

## **PL281 What was (and is) Enlightenment?**

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### **Course Description**

In contemporary debates, we often hear an appeal to the Enlightenment in the context of the defense of scientific standards of evidence (especially in opposition to conspiracy theories), or in calls for reason and tolerance in opposition to religious fanaticism and obscurantism. What is the “Enlightenment” being invoked here? The Enlightenment as an intellectual movement has ancient and diverse philosophical roots, and the term does not ultimately refer to a homogenous time-period or a normative body of work. It is however still often associated with French philosophers of the pre-Revolutionary era. What were their main principles, methods and objects of inquiry? A determination to question tradition, to critique prejudice, a wish to go back to “nature”, to challenge existing forms of authority and power, and to gather and make accessible all forms of reliable knowledge. The thinkers of the Enlightenment were dedicated anthropologists, analyzing other cultures the better to understand and change their own. Of course, the universalistic and rationalistic philosophical premises of this intellectual movement have not gone uncontested over the centuries, especially in regard to matters of race, gender, colonialism and other questions of political domination and control. In this course, we will read some of its key texts, by Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Diderot and d’Alembert, but also twentieth-century and more recent responses and critiques. We will visit the Staatsbibliothek at Unter den Linden, to consider how works that have been decisive for modern thought were originally circulated and presented in physical form.

### **Requirements**

#### **Academic Integrity**

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

#### **Attendance**

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

**SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FALL 2021:** Some students may need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Instructors should make efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

Assignment, Grade Breakdown and Deadlines

Participation (25%)

The students are expected to attend and actively participate in the discussions during the classes. In addition, every class involves some preparation. It is expected that students have carefully read the scheduled text, and wrote notes on what they consider important, remarkable, debatable or questionable. Questions and critical interpretations are welcomed and encouraged. It will be important that the students learn to contextualize the texts of the eighteenth-century historically and politically

Presentation (25%)

Each student will give a 20-30' presentation on one of the topic on the schedule. During the first sessions, the students will have the opportunity to orient themselves and choose a topic, which could be treated for the final paper. There will be time to discuss the topic choice with the instructor, preferably early on in the course.

A mid-semester assignment of about 1000 words will be due before the **October 29<sup>th</sup>**. Thematically, it should be aligned with the final paper and serve as a preparation.

Final Paper (50%)

A final paper of about 4000 words will be due during completion week. Latest submission date is **December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021**.

**Policy on Late Submission of Papers**

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

**Schedule and Organization**

*The instructor will provide a course reader for the two first introductory sessions  
Texts of the reading list which are not at the library, will be made available by the instructor.*

Topic	Reading assignment	Thu 15:45-19:00
1. Introduction: <i>What was (and is) Enlightenment?</i>	The instructor will provide a reader for the first two introductory sessions of the course. It will entail extracts of texts / images / podcast/ quotes of both current debates on the Enlightenment as well as on the historical context of eighteenth-century in France and Europe. This reader will accompany	September 2 <sup>nd</sup>

	the readings during the whole term and frame our inquiries.	
2. Enlightenment in social political context (Introduction II)	Reading assignment based on the reader.	September 7, Tuesday 15 :45-17 :15 <i>*Please note that this replaces the regular Thursday meeting</i>
3. A diversion through Persia (Montesquieu I)	-Charles-Louis de Montesquieu : <i>Persian Letters (Lettres Persanes)</i> , 1721 : « Introduction », <i>Some Reflections on the Persian Letters</i> , Letters I-XXIII ; XLVI, XLVIII -Tzvetan Todorov: Distanciation, in: <i>On human diversity</i> (Harvard University Press) 1993. Ch. 5.1 -Srinivas Aravamundan: <i>Enlightenment Orientalism. Resisting the Rise of the Novel</i> , Chicago University Press 2011. Part One: “Oriental Singularity: Montesquieu”	September 16
4. Women in the seraglio (Montesquieu II)	<i>Persian Letters</i> : XXXIV, XLVII, LXII, LXIV-LXV; CXLVII-CLXI -Dena Goodman : “ La Liberté des femmes. Lire le personnage de Roxane de Montesquieu...”, <i>Montesquieu zwischen den Disziplinen</i> , Berlin 2010; D. Goodman: <i>Criticism in Action: Enlightenment Experiments in Political Writing</i> , Cornell University Press 1989, I: Montesquieu: “The Epistolary Form of Criticism”	September 23
5. <i>Letters of a Peruvian Woman</i> (Graffigny)	Françoise de Graffigny: <i>Letters of a Peruvian Woman (Lettres d'une Péruvienne</i> , 1747) translated by Jonathan Mallinson (O.U.P.) 2020 -Katharine Ann Jensen, “Writing as a <i>Péruvienne</i> ; or, How Women Came to the Epistolary Novel: Françoise de Graffigny”, in: <i>Writing Love: Letters, Women, and the Novel in France, 1605-1776</i> , Southern Illinois UP 1995	September 30
6. Jocasta, the City and the Gods: Rewriting Oedipus (Voltaire I)	<i>Oedipus, A Tragedy</i> , 1718 -As an introduction to Voltaire: <a href="https://www.voltaire.ox.ac.uk/about-voltaire/">https://www.voltaire.ox.ac.uk/about-voltaire/</a>	October 7
7. England and Religious Tolerance (Voltaire II)	<i>Letters on England (Lettres philosophiques</i> , 1734): I-XV -a selection of poems and short texts of Voltaire: <i>The Wordling (Le</i>	October 14

