

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

History/Religious Studies 411

THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND ITS CRITICS

Spring 2020

Tues & Thurs, 9:30-10:45, 474 Van Hise

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Office hours: Thursdays, 11:00-1:00, and by appointment

The Enlightenment is a contested notion not just among scholars but also in wider cultural debates today. What was it? Why did it happen where and when it did? Was there a single Enlightenment or many? Why have some celebrated the Enlightenment as a source of all that is 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 an era (c. 1650-1800) when norms that had shaped European life for many centuries faced unprecedented scrutiny. Long-held views on knowledge, nature, religion, politics, ethics, and how society should be ordered were challenged by bold new visions. Through their debates, Enlightenment thinkers and their critics shaped how many people today still think about such things. We will encounter some of the most articulate and influential figures of the time while also considering broader shifts in society, culture, and mentalities.

Religion will play a key role in this course. That is because religion touched most aspects of life in early modern Europe and the Enlightenment's central debates turned, directly or indirectly, on ultimate questions to which religious traditions had long given answers. A few rejected all established religion and sought a secular basis for living and ordering the world. Some aimed to transform their religious traditions in light of new ideas and circumstances. Critics of various stripes repudiated such attempts and set out alternative paths. This course will equip you to think historically about these developments.

### Course Objectives

This course aims to spark and nourish your fascination with the fields of Enlightenment studies and European intellectual and religious history. If you invest time, thought, and hard work in the course, you can also expect to:

- know key intellectual trends, flashpoints, personalities, and texts associated with the Enlightenment as well as current scholarly debates about them
- learn how to think historically, growing attuned to the importance of context, causality, contingency, complexity, and change over time for understanding the past
- learn how to construct strong historical arguments based on evidence and clear reasoning
- become a stronger writer of analytical and argumentative prose
- grow in the virtues of curiosity, open-mindedness, and intellectual humility

## Course Credit

This three-credit course meets for two 75-minute periods each week over the semester and carries the expectation that you will spend an average of three hours outside of class for each class meeting. In other words, plan to allot about six hours per week for reading, writing papers, and preparing for class meetings. Some weeks the work load will be heavier; other weeks it will be lighter.

## Course Requirements for Undergraduate Students

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. More than two unexcused absences will lower your class participation grade.

We will discuss assigned readings during most meeting and on a few days we will spend the whole period in class discussion. On occasion you will do brief in-class writing exercises to spur thought and discussion. 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. *You must bring a copy of texts to class on the day they will be discussed.*

You will receive a participation grade (on a 10-point scale) three times during the semester: on February 20, March 31, and April 30. Attendance and class participation count for 20% of your final grade.

2. Write four 250-300-word responses to assigned readings. Questions for each reading will be posted on Canvas. You will have the option to write on most texts and may choose which readings you respond to. If you wish, you may write up to six response papers; in that case the four highest grades will count. The first response must be turned in by February 6, the second by March 3, the third by March 31, the fourth by April 28. 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, thoughtful reading of the whole 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 (such as the Web)?
- (4) Is it written in clear and concise prose, polished for grammar and style?

To get credit for a response paper, leave it on Canvas before the class when the reading is due; the submission folder 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 on Canvas before class on February 25 and April 7, 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 is worth 20% of your final grade.

Rewrites: You may rewrite one or both of the analytical 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 initiating your own improvements.

4. Write a final paper of 1900-2100 words (about 6 pages), due on Canvas by 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 5. The essay prompts will be handed out during the last week of class. The final counts for 25% of your final grade.

### **Course Requirements for Graduate Students**

In lieu of the three 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 March 5 and April 28, respectively, or (B) an article-length paper (10,000-12,000 words, including footnotes) based on original research, due on April 28. Please see me early in the semester to discuss possibilities. Graduate students will write the four response papers. Grade breakdown for graduate students is: class participation, 15%; response papers, 15%; historiographical papers or article, 70%.

### **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	0-59%=F
88-92%=AB	78-82%=BC	60-69%=D	

### **Honors Credit**

Students taking the course for honors credit will pursue an independent project in place of the first or second papers. This may take the form of a longer paper (typically 10-12 pages) on a topic arising out of course materials; for those with interests in art, film, or other media, there are other possibilities. Please contact me by the week of February 11 to discuss options.

