

History/Religious Studies 512

THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND ITS CRITICS

Fall 2017

Tues & Thurs, 9:30-10:45 a.m., B215 Van Vleck

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The Enlightenment is a contested idea not just among scholars but also in wider cultural debates today. What was it? Was there a single Enlightenment or many? Why did it happen where and when it did? What role did the Enlightenment play in creating the world we live in? Why have some people celebrated it as a source of all that's best in the modern world, while others have rejected it as a force for ill?

In this course we will ask and answer those questions, among others. We will engage with a period in European history—the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—that deeply shaped how people today think about such topics as religion, politics, nature, ethics, society, and the self. We will encounter some of the most articulate and widely-read writers of the era while also considering broader shifts in politics, society, culture, and mentalities.

Religion will play a central role in this course. That is because religion permeated most aspects of society and thought in early modern Europe, and the concerns of Enlightenment thinkers and their critics often had to do, directly or indirectly, with theological questions. Some partisans of Enlightenment rejected all established religion or tried to defuse its political power in order to create stable societies based on non-confessional norms. Others aimed to update and rearticulate their religious traditions in light of new circumstances, while still others repudiated such attempts. This course will equip you to think about these developments and their relevance for today.

Course Objectives

The primary aim of this course is to spark and nourish your fascination with the fields of Enlightenment studies and European intellectual history. If you invest time, thought, and hard work in the course, you can also expect to:

- learn how to think historically, growing attuned to the importance of context, causality, contingency, complexity, and change over time for understanding the past
- understand how and why scholars debate the past and how such debates relate to present-day concerns
- become a sharper, more perceptive reader of writings from the past in light of their historical contexts
- become a stronger writer of analytical and argumentative prose

Course Requirements

1. Attend and be prepared to participate in all class meetings. In opting to take this course you are committing yourself to come to class regularly. I will take attendance throughout the semester. If an illness or emergency forces you to miss a period, please email me in advance. Three or more unexcused absences will lower your final course grade.

We will discuss assigned readings almost every meeting and on a few days we will spend most of the period in class discussion. You must bring a hard copy of every reading to class. You are expected to read all required texts closely beforehand and to come ready to voice your insights and questions and to engage with those of your classmates. Readings listed as “recommended” on the schedule below are for those who wish to explore a subject further and potential sources for your papers.

On occasion you will be asked to do brief in-class writing exercises about readings or other class materials as a way to spur thought and discussion. Not all of these assignments will be collected, but those that are will be graded on a credit/no credit basis. Attendance and class participation count for 20% of your final grade.

2. Write four response papers of 250-300 words each, answering a specific question about the day's assigned readings. Questions will be posted on Learn@UW. You will have the option of writing on most texts and may choose which readings you respond to. The first paper must be turned in by September 26, the second by October 19, the third by November 7, the fourth by December 7. Response papers will be graded using the following criteria: (1) Did you answer the question clearly and directly? (2) Does your response reflect a close, careful reading of the relevant text(s)? (3) Is your paper based on the text itself rather than generalizations or things you may have read about the text elsewhere? (4) Is it written in clear, concise prose, free of errors? To get credit for a response paper, leave a copy in the Dropbox on Learn@UW before the start of the class period when the reading is due; the Dropbox closes at 9:30 a.m. sharp. No late papers accepted. Together, the four responses make up 20% of your final grade.

3. Write two analytical papers of 1700-1800 words (about 5 pages) each, due in hard and electronic copy at the beginning of class on October 10 and November 16, respectively. Each paper will address a question based on texts and themes that we will have discussed in class. Late papers will be lowered one grade for each day they are late (e.g., a B paper becomes a BC if turned in a day late, a C the next day, etc.). The first paper is worth 15% and the second, 20% of your final grade.

Rewrites: You may rewrite one or both of the above papers. To do so, you must talk with me by the next class day after I return the original version, preferably during office hours. We will agree on the revisions to be made and set a new due date, typically one week later. Rewriting a paper does not guarantee a higher grade. To raise your grade, you must revise your essay substantially, taking my comments into account and also making your own improvements. Your original paper and my comments on it must be turned in along with your revised essay.

4. Write a final paper of 1900-2100 words (about 6 pages), due in the Learn@UW Dropbox by 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 21. The essay question(s) will be handed out during the last week of class. The final counts for 25% of your final grade.

Grading Scale

All assignments and your final course grade will be calculated using the following scale:

93-100%=A	83-87%=B	70-77%=C	60-60%=F
88-92%=AB	78-82%=BC	60-70%=D	

Honors Credit

Students taking the course for honors credit will pursue an independent project in place of the second paper. This project may take the form of a longer paper (typically around 10 pages) on a topic arising out of course materials. For those with interests in art, media, or public presentations there are other possibilities. Please contact me by October 12 to discuss options and settle on a project.

Graduate Students

In lieu of the two analytical papers, graduate students will write either (A) two historiographical papers of 10-12 pages each on a topic chosen in consultation with me, due on October 10 and November 21, respectively, or (B) an article-length paper (10,000-12,00 words, including footnotes) based on original research, due on November 21. Please see me early in the semester to discuss possibilities. Graduate students will not write the response papers but they will write the final paper. Grade breakdown for graduate students is: Class participation, 20%; historiographical papers or article, 60%, final paper, 20%.

Disabilities and McBurney Students

If you are a McBurney student or have a disability that requires special accommodations, please let me know at the beginning of the semester and I will be happy to make arrangements.