	<p><i>Mondain</i>, 1736) ; <i>Prayer to God</i> in: <i>Treatise on Tolerance</i>, 1763; the article “Free Thinking” in <i>Dictionary of Philosophy</i>, 1764; <i>On the horrible danger of reading</i>, 1765 -a selection of letters from the <i>Correspondence between Voltaire and the Prince and later King of Prussia</i></p>	
Autumn break	Semester break	October 21
8. War, superstitions and other calamities (Voltaire III)	<i>Candide, or All the Best</i> , 1759 (A philosophical satirical tale )	October 28
9. Knowledge for the Public: Encyclopedia I	<p>Visit to the department of the rare books at <i>Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin</i> in order to see the original volumes of the <i>Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des Arts, des Sciences et des Métiers</i>, edited by Denis Diderot, Jean d’Alembert, Paris/ Neufchastel 1751-1765 -As an introduction, read chapter 5 of Robert Darnton: <i>The Great Cat Massacre and other episode in French cultural history</i> London, 1984 with the title: “Philosophers trim. The tree of Knowledge. The epistemological strategy of the Encyclopédie, pp. 185-208 -Lorraine Daston, “Observation and Enlightenment “ in: <i>Scholars in Action. The Practice of Knowledge and the Figure of the Savant in the 18th Century</i>, Brill 2013</p>	November 4
10. Encyclopédie II	A selection of articles of the <i>Encyclopédie</i>	November 11
11. “Witnessing the beginning of the world”: serious questions in comedies	<p>-Marivaux, <i>The Dispute</i>, a comedy 1744 -Pierre Caron de Beaumarchais, <i>The Marriage of Figaro</i>, 1778 Read the text and watch the plays/ opera (Mozart. <i>Le nozze di Figaro</i>, 1786) based on the adaptation of da Ponte.</p>	November 18
12. The critique of Civilisation (Rousseau I)	<p>Jean-Jacques Rousseau: -<i>Discourse on the Sciences and Arts</i>, 1750 (First part) -<i>Discourse on the Origins of Inequality</i>, 1755 (extracts) -Jean Starobinski, “The Word Civilization,” in: <i>Blessings in</i></p>	November 25

	<p><i>Disguise, Or, The Morality of Evil</i> (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993)</p> <p>-Mark Hulliung, <i>The Autocritique of Enlightenment. Rousseau and the Philosophes</i>, Harvard University Press 2013</p>	
13. Writing of the self (Rousseau II)	<p><i>The Confessions</i>, Book 1</p> <p>-Jean Starobinski, <i>Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction</i>, University of Chicago Press: London. 1988 (extracts).</p>	December 2
14. Travelling around the world?	<p><i>Denis Diderot, Supplement to Bougainville's Voyage</i>, ca. 1772</p> <p>-Srinivas Aravamudan, « Trop(icaliz)ing the Enlightenment », <i>Diacritics</i> 23.3., 48-68</p> <p>-Doris L. Garraway, "Of Speaking Natives and Hybrid Philosophers: Lahontan, Diderot, and the French Enlightenment Critique of Colonialism" in: <i>Postcolonial Enlightenment</i> ed. by Daniel Carrey and Lynn Festa, Oxford 2009</p>	December 9

### Bibliography:

#### Primary sources

- Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais : *La folle journée ou Le mariage de Figaro*, Paris 1784 [*The Marriage