

(Draft – may be slightly tweaked before the start of the spring 2022 semester)

The Age of Enlightenment

History 01:510:321

Spring 2022

Professor Jennifer M. Jones
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Monday, Thursday, 12:10-1:30 pm
CA-A1 (College Ave Campus)

Introduction to Course

What is Enlightenment? A question voiced most famously by Immanuel Kant in 1784 has intrigued historians ever since. Did the Enlightenment constitute a unified body of thought? What was the goal of the “Enlightenment project”? And how do we make sense of the origins, development, and enduring effects of this body of thought? Until the final third of the 20th century, intellectual historians dominated the study of the Enlightenment. Scholars such as Ernst Cassirer (1930s) and Peter Gay (1960s) studied the Enlightenment by focusing on a small coterie of intellectuals, the books and treatises they published, and the canonical debates in which they engaged. The Enlightenment belonged squarely in the history of ideas.

Yet, beginning in the early 1970s scholars began to question the standard narrative of the Enlightenment as an intellectual movement embodied solely in the writings of *philosophes* and philosophers. The call for a “social history of the Enlightenment” opened exciting new avenues for understanding the Enlightenment: How were the writings of the Enlightenment published and disseminated? How did the interrelated practices of reading, writing, and print culture shape the reception of the Enlightenment? What was the relationship of the “high” and “low” Enlightenment? Research in this vein focused on dissemination and popularization of the Enlightenment. The English translation of Jurgen Habermas’s *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* in 1989 further catalyzed Anglo-American historians’ research on the social practices that fostered the Enlightenment, leading them to introduce a new cast of characters – including female *salonnières*, freemasons, and café habitués – to studies of Enlightened sociability. More recently, attention to conceptions of race and “the exotic” have reconceptualized our understanding of the Enlightenment’s foundations and legacy. Collectively, over the past forty years these new questions and approaches have destabilized the traditional master narrative of the Enlightenment’s role in the West’s steady march towards modernization, secularization, individualism, and the ascendancy of reason. The Enlightenment has begun to look messier and less unitary.

This course organizes our study of the Enlightenment around a series of ongoing – and often contentious – debates. Men and women in the 18th century debated: How should “moderns” use and build upon the wisdom of the ancients? What is the boundary between religious faith and toleration? Are science and rationality antithetical to religious belief? Or, can one harmonize the insights of science and religious traditions? How should governments facilitate progress? What is the purpose of human social interactions (sociability)? What is the role of natural law? How can a society insure equality? And, how can individuals find happiness?

To understand these debates, we’ll roam throughout Europe – from London and Edinburgh to Milan and St. Petersburg -- with Paris as our home base. We’ll listen in on the conversations that animated the canonical writers of the Enlightenment – Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, Hume, Smith, Gibbon, Mendelssohn, Beccaria, and Kant, to name just a few of the luminaries. But we’ll also explore how less

well-known Europeans responded to the changing patterns of social, cultural, economic, and political life in eighteenth century. We'll explore the new ways that men and women read books, attributed new meaning to art, listened to music, debated how best to raise their children, and explained racial categories. To underscore the role of conversation and debate in the Enlightenment, students will participate in a "pop up" salon in the second half of the semester. Students will study the position of a key philosopher of the Enlightenment and come to our in-class "salon" prepared to debate key topics with fellow philosophes and salon guests.

Our exploration of the Enlightenment will also stimulate an important conversation about the legacy of the Enlightenment in our culture today. Are we still children of the Enlightenment? Should we try to be? OR, has the Enlightenment left us a darker legacy? Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker's best-selling 2018 book, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*, makes the case for returning to core principles of the Enlightenment. Yet, many historians argue that Pinker has taken the Enlightenment out of context and has created a fantasy of a unified Enlightenment that never actually existed. These historians assert that we need to re-historicize the Enlightenment by emphasizing the contentious debates and intellectual conflicts that gave shape to the Enlightenment. By joining this course, you will get a chance to take part in this debate over the meaning and uses of the Enlightenment.

Broad topics	Specific themes
The Birth of Modernity: The Ancients and the Moderns Science and rationality: Newtonian science Religion and toleration: Religion, rationality, skepticism Progress and happiness Sociability and the public sphere The Individual and the Self	Commerce, luxury, and political economy Books and readers Childhood and Education The role and nature of women Criminal law reform Race and empire Enlightenment and Revolution The legacy of the Enlightenment

Books for purchase at the Rutgers Barnes and Noble Book:

Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment*, 4th edition
 Margaret Jacob, *Enlightenment, a brief history with documents*, 2nd edition
 Voltaire, *Candide*, translated by Burton Raffel

Assignments and grading:

Five Canvas reflection posts (5 points each)	25%
Midterm exam	20%
Salon debate project	
• Working papers	20%
• Performance	5%
Final exam	20%
Participation	10%

Weekly Schedule

Week One: Introductions

Thursday, January 20 Introduction

Week Two: Foundations

Monday, January 24 Foundational themes and concepts

Thursday, January 27 Building a Bridge to the 18th century

Week Three: The Satirical Enlightenment

Monday, January 31 Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*

Thursday, February 3 Voltaire's *Candide*

Week Four: Science and Enlightenment

Monday, February 7 John Locke

Thursday, February 10 Isaac Newton

Week Five: The Birth of the Public Sphere

Monday, February 14 Reading revolutions

Thursday, February 17 Coffee houses, salons, and masonic lodges

Week Six: The Enlightenment in print

Monday, February 21 Reading revolutions

Thursday, February 24 The *Encyclopédie*

Week Seven: Enlightened Despots and the Social Contract

Monday, February 28 Reforming monarchs:

Frederick the Great of Prussia, Catherine the Great of Russia

Thursday, March 3 Rousseau's reach toward republicanism

Week Eight: Fiction, Feeling, and Modern Subjectivity

Monday, March 7 Jean-Jacque Rousseau, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Thursday, March 10 Midterm

Spring Break: No class on March 14 and 17

Week Nine: Commerce, Luxury, and Political Economy

Monday, March 21 The Scottish Enlightenment

Thursday, March 24 Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*

Week Ten: The Enlightened parent, the Enlightened child

Monday, March 28 Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile*

Thursday, March 31

Week Eleven: Criminal Law Reform

Monday, April 4 The Academy of Fisticuffs, Milan

Thursday, April 7 Cesare Beccaria

Week Twelve: Race and Empire

Monday, April 11 Comte de Buffon

Thursday, April 14 Abbé Raynal

Week Thirteen: Debating women's place

Monday, April 18 Condorcet

Thursday, April 21 Mary Wollstonecraft

Week Fourteen: The Salon

Monday, April 25 Salon dress rehearsal

Thursday, April 28 "Pop-up" salon

Week Fifteen: Legacy of the Enlightenment

Monday, May 2

Final exam during the scheduled final exam period (Date TBD)

Key dates:

January 20, first day of class

March 14, 17, No class, Spring Break

May 2, last day of class