### **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 you've encountered in the course, to get help on a paper, to explore an idea, or simply to chat. I hold regular office hours on Thursdays, 11:00-1:00, but if you have a schedule conflict then, let me know and we can arrange another time to meet. In general the best way to reach me is by email ([eric.carlsson@wisc.edu](mailto: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.

### **Learning Accessibility**

If you have an instructional need that requires accommodations, please inform me of this at the start of the semester or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. I will then either work directly with you or coordinate with the McBurney Center to provide reasonable accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

## The History Lab

The History Lab is an excellent resource for undergraduates writing history papers. Trained Ph.D. students in history will help you regardless of your stage in the writing process—formulating a thesis, developing your argument, citing sources, revising your drafts, and more. The History Lab is located in 4255 Mosse Humanities Building. 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 isn't tempted to check social media, play games, shop, etc.? For these reasons, and because this course runs on face-to-face interaction, I strongly encourage you not to use computers in class. Cell phones should be silenced and put away during class.

## Academic Integrity

By enrolling in this course, you agree to uphold the high academic standards of UW-Madison. No form of cheating, unauthorized collaboration, or plagiarism—representing somebody else's work as your own—or helping others commit these acts will be tolerated. In your papers you must cite sources carefully, whether you repeat someone else's exact words or paraphrase or draw on their ideas. If you have specific questions about plagiarism and how to avoid it, please speak with me or consult <https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/assignments/quoting/sources/>. Penalties for academic misconduct range from failing an assignment or a course to being suspended from the university. For university policies on academic misconduct, see <https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/>.

## 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 as a PDF file on Canvas.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Unless otherwise indicated, all required readings not from the books listed above are available in the course reader and on Canvas. The recommended readings are also posted on Canvas. You will find full bibliographical information for the selections below in the reader's table of contents and on Canvas.

### I. Introduction: What Is Enlightenment?

- Jan 21            Course Introduction  
Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?"
- Jan 23            Enlightenment Now  
Steven Pinker, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*, 7-14, 29-35  
Caroline Winterer, "Buck up, everyone! We are riding along the Enlightenment's long path of progress" [link on Canvas]  
Peter Harrison, "The Enlightenment of Steven Pinker" [link on Canvas]
- Recommended:*  
Lynn Hunt and Margaret C. Jacob, "Enlightenment Studies"
- Jan 28            Enlightenment Then  
Margaret C. Jacob, *The Secular Enlightenment*, 1-5, 33-52  
David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna*, 1-5, 19-21
- Recommended:*  
Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750*, 1-22  
Samuel Moyn, "Mind the Enlightenment"

### II. Confession, Conflict, and the Quest for Order

- Jan 30            Religion and Society in the Seventeenth Century  
Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe*, 1-12, 99-143
- Recommended:*  
Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700*, 228-287
- Feb 4            Toleration: Practice  
Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe*, 144-171, 333-358
- Recommended:*  
Ole Peter Grell and Roy Porter, "Toleration in Enlightenment Europe"



#### IV. The Transformation of Public Life

Feb 25      Books, Readers, and the Press      **PAPER 1 DUE**  
Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*—start reading

*Recommended:*

T. C. W. Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe 1660-1789*, 103-135

Feb 27      New Venues of Sociability  
Dena Goodman, "Enlightenment Salons: The Convergence of Female and Philosophic Ambitions"  
Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*—keep reading

*Recommended:*

Brian Cowan, "Mr. Spectator and the Coffeehouse Public Sphere"  
Antoine Lilti, "Private Lives, Public Space: A New Social History of the Enlightenment"

Mar 3      The Novel: *Gulliver's Travels*      **Response 2 due**  
Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*—finish

*Recommended:*

Laura Brown, "Reading Race and Gender in *Gulliver's Travels*"  
Douglas Lane Patey, "Swift's Satire on 'Science' and the Structure of *Gulliver's Travels*"

Mar 5      Religion and the Public Sphere  
James Van Horn Melton, "Pietism, Politics, and the Public Sphere in Germany"

*Recommended:*

Martin Gierl, "Pietism, Enlightenment, and Modernity"

