

## BLHS-108 Enlightenment, Revolution and Democracy

Fall 2018

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Thursday 6:00-9:35pm

Room: C117

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Office hours 7:30pm Wednesdays via ZOOM and by appointment

### ***Course Description:***

Historians use the term the Enlightenment to describe a period of European history during the long eighteenth century (roughly 1680-1800) when people began to understand the world in a fundamentally new way. Before this time almost everyone accepted as natural social hierarchy, monarchy, and the Catholic church's monopoly on education as well as religious doctrine and practice. Educated people's understanding of the physical world, human nature, and the proper ordering of our life on Earth largely came from the Bible and classical sources, which scholars assumed to be definitive and unquestionable.

This certainty was destroyed rather suddenly by two enormous disruptions that occurred in the sixteenth century: the Reformation and the discovery of the New World. The first caused more than 100 years of religious disputation and warfare that undermined the Church's claim to have all the answers; the second introduced Europeans to formerly unimagined worlds and peoples and caused them to question their most basic assumptions about what was natural, right and even possible. By the late seventeenth century ancient wisdom began to seem inadequate—in many cases it had been shown to be demonstrably false (i.e. the world was not flat after all)—so thinking people undertook a new intellectual project to make sense of their reality without the aid of religion and tradition, by using their own reason as their guide. They picked up tools pioneered during the Scientific Revolution—empirical observation and the scientific method—and set about creating a new science of man.

Centered in Paris but connected by improving communications, an international community of *philosophes* posited new social and political arrangements inspired by their belief in human progress and man's ability to build a more just, free and reasonable way of life for himself. Their ideas spread to increasing numbers of literate Europeans at home and in their overseas colonies. By the 1760s and 1770s many literate Europeans on both sides of the Atlantic were deeply inspired by this Enlightenment project to imagine an enlightened republic that would provide liberty, equality and fraternity to all its citizens. This was the spirit that shaped the American Revolution in 1776 and the French Revolution in 1789.

Our class will focus mainly on the political implications and consequences of the Enlightenment project and demonstrate how many of our modern Western beliefs and values are the product of this European movement. Our faith in representative democracy and commitment to equality, human rights and free market liberalism are all products of the Enlightenment. We will study these ideas in their historical context so as to better understand where they come from, how they evolved in different places and finally,

what limitations, contradictions and potential dangers were wrapped up in this grand project to improve humanity.

## ***Learning Objectives***

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of major Enlightenment-era thinkers and key ideas such as reason, progress, democracy, universal human rights, etc.
- Students will be able to explain how Enlightenment ideas contributed to the course of the American and French revolutions.
- Students will be able to explain the major shortcomings and contradictions of the Enlightenment project.
- Students will demonstrate historical research skills and the ability synthesize and present information in written and oral format.
- Students will deepen their ability to read complex historical texts carefully and critically.

## ***Required Texts\****

*\*Please order/borrow these specific editions so that you can find passages easily during class discussions. If you have any trouble getting these editions, please let me know.*

Isaac Kramnick, ed. *The Portable Enlightenment Reader*  
ISBN: 9780140245660

Aphra Behn. *Oroonoko, The Rover and Other Works*  
ISBN: 9780140433388

Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Life of Olaudah Equiano*  
ISBN: 9780142437162

John Locke. *Two Treatises on Government*  
ISBN: 9780300100181

Thomas Paine, *Common Sense and The Rights of Man*  
ISBN: 9780199538003

Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Social Contract and the Discourses*  
ISBN: 9780300091410

Voltaire, *Candide*. (*Penguin Classics edition*)  
ISBN: 9780140440041

Mary Wollstonecraft *Vindication of the Rights of Women*  
ISBN: 9780486290362

\*I will send you other texts listed on the syllabus or post them on our CANVAS page.

## ***A Note on Readings***

In this class we read actual historical sources from the time. Most of these texts are rather challenging and require several readings and thorough note taking to understand. Highlighting is not enough. You should make every effort to take notes in a notebook while you are reading and then type these notes up sometime before class. This will give you the kind of comprehension necessary to participate in class discussion in a meaningful way. It will also help you ace your weekly essays.

Taken as a whole, these readings will provide you with a rich understanding of the different aspects of the Enlightenment. It was an exciting, revolutionary time, full of nuances and contradictions. Each reading will give you another dimension of this world. As the course continues, your understanding will deepen and become more sophisticated. Missing a week or two (or not taking the time to really understand a given text) will create significant gaps in your understanding that will undermine your success in later weeks. The essays are designed to allow you to consolidate your knowledge from previous weeks so that by the end of the course you will have gained a firm understanding of what this pivotal period in history was all about.

Patient, thorough work throughout the semester will yield great rewards.

## ***Extra Resources***

Every day there are more resources out there to enrich our study of the Enlightenment!  
Here are some I would like to recommend:

LISTEN to your readings! Almost all of our texts are available in audio format either through Librivox or Audible or just on Youtube. I would recommend that you try listening to the text as you read (or as you commute or run on the treadmill, etc.) Unless you are a purely auditory learner, listening will not replace reading, but listening can reinforce the material in your memory by storing the information in more than one part of the brain.

