of Women* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 609-618)

VII. The Consequences: Europe in the 1780s

- 12/2 *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.
- 12/4 *France: Slouching Towards the Tennis Court* — Meanwhile, in France, the state is bankrupt, Beaumarchais writes a blockbuster, and Louis XVI calls the Estates Assembly to Versailles. Looking for a place to meet, the delegates of the Third Estate find their way

onto the royal tennis court, while, back in Paris, the crowd around the Bastille turns nasty. The rest (as they say) is history.

Outram, *The Enlightenment* 126-140

Beaumarchais, *The Marriage of Figaro* (selections in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 23-25)

Selections from Abbé Sieyès, *What is the Third Estate?**

“Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen,” (in Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 466-69)

12/9

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. Their reveries are interrupted by urban mobs. His laboratory destroyed in a riot, Joseph Priestley seeks utopia in the wilds of Pennsylvania.

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)

Fourth Paper Due

12/11

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.

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

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?” (Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* 1-7).

Final Examination, Saturday, December 20 from 3:00 –5:00 PM