

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

History & Religious Studies 411

THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND ITS CRITICS

Spring 2024

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:30-10:45 am
1651 Mosse Humanities

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

Course Description

The Enlightenment is a contested idea 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'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 explore an era (c. 1650-1800) when norms that had shaped European life for many centuries faced unprecedented scrutiny. Long-held ideas about 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's 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. Some thinkers rejected all established religion and sought a secular basis for living in and ordering the world. Others 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.

Learning Outcomes

This course aims 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 will also improve your ability to:

- explain key trends, flashpoints, personalities, and texts associated with the Enlightenment
- think historically, grasping the importance of context, causality, contingency, complexity, and change over time for understanding the past
- interpret sources from the past contextually, critically, and empathetically
- construct strong historical arguments based on evidence and clear reasoning
- compose clear analytical and argumentative written prose

Course Credit and Workload

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 workload will be heavier; other weeks it will be lighter.

Requirements and Assessment for Undergraduate Students

1. Class participation: Read all assigned texts, attend class, complete in-class writing exercises, and contribute actively to class discussions. In opting to take this course you are committing yourself to be present and an active participant in class. I will take attendance throughout the semester. If you become ill or face an emergency that forces you to miss a class session, please email me as soon as possible. More than two unexcused absences will lower your class participation grade.

We will discuss assigned readings at just about every class meeting and on a few days we'll spend the whole period in class discussion. On occasion you will also do brief in-class writing exercises based on assigned readings to spur thought and discussion; these exercises will be collected. 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 paper copy of texts to class on the day they will be discussed.*

Class participation will be evaluated using this rubric (standard in the History Department):

Excellent (93-100)	Good (83-92)	Competent (70-82)	Inadequate (60-69)	Fail (0-59)
-Mastery over readings and previous discussion -Explores questions rigorously -Comes to class with interpretations and questions -Engages others	-Knows readings well -Consistent preparation and involvement -Offers analysis of texts in class	-Basic grasp of reading -Mostly offers facts or surface-level interpretations -Contributes when called upon but not actively engaged	-Insufficient command of reading -Attempts to contribute facts or interpretations when called but unable to offer substance	-Uninvolved -Unexcused -Disruptive

You will receive a class participation grade three times during the semester: on February 22, April 2, and May 2. Class participation counts for 20% of your course grade.

2. Write four 250-300-word responses to assigned readings. All prompts will be posted on Canvas. You will have the option to write on most texts and you may choose which readings you respond to. If you wish, you may write more than four response papers; in that case the four highest grades will count. All responses are due on Canvas at 10:00 p.m. the night before the text will be discussed in class. No late papers accepted. You must complete the first response by February 12, the second by March 6, the third by April 10, the fourth by April 29. Responses will be graded using the following criteria:

- Did you answer the question clearly and directly?
- Does your response reflect a close reading of the whole of the relevant text(s)?

- Does your paper display insight and thoughtful grappling with the text?
- Is it written in clear and concise prose, polished for typos and grammatical errors?

Together, the four responses make up 15% of your final grade.

3. Write two analytical papers of 1600-1800 words (5-6 pages) each, due on Canvas at 10:00 p.m. on February 26 and April 3, respectively. Each paper will address a prompt based on themes and texts that we will have discussed in class. The grading criteria for the papers is posted in the “Paper Assignments” module on Canvas. Each paper counts for 20% of your final grade.

Rewrites: You may rewrite one or both of the two analytical papers. To do so, you must talk with me within two days after I return the original version. We will agree on the revisions to be made and set a new due date, typically one week after the paper was returned. 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.

Late Papers: If you face a situation that will prevent you from turning in a paper on time, please contact me as early as possible, and at least three days before the assignment is due, and we may work out another due date. Late papers that haven’t received an extension 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.).

4. Write a final paper of 1800-2000 words (6-7 pages), due on Canvas on Monday, May 6 at 7:00 p.m. The essay prompts will be handed out during the last week of class. The final paper counts for 25% of your course grade.

Requirements and Assessment for Graduate Students

In lieu of the three analytical papers, graduate students will write either (A) two historiographical papers of 8-10 pages each on a topic chosen in consultation with me, due on March 12 and May 2, respectively, or (B) an article-length paper (about 10,000 words, including footnotes) based on original research, due on May 2. Please see me early in the semester (by February 13) to discuss possibilities and set a plan for turning a proposal, bibliography, first draft, and final draft. Graduate students will write the four response papers. Grade breakdown for graduate students is class participation, 15%; response papers, 15%; historiographical papers 35% each, or research paper, 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 arising out of course topics and their own interests. This may take the form of a research paper or scholarly review. For those interested in literature, art, film, or other media, there are other possibilities. If

you are taking the course for honors, please come to my office hours by February 20 to discuss options, determine a project, and set a schedule for completing it.