LISTEN to smart people discussing your readings! One of the best podcasts for history nerds is the BBC's *In Our Time*. This program features three historians discussing some interesting topic of history. A search of their website will turn up all sorts of interesting programs about the Enlightenment and many of the works we'll read this semester. Edify your commute or exercise routine!

*In Our Time* website:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qykl/episodes/downloads>

LISTEN to Yale professors! Yale has open courses, including very helpful ones like *Introduction to Political Theory* and the *Foundations of Social Thought*. There are plenty of other online courses that can help you put our readings in context. Let me know if you find any good ones.

<https://oyc.yale.edu/courses>

WATCH Historical documentaries and movies

I am compiling a list of relevant movies and documentaries. Please share the names of any you find.

## ***Course Requirements and Grading***

Weekly (very) short essays: 100 points

Every Wednesday by 12:00noon you will send me a paragraph via email about that week's readings. I will give you a specific question and some background information so that you can craft an informed, thoughtful answer. These paragraphs are intended both to focus your reading and to improve your writing skills. Each paragraph will be worth 10 points. There will be 12 quizzes over the course of the semester, so I will drop your two lowest grades.

Research Project and Presentation [Stars of the Enlightenment Project] (200 points)

At the beginning of the semester you will chose/be assigned a leading figure of the Enlightenment to research for an oral presentation. You should immediately begin gathering sources, ideally a biography and several articles about the person's works. **Your sources must include actual books and/or articles, not just Wikipedia-like, on-line sources.** When your week arrives you will give a presentation to the class that describes the person's life, works, influence on the Enlightenment and his/her general historical significance. The presentation should last at least 20 minutes, but no more than 25 minutes and be followed by 5-10 minutes of questions/discussion. You will need to submit a bibliography for this project, using standard MLA format.

Two Short Essays (150, 250 points respectively)

You will write at two short essays (1250-1500 words) discussing some of the major themes we have covered in class up until that point. These essays will be based on class readings and will not require additional research. You will receive more specific instructions in class.

Final Project/Essay/Presentation (100 points)

At the end of the semester you will be given the opportunity to present what you have learned to me and the rest of the class in whatever format you choose. Details to follow

Class participation (200 points)

Your success in this class and the success of the class as a whole depends on your informed, thoughtful participation. You are expected to arrive to every class (on time) having read the material carefully, preferably more than once, and having taken copious notes. You should always review your notes shortly before class and highlight specific passages that you did not understand and/or would like to discuss. Your careful preparation will benefit your weekly grade and ensure to a lively intellectual exchange during class, which, after all, is the whole point.

Course Grading scale:

A = 93-100%  
A- = 90-92%  
B+= 88-89.9%  
B = 83-87.9%  
B- = 80-82%  
C+= 78-79.9%  
C = 73-77.9%  
C- = 70-72%  
D+= 68-69.9%  
D = 60-67.9%

F = Below 60%

***No screens in the classroom policy.***

As part of our commitment to do our best work in class, we will all silence and put away our devices before 6:00pm. No screens will be allowed during class time—not even to read the texts. Bring paper and pencils and think of this as an historical field trip back to the days before we were all addicted to the internet.

## Schedule of Classes

### **Class 1 August 30, 2018 ✳ What was the Enlightenment all about?**

Read in Kramnick:

Introduction p. ix

*The New Science* by Bacon p. 39

*On Bacon and Newton* by Voltaire p. 51

### **Class 2 September 6, 2018 ✳ Questioning Ancient Wisdom in Light of New Discoveries**

Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688) (READ Introduction too)

✳*Star of the week: Aphra Behn*

### **Class 3 September 13, 2018 ✳ Reconsidering Natural Laws: a New Science of Man & Progress**

Kramnick:

Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* p. 185

Hume's *A Treatise on Human Nature*, p. 195

Francis Hutcheson's *Concerning the Moral Sense*, p. 275

Adam Smith's *Impartial Spectator* p. 280 and *The Four Stage Theory of Development*, p. 378

Adam Ferguson *The Progressive Character of Human Nature*, p. 380

✳*Star of the week: David Hume*

### **Class 4 September 20, 2018 ✳ Positing A New Social Contract: Locke**

Kramnick:

*A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689) by Locke

John Locke's *Second Treatise on Government* (1690)

