

New School for Social Research
Committee on Historical Studies
Course No. CHS 252-8028

Fordham University
Department of History
Course No. HSGA 6504

ENLIGHTENMENT AND MODERNITY

Tuesdays 5:50-7:30 pm
Spring 1997 (Revised)

Faculty

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Course Description

The Enlightenment has traditionally been associated with the birth of modernity. After all, many influential men and women in the eighteenth century condemned the superstition of religion, the arbitrariness of absolutism, the inhumanity of established institutions, and the doctrinaire character of classical philosophy. Their critiques thus appear to have initiated a universal project of creating secular, constitutional, humane, and open societies. Consequently, taking a position on "the Enlightenment" has been de rigueur for intellectuals since the eighteenth century, at least in the West. Through close readings of primary source texts and later historical interpretations, this seminar will investigate the usefulness or desirability of enlightened thought and action, whether in the eighteenth century or the present. Questions to be explored include: Does critical reason undermine or substitute for belief? Should human rights and constitutional government be made universal? Can an enlightened conception of humanity embrace diversity? Is it possible or desirable for a liberating "truth" to emerge from enlightenment?

Written Requirement

One seminar paper of 15-20 pages on a topic agreed upon by the student and instructor, due at the end of the semester. An abstract of the proposed paper must be submitted and agreed upon no later than Tuesday, 8 April.

Required Readings

The following books contain most of the required readings, which are or will soon be available for purchase at Posman Books, 1 University Place, and at the Fordham University Barnes & Noble. Please use the assigned editions.

- Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1995)
- James Schmidt, *What Is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Answers* (California, 1996)
- Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, trans. C. J. Betts (Penguin Classics, 1975)
- Voltaire, *Letters on England*, trans. L. Tancock (Penguin Classics, 1980)
- Françoise de Graffigny, *Letters from a Peruvian Woman* (MLA, 1994)
- Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*, ed. V. Carreta (Penguin Classics)
- Isabelle de Charrière, *Letters of Mistress Henley* (MLA, 1994)
- Jerry Z. Muller, *Adam Smith in His Time and Ours* (Princeton, 1993)
- Margaret C. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford, 1991)
- Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Cornell, 1994)
- Robert Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (Norton, 1996)
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Politics & the Arts: Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre*, trans. A. Bloom (Cornell, 1960)
- Pierre Saint-Amand, *The Laws of Hostility: Politics, Violence, and the Enlightenment* (Minnesota, 1996)
- Max Horkheimer & Theodore Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. J. Cumming (Continuum, 1972, 1996)

One copy of each book above has been placed on reserve at both Fogelman and Duane Libraries.

Note: This course, a joint New School-Fordham graduate seminar, is a first attempt at forging cooperation between historically-

oriented scholars at the two universities. Consequently, there may be some logistical difficulties coordinating our work together during the semester. The fact that the two universities operate under slightly different calendars, for instance, will present difficulties from time to time. Students should note, in particular, the following problem dates:

First course meetings	<p>The two universities begin on different weeks. We will meet the Fordham students first at Rose Hill on 14 January. Then, on 21 January, faculty and students from both institutions will meet at the New School for the first substantive seminar.</p> <p><u>-New School students:</u> You will have to be prepared to participate in a substantive seminar discussion when the course first meets at the New School. To do so, you must read Dorinda Outram's <i>The Enlightenment</i> and be prepared to discuss it on 21 January.</p> <p><u>-Fordham students:</u> You will have to find your way to our classroom at the New School. The New School, unfortunately, cannot tell us exactly where we will be meeting until about one hour before class begins. To locate our room, you will have to go to the New School Graduate Faculty building at 65 Fifth Avenue (between 13th and 14th Streets, on the East side). Dennis McEnnerney and Tip Ragan will aim to meet you in the lobby at 5:30, to lead you to our classroom.</p> <p>In case you are delayed, however, here is how New School students find their way to classes: Upon entering the lobby, you will see large bulletin boards listing course offerings and classroom locations. The New School lists our seminar as Course No. CHS 252-8028, "Enlightenment and Modernity." Find the course listing on the bulletin board--the location will be listed alongside it. It is most likely that we will meet in the 65 Fifth Avenue building. However, if another location is listed or you have trouble finding our room, ask the guard or one of the student receptionists. Tell them you are Fordham students attending a joint New School-Fordham graduate history seminar for the first time.</p>
Tues., 18 Feb.	<p><u>-Fordham students:</u> Fordham follows a Monday schedule on 18 February, which may cause a conflict for some Fordham students. If you have such a conflict, let the instructors know, and they will arrange a special tutorial for you at Rose Hill sometime during that week.</p>
Spring breaks	<p>The New School and Fordham have different spring breaks, a week apart. Since it would be unfair to follow only one break, and since it would be a logistical nightmare to add make-up classes, the instructors will forgo their breaks. While one campus is on break, we will meet with the other at its campus, and then repeat that seminar session with the other student group at its campus when the first group goes on break. Specifically:</p> <p><u>-New School students:</u> we will meet with you at the New School to discuss Robert Darnton's <i>Forbidden Best-Sellers</i> on 4 March, while the Fordham students are on vacation. You will then take your break on 18 March.</p> <p><u>-Fordham students:</u> You will take your break on 4 March. Then we will meet with you at Rose Hill on 18 March to discuss the Darnton book, while the New School goes on vacation.</p>
Tues., 22 Apr. (Passover)	<p>We will meet on Passover. However, arrangements can be made for any observant students.</p>
Final classes & papers	<p>Our last course meeting will take place on Tues., 6 May, which is at the beginning of exam week at Fordham. The semester ends on 9 May at the New School and on 12 May at Fordham. The final papers will likely be due sometime prior to the end of the semester; the exact date will be announced once we determine when grades are due at the respective institutions. However, students should expect to be required to complete their papers very soon after our last meeting.</p>

SCHEDULE OF COURSE MEETINGS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

1. ENLIGHTENING QUESTIONS AND REASONS TO QUESTION

- Tues., 14 Jan.
(Fordham students only) Introduction
No reading assigned.
Meet at Fordham Rose Hill Campus
- Tues., 21 Jan.
(both Fordham and
New School students) Enlightenment: Preliminary Surveys
Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment*.
Meet at the New School. See the lobby bulletin board, 65 Fifth Ave., for room location
- Tues., 28 Jan. Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Surveys
James Schmidt, *What Is Enlightenment?*, preface, intro., and part I, pp. ix-xiii, 1-231.
- Tues., 4 Feb. Europe and "Civilization" (1)
Montesquieu, *The Persian Letters*.
- Tues., 11 Feb. Europe and "Civilization" (2)
Voltaire, *Letters on England*.
Isabelle de Charrière, *Letters of Mistress Henley*.
- Tues., 18 Feb. Europe and "Civilization" (3)
Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*.
Françoise de Graffigny, *Letters from a Peruvian Woman*.
Fordham follows Monday schedule--students with a conflict will meet with instructors for a separate tutorial at the Fordham Rose Campus if necessary

2. EXPERIMENTS IN LIVING AND THINKING

- Tues., 25 Feb. Political Economy and Scottish Enlightenment
Jerry Z. Muller, *Adam Smith in His Time and Ours*.
- Tues., 4 Mar.
(New School only) Grub Street and Cultural Revolution
Robert Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*.
- Tues., 11 Mar. Freedom: A Modern Religion?
Margaret C. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*.
- Tues., 18 Mar.
(Fordham students only) Grub Street and Cultural Revolution
Robert Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*.
Meet at Fordham Rose Hill Campus

Tues., 25 Mar. High Society, Gender, and Equality
Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*.

3. DISTURBING CHALLENGES AND MODERN ORDERS

Tues., 1 Apr. The Rousseauist Critique
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. d'Alembert*.
ABSTRACTS OF PAPERS MUST BE APPROVED BY THIS DATE

Tues., 8 Apr. Societies, Nations, and Powers
Pierre Saint-Amand, *The Laws of Hostility*.

Tues., 15 Apr. The Frankfurt School and the Postmodern Anti-Enlightenment
Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

Tues., 22 Apr.
(Passover) Contemporary Historiographical Questions
Schmidt, part II, pp. 233-341.

Tues., 29 Apr. Contemporary Philosophical Questions (1)
Schmidt, part III, pp. 343-425.

Tues., 6 May
(Exam Week) Contemporary Philosophical Questions (2)
Schmidt, part III, pp. 426-532.

Date TBA **PAPERS DUE**