Communication and Office Hours

I welcome meeting with students outside of class time. You are encouraged to come to office hours at any time during the semester, whether to discuss a question or problem raised by the course, to get help on a paper, to explore an idea, or simply to chat. I hold regular office hours on Tuesdays, 11:00-12:00 and Thursdays, 8:15-9:15, but if you have a schedule conflict at those times we can arrange another time to meet. Generally, the best way to reach me is via email (eric.carlsson@wisc.edu). I check email regularly and will try to respond within 24 hours. Often I can reply sooner than that, but on weekends response time may be up to 48 hours.

The History Lab

The History Lab (located in 4255 Mosse Humanities) is an excellent resource specifically for undergraduates writing history papers. Ph.D. students in history will help you regardless of your stage in the writing process—choosing a topic, conducting research, formulating a thesis, developing your argument, citing sources, revising your drafts, or even paragraph and sentence composition. You can sign up for a one-on-one consultation at <https://advising.wisc.edu/content/history-lab#info>.

Electronic Devices

A growing body of research suggests that students grasp concepts better, process information more thoughtfully, focus their attention more sharply, and—not surprisingly—earn better grades when they take notes with pen and paper rather than on a computer. And who of us with an open laptop before us is not tempted to surf, check messages, scan Facebook, etc.? For these reasons, I strongly encourage you to not to use computers in class. Cell phones should be silenced and put away during class.

Academic Integrity

UW-Madison takes academic integrity very seriously and so do I. Plagiarism—representing somebody else’s work as your own—will not be tolerated in this course. In your papers you must cite sources carefully, whether you repeat someone else’s exact words or paraphrase or draw on her or his ideas. All papers will be checked electronically for plagiarism. If you have specific questions about plagiarism and how to avoid it, please speak with me or consult http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html. Penalties for plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and other forms of cheating range from failing an assignment or a course to being expelled from the university. For university policies on academic misconduct, see <http://students.wisc.edu/doso/acadintegrity.html>.

Course Texts

The required books are available at local and online stores. Copies of each have also been placed on reserve at College Library. These works come in multiple English versions; please use the following editions:

John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. James Tully (Hackett, 1983)
Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, ed. Robert DeMaria (Penguin, 2001)
Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation*, ed. Nicholas Cronk (Oxford UP, 1994)
Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Nathan the Wise, with Related Documents*, trans. and ed. Ronald Schechter (Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2004)
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, trans. David Constantine (Oxford UP, 2012)

Many of our readings will come from articles and excerpts from longer works. These are available in the course reader, which you can purchase from the Letters & Science Copy Center, 6120 Sewell Social Sciences Building. Each text will also be posted on Learn@UW.

COURSE SCHEDULE

All required readings not from the books listed above are available in the course reader and on Learn@UW. Many recommended readings are posted online; some are available on reserve at College Library, as noted below. You will find full bibliographical information for the selections below in the reader’s table of contents (also available online).

Birth of the Secular Age (2011)

Sep 28 Toleration: Theory
John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689)

Recommended:
James H. Tully's introduction to the Hackett edition of Locke's *Letter* (1983)
Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752* (2006)

III. Revolutions of the Mind

Oct 3 Assault on the Ancients
Galileo Galilei, "Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina" (1615)
Francis Bacon, *Novum Organon* (1620)
René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* (1637)

Recommended:
Peter Harrison, *The Territories of Science and Religion* (2015) [on reserve]
Jerome J. Langford, *Galileo, Science and the Church* (3d ed., 1992) [on reserve]

Oct 5 Science and Newtonianism
Isaac Newton, *Principia* (1687), *Opticks* (1704), and Letter to Richard Bentley (1692)
Margaret C. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (rev ed., 2006)

Recommended:
Rob Iliffe, "The Religion of Isaac Newton" (2016)
Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (2000)

Oct 10 Reason's Limits **PAPER 1 DUE**
Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (1670)
Pierre Bayle, "David," in *Historical and Critical Dictionary* (1697, 1702)

Recommended:
Pierre Bayle, "Pyrrho," in *Historical and Critical Dictionary* (1697, 1702)
Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Savonarola to Bayle* (2003)

IV. The Transformation of Public Life

Oct 12 Books, Readers, and the Press
Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726)—start reading

Recommended:
Robert DeMaria's introduction to the Penguin Classics edition of *Gulliver* (2001)
T. C. W. Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe 1660-1789* (2002)

- Nov 30 Storm and Stress
 Ruth-Ellen B. Joeres, “Sturm und Drang” (2003)
 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774)—start reading
- Recommended:
 David Constantine’s introduction to the Oxford World Classics edition of *Werther* (2012)
 Tim Blanning, *The Romantic Revolution: A History* (2011) [on reserve]
- Dec 5 *The Sorrows of Young Werther*
 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774)—finish
- Dec 7 Enlightenment’s Enemies **Response 4 due**
 Johann Georg Hamann, “Biblical Reflections” (1758), “Golgotha and Scheblimini” (1784), and Letter to Christian Jacob Kraus (1784)
 Isaiah Berlin, *The Magus of the North* (1993)
- Recommended:
 Mark Lilla, “What Is Counter-Enlightenment?” (2003)

VIII. Conclusion

- Dec 12 The Enlightenment: Taking Stock
 Dale K. Van Kley, “The Varieties of Enlightened Experience” (2016)
- Recommended:
 Vincenzo Ferrone, *The Enlightenment: History of an Idea* (2015)
 David Hollinger, “The Enlightenment and the Genealogy of Cultural Conflict in the United States” (2001)
- Dec 21 **Final paper due in Learn@UW Dropbox by 1:00 p.m.**