#### V. Themes in the French Enlightenment

Mar 10      France and the European Enlightenment  
Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation*, 10-32

*Recommended:*

Norman Hampson, "The Enlightenment in France"  
Geoffrey Turnovsky, "The Making of a Name: A Life of Voltaire"

Mar 12      Voltaire vs. *l'infâme*  
Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation*, 32-66, 123-129

*Recommended:*

John Leigh, "Voltaire and the Myth of England"

-- SPRING BREAK --

- Mar 24      Reordering Knowledge: The *Encyclopédie*  
Raymond Birn, “*Encyclopédie*”  
Jean Le Rond d’Alembert, “Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia”  
Articles [tba] on online Encyclopedia of Diderot and d’Alembert
- Recommended:*  
Robert Darnton, “Philosophers Trim the Tree of Knowledge”
- Mar 26      Visit to Special Collections, Memorial Library  
Articles [tba] on online Encyclopedia of Diderot and d’Alembert
- Mar 31      Rousseau’s Revolt      **Response 3 due**  
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts; Discourse on the Origin . . . of Inequality; Emile*  
Tom Furniss, “Rousseau: Enlightened Critic of the Enlightenment?”
- Recommended:*  
Arthur M. Melzer, “The Origin of the Counter-Enlightenment: Rousseau and the New Religion of Sincerity”

**VI. Athens of the North: The Scottish Enlightenment**

- Apr 2      Northern Lights  
Alexander Broadie, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, 6-42
- Recommended:*  
Richard B. Sher, “Scotland Transformed: The Eighteenth Century”  
Thomas Ahnert, *The Moral Culture of the Scottish Enlightenment, 1690-1805*, 1-16
- Apr 7      “The Science of Man”      **PAPER 2 DUE**
- Recommended:*  
Nicholas Phillipson, “The Scottish Enlightenment and the Science of Man”  
Christopher J. Berry, “Sociality and Socialisation”  
Aaron Garrett, “Anthropology: The ‘Original’ of Human Nature”
- Apr 9      Virtue, Commerce, and Progress  
David Hume, “Of Commerce” and “Of Refinement in the Arts”  
Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*
- Recommended:*  
Craig Smith, “Political Economy”  
Emma Rothschild and Amartya Sen, “Adam Smith’s Economics”



## VII. Religion, Enlightenment, and Counter-Enlightenment in Germany

Apr 14      Enlightenment in a German Key  
Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Nathan the Wise*—start reading

*Recommended:*  
Martin Mulrow, “The Itinerary of a Young Intellectual in Early Enlightenment Germany”  
Ian Hunter, “Multiple Enlightenment: Rival *Aufklärer* at the University of Halle 1690-1730”

Apr 16      Jews, Christians, and Toleration  
Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Nathan the Wise*—finish

*Recommended:*  
Ronald Schechter’s introduction to the Bedford/St. Martin’s edition  
H. B. Nisbet, *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing*, 601-23

Apr 21      Storm and Stress  
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*—start reading

*Recommended:*  
Ruth-Ellen B. Joeres, “Sturm und Drang”  
Tim Blanning, *The Romantic Revolution: A History* [on reserve]

Apr 23      The Romantic Novel: *The Sorrows of Young Werther*  
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*—finish

Apr 28      Magus of the North and Enlightenment’s Foe      **Response 4 due**  
Isaiah Berlin, “The Magus of the North”  
Johann Georg Hamann, “Biblical Reflections,” “Golgotha and Scheblimini,” and Letter to Christian Jacob Kraus

*Recommended:*  
Mark Lilla, “What Is Counter-Enlightenment?”  
Oswald Bayer, *A Contemporary in Dissent: Johann Georg Hamann as a Radical Enlightener*, 117-27

## VIII. Conclusion: The Enlightenment and Us

Apr 30      Taking Stock

*Recommended:*  
Dale K. Van Kley, “The Varieties of Enlightened Experience”  
Karen O’Brien, “The Feminist Critique of Enlightenment”  
James Schmidt, “What Enlightenment Project?”

**Final paper due on Canvas on Tuesday, May 5 at 4:00 p.m.**