

HIST 426/526: CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Prof. Ian F. McNeely – University of Oregon – Spring 2007

CRNs: 35566/35567

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Description

The Enlightenment was one of the most dynamic periods in European history and had an enormous impact on the entire modern world. It gave us, among other things, attitudes toward science, religion, history, economics, sex, government, and education that still dominate our thinking and institutions today. The Enlightenment spans the period from roughly the 1690s through the 1780s in Europe and America. Its chronological bookends in the realm of political history are the Glorious Revolution in England in 1688 and the French Revolution in 1789. In the realm of ideas, the Enlightenment arguably began with John Locke's writings ca. 1690 and culminated in Immanuel Kant's three Critiques in the 1780s.

Our course, however, focuses on the realm of culture, and in particular literate culture. We'll begin with an entertaining and insightful urban ethnography of prerevolutionary Paris. We'll also be reading other, less canonical texts that are fascinating as bellwethers for broader cultural changes during this epoch.

This is a reading-intensive class: do not sign up for it unless you are, or are willing to become, a "textual learner." Scholars of the Enlightenment set models of clarity, elegance, and wit in prose writing that have not been rivaled since, and any cultural history of the period must attend, first and foremost, to the sheer profusion of written texts it produced.

Assignments

For undergraduates:

- Four unannounced quizzes (10% each, only *one* of which can be made up)
- Final exam (30%)
- Imitation exercise, ca. 10-12 pages, due Jun. 7 (30%) [[click here for more information](#)]

Graduate students are responsible for the final exam but not the other requirements, are expected to participate actively in class discussions (which means doing all the reading), and must submit a substantial historiographical essay (20-25 pages) on a theme chosen in consultation with me.

Books for purchase

- Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 2006)
- Louis-Sebastien Mercier, *Panorama of Paris*, ed. Jeremy Popkin (Penn State, 1999)
- Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *Letters* (Knopf, 1992)
- Julien Offroy de la Mettrie, *Man a Machine and Man a Plant* (Hackett, 1994)
- Laurent Dubois and John D. Garrigus, *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean 1789-1804* (St. Martins, 2006)

All the required readings will be on two-hour reserve at Knight library.

SCHEDULE

1. Cultural history

(4/3) Outram, ch. 1

(4/5) [Roger Schmidt, "Caffeine and the Coming of the Enlightenment," *Raritan* 23 no. 1 \(Summer 2003\): 129-149](#) [download PDF file]

2. The public sphere

(4/10) Outram, ch. 2; Mercier, 1-17

(4/12) Mercier, 23-92

3. Government

(4/17) Outram, ch. 3; Mercier, 92-165

(4/19) Mercier, 165-230

4. Europeanness

(4/24) Outram, ch. 4; Montagu vii-xxiv, 91-102

(4/26) Montagu, 102-162

5. Gender

(5/1) Outram, ch. 6; Montagu, 162-88, reread sections on Turkish women

(5/3) Montagu, 18-37, 376-78, 417-23, 467-72

6. Science

(5/8) Outram, ch. 7; La Mettrie, 1-15

(5/10) La Mettrie, 27-48

7. Religion

(5/15) Outram, ch. 8; La Mettrie, 48-76

(5/17) Georges Buffon, "The Nomenclature of Apes"

8. Slavery

(5/22) Outram, ch. 5; Dubois & Garrigus, 7-23

(5/24) Dubois & Garrigus, 47-85

9. Revolution

(5/29) Outram, ch. 9; Dubois & Garrigus, 24-40

(5/31) Dubois & Garrigus, 86-132

10. Conclusions

(6/5) [Encyclopédie](#) (read 3 articles of your choice)

(6/7) Conclusions