✳*Star of the week: John Locke*

### **Class 5 September 27, 2018 ✳ Writers' workshop for essay #1**

Send first drafts to me before class; **final draft due Monday**

### **Class 6 October 4, 2018 ✳ Rousseau's influence on Political Thought in France**

*Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* by Rousseau

✳*Star of the week: Jean Jacques Rousseau*

### **Class 7 October 11, 2018 ✳ Voltaire's Criticism of Enlightenment Optimism**

Voltaire's *Candide*

✳*Stars of the week: Voltaire and Madame du Chatâlet*

**Class 8 October 18, 2018 ✳Putting Enlightenment Thought into Practice**

*The Social Contract* by Rousseau

☞*Stars of the week: Madame Geoffrin and Denis Diderot*

**Class 9 October 25, 2018 ✳Revolutionary Ideas in America**

*The US Declaration of Independence*

Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*

☞*Stars of the week: Thomas Paine and Benjamin Franklin*

**Class 10 November 1, 2018 ✳The French Revolution, part I: An Idealistic Beginning**

*The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*

*The Declaration of the Rights of Woman*

WATCH MOVIE

☞*Stars of the week: Georges Danton and the Comte de Mirabeau*

**Class 11 November 8, 2018 ✳The French Revolution, part II: Things Take a Sinister Turn**

Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*

WATCH MOVIE

☞*Star of the week: Maximillian Robespierre*

**Class 12 November 15, 2018 ✳Social Progress? Slavery and The Abolition Movement**

*The Interesting Life of Olaudah Equiano*

☞*Star of the week: William Wilberforce*

THANKSGIVING BREAK

**Class 13 November 29, 2018 ✳Social Progress? The Women's Question**

Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

☞*Star of the week: Mary Wollstonecraft*

**Class 14 December 6, 2018 ✳An Assessment of the Enlightenment Project**

Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

☞*Star of the week: Sir Edmund Burke*

**Class 15 TBA ✳ Final Class and Final Presentations**

## ***Disabilities***

If you are a student with a documented disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 or [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu).

Turnitin.com

Students acknowledge that by taking this course all required papers can be submitted for a Textual Similarity Review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

Extreme weather, Emergencies, and Instructional Continuity

During inclement weather or other emergencies on a day when we are scheduled to meet face-to-face, check the university's Web site or call (202) 687-7669 for information on whether the university is open. If the university is open, this class will meet. If the university is closed, this class will meet through distance means such as online videoconferencing; check your e-mail for a message from me on how we will proceed in that situation. Due dates for written assignments submitted through Blackboard will not be changed due to campus closings.

The university recently has acquired the capability to send text messages and recorded messages about emergencies to cell phones and other mobile devices. Sign up on MyAccess.

Georgetown Honor System

All students are expected to follow Georgetown's honor code unconditionally. We assume you have read the honor code material located at <http://scs.georgetown.edu/academic-affairs/honor-code>, and in particular have read the following documents: Honor Council Pamphlet, What is Plagiarism, Sanctioning Guidelines, and Expedited Sanctioning Process. Papers in this course will all be submitted to turnitin.com for checking.

Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

## ***Plagiarism***

In accord with university policy, all incidents of suspected plagiarism or other Honor Code violations will be reported to the Honor Council without fail.

If the Honor Council finds that a student has plagiarized or has violated the Honor Code in any other way, the student may receive a grade of F for the course.

## ***Policy Accommodating Students' Religious Observances***

The following is university policy:

Georgetown University promotes respect for all religions. Any student who is unable to attend classes or to participate in any examination, presentation, or assignment on a given day because of the observance of a major religious holiday or related travel shall be excused and provided with the opportunity to make up, without unreasonable burden, any work that has been missed for this reason and shall not in any other way be penalized for the absence or rescheduled work. Students will remain responsible for all assigned work. Students should notify professors in writing at the beginning of the semester of religious observances that conflict with their classes.

## ***Title IX at Georgetown***

<https://titleix.georgetown.edu/>

### ***Sexual Misconduct***

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (“Title IX”) prohibits discrimination based on sex in any educational programs, which includes sexual harassment or any acts of sexual misconduct. Title IX requires the University, upon becoming aware of any incident of sexual harassment and misconduct to respond appropriately to protect and maintain the safety of the University community, including students, faculty, and staff.

Georgetown University prohibits sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, and stalking.

Discrimination based on sex, including sexual misconduct and discrimination based on pregnancy or parenting status, subverts the University's mission and threatens permanent damage to the educational experience, careers, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff.

Please know that as a faculty member I am committed to supporting survivors of sexual misconduct, including relationship violence and sexual assault. However, University policy also requires me to report any disclosures about sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator, whose role is to coordinate the University’s response to sexual misconduct.

#### **Jen Schweer, MA, LPC**

Associate Director of Health Education Services  
for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention  
(202) 687-0323  
jls242@georgetown.edu

#### **Erica Shirley**

Trauma Specialist  
Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS)  
(202) 687-6985  
els54@georgetown.edu

Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professional resources who can provide support and assistance to survivors of sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct. These resources include:

More information about campus resources and reporting sexual misconduct can be found at:  
<https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/get-help>.

### ***Pregnancy Adjustments and Accommodations***

Georgetown University is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive environment for pregnant and parenting students. Students may request adjustments based on general pregnancy needs or accommodations based on a pregnancy-related complication. Specific adjustments will be handled on a case by case basis and will depend on medical need and academic requirements.

Students seeking a pregnancy adjustment or accommodation should follow the process laid out at: <https://titleix.georgetown.edu/student-pregnancy>.