Laptop Policy

A large body of research shows that students process information more thoughtfully, grasp concepts better, focus their attention more sharply, and as a result earn better grades when they take notes with pen and paper rather than on a computer. For this reason, and because the temptation to get distracted by matters unrelated to class is very strong, I ask that you refrain from using laptops during class. I'll make two exceptions to this general rule. You're exempt if (1) you are McBurney student with a documented need, or (2) you come to my office hours and make a persuasive case for why you want to use one in class and how you will use it. Phones should be silenced and put away before class starts.

Academic Integrity

By enrolling in this course, you agree to uphold the high academic standards of UW–Madison. All work you turn in must be your own. In your papers you must cite sources carefully, whether you repeat someone else's exact words or paraphrase or draw on their ideas. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism. Submitting work generated by AI tools, such as ChatGPT, also constitutes plagiarism. 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/>. If you turn in plagiarized work, you will earn a zero on the assignment, an academic misconduct report will be filed, and you may fail the course. For university policies on academic misconduct, see <https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-misconduct/>.

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 an assignment, to explore an idea, or simply to chat. I hold regular office hours in 5217 Mosse Humanities on Tuesdays, 11:00 am-1:00 pm. If you have a schedule conflict then, let me know and we can arrange another time to meet. The best way to reach me is by 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 is the Department of History's in-house writing center. Its graduate student staff offer expert, one-on-one advising on your history projects, both in-person and virtually. No matter your stage in the writing process—choosing a topic, conducting research, composing a thesis, outlining your argument, or revising your drafts—the History Lab staff will help you sharpen your skills and become a more successful writer. For instructions on how to schedule an appointment with a Lab TA, or to find tips, guides, and other resources for all of your history assignment needs, visit <https://history.wisc.edu/undergraduate-program/the-history-lab/>.

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.

UW–Madison Statement on Diversity

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW–Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. UW–Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background—people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

Course Texts

Many of our readings will come from articles and excerpts from longer works. These are available in the course reader, which you can buy from the L&S Copy Center, 6120 Social Science Building. Each text is also posted as a PDF file on Canvas. *You must bring a hard copy of texts to class on the day they will be discussed.*

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)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Unless otherwise indicated, all required readings excluding the books listed above are available in the course reader and on Canvas, where you will also find recommended readings for each class session. Full bibliographical information for all required and recommended texts is available in the “Course Documents” module on Canvas.

I. Introduction: What Is Enlightenment?

Jan 23

Course Introduction

Immanuel Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?”

Jan 25 Enlightenment Now
Steven Pinker, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*, 1-14, 29-35
Caroline Winterer, “Buck up, everyone! We are riding along the Enlightenment’s long path of progress”
Peter Harrison, “The Enlightenment of Steven Pinker”

Recommended:

John Robertson, “Europe’s Enlightenment”
Lynn Hunt & Margaret Jacob, “Enlightenment Studies”

Jan 30 Enlightenment Narratives
Interview with Jonathan Israel, *Oxonian Review* [on Canvas]
David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment*, 1-5, 19-21
Dan Edelstein, *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy*, 1-6, 24-36

Recommended:

Samuel Moyn, “Mind the Enlightenment”
Daniel Fulda, “Identity in Diversity: Programmatic Pictures of the Enlightenment”

II. Confession, Conflict, and the Quest for Order

Feb 1 Society, Religion and Conflict in Seventeenth-Century Europe
Benjamin J. Kaplan, “Coexistence, Conflict, and the Practice of Toleration”

Recommended:

H. R. Trevor-Roper, “The Religious Origins of the Enlightenment”

Feb 6 “The Great Separation”
Mark Lilla, *The Stillborn God*, ch. 2
Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*

Recommended:

Justin Champion, “Godless Politics: Hobbes and Public Religion”

Feb 8 Toleration I
Baruch Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*
Pierre Bayle, *Miscellaneous Thoughts on the Comet of 1680; Philosophical Commentary on the Words of Jesus Christ, “Compel Them to Come In”*

Recommended:

Perez Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West*, ch. 7
Martin Fitzpatrick, “Toleration and the Enlightenment Movement”

Feb 13 Toleration II → **Response 1 due 2/12**
John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (entire)

Recommended:

James H. Tully, Introduction to Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration*
Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the
Emancipation of Man 1670-1752*, ch. 6

III. Revolutions of the Mind

Feb 15

Assault on the Ancients

Galileo Galilei, "Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina"
Francis Bacon, *The New Instrument*
René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*

Recommended:

John Henry, "Science and the Coming of Enlightenment"

Feb 20

The Newtonian Revolution

Isaac Newton, *Principia*, *Opticks*, and Letter to Richard Bentley
Margaret C. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment*, ch. 3

Recommended:

I. Bernard Cohen, "The Newtonian Revolution"
Larry Stewart, "Science and the Eighteenth-Century Public"

Feb 22

Skepticism and Reason's Limits

Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*
Pierre Bayle, "David," in *Historical and Critical Dictionary*

Recommended:

Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Savonarola to Bayle*, 180-184, 283-
302
Graeme Hunter, "Blaise Pascal"
Walter Rex, "Pierre Bayle: The Theology and Politics of the Article on David"

IV. The Transformation of Public Life

Feb 27

Books, Readers, and the Press

→Paper 1 due 2/26

Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*—start reading

Recommended:

Michael Schaich, "The Public Sphere"
T. C. W. Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime
Europe 1660-1789*, 103-135
Robert Darnton, "The High Enlightenment and the Low-Life of Literature"

Feb 29

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, “The Kingdom of *Politesse*: Salons and the Republic of Letters in Eighteenth-Century Paris”

Mar 5

The Novel: *Gulliver's Travels*

Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*—finish

Recommended:

Laura Brown, “Reading Race and Gender in *Gulliver's Travels*”

R. S. Crane, “The Houyhnhnms, the Yahoos and the History of Ideas”

Douglas Lane Patey, “Swift's Satire on ‘Science’ and the Structure of *Gulliver's Travels*”

Mar 7

Religion and the Public Sphere

→Response 2 due 3/6

James Van Horn Melton, “Pietism, Politics, and the Public Sphere in Germany”

Recommended:

Martin Gierl, “Pietism, Enlightenment, and Modernity”

Ulrike Gleixner, “Pietism and Gender: Self-Modelling and Agency”

V. Themes in the French Enlightenment

Mar 12

Europe's Enlightenment and the Case of France

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 14

Battling *l'infâme*

Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation*, 32-66, 123-129

Recommended:

John Leigh, “Voltaire and the Myth of England”

Mar 19

Reordering Knowledge: The *Encyclopédie*

Raymond Birn, “*Encyclopédie*” [link on Canvas]

Denis Diderot, “Encyclopedia”

Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, “Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia”

Recommended:

Robert Darnton, “Philosophers Trim the Tree of Knowledge”

Mar 21

Visit to Special Collections, Memorial Library

Articles on online *Encyclopedia of Diderot and d'Alembert* [link on Canvas]

Recommended:

John R. Pannabecker, "Representing Mechanical Arts in Diderot's 'Encyclopédie'"
Florian Knothe, "Depictions of Glassmaking in Diderot's 'Encyclopédie'"
James Llana, "Natural History and the *Encyclopédie*"

-- SPRING BREAK --

Apr 2

Rousseau's Revolt

Tom Furniss, "Rousseau: Enlightened Critic of the Enlightenment?"
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts; Discourse on the Origin . . . of Inequality; Emile*

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 4

Northern Lights: The Case of Scotland

→Paper 2 due 4/3

Alexander Broadie, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, 6-42

Recommended:

John Robertson, "The Scottish Enlightenment"
Roger Emerson, "The Contexts of the Scottish Enlightenment"

Apr 9

The "Science of Man" and Society

Bernard Mandeville, "The Fable of the Bees"
Frances Hutcheson, *System of Moral Philosophy*
Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*

Recommended:

Christopher J. Berry, "The Science of Man and Society in the Scottish Enlightenment"
Thomas Ahnert, *The Moral Culture of the Scottish Enlightenment, 1690-1805*, 1-16

Apr 11

Virtue, Commerce, and Progress

→Response 3 due 4/10

David Hume, "Of Commerce" and "Of Refinement in the Arts"
Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*

Recommended:

Laurence Dickey, "Doux-Commerce and Humanitarian Values"
Emma Rothschild and Amartya Sen, "Adam Smith's Economics"

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

Apr 16

Protestant Enlightenment in a German Key

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Nathan the Wise*—start reading

Recommended:

Joachim Whaley, "The Protestant Enlightenment in Germany"

Ian Hunter, "Multiple Enlightenments: Rival *Aufklärer* at the University of Halle 1690-1730"

Martin Mulsow, "The Itinerary of a Young Intellectual in Early Enlightenment Germany"

Apr 18

Jews, Christians, and Toleration

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Nathan the Wise*—finish

Recommended:

Ronald Schechter, Introduction to the Bedford/St. Martin's edition

H. B. Nisbet, *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing*, 601-23

Apr 23

Sturm und Drang

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*—start reading

Recommended:

Azade Seyhan, "What is Romanticism, and Where Did it Come From?"

Ruth-Ellen B. Joeres, "Sturm und Drang"

Apr 25

The Romantic Novel: *The Sorrows of Young Werther*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*—finish

Recommended:

David Constantine, Introduction to the Oxford World's Classics edition

Apr 30

Religion and Counter-Enlightenment

→ **Response 4 due 4/29**

Isaiah Berlin, "The Magus of the North"

Johann Georg Hamann, "Biblical Reflections" 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: Does the Enlightenment Still Matter?

May 2

Enlightenment Now, Revisited

Anthony Pagden, *The Enlightenment and Why It Still Matters*, Preface

Recommended:

James Schmidt, "What Enlightenment Project?"

William J. Bulman, "Enlightenment for the Culture Wars"

→ **Final paper due on Monday, May 6 at 7:00 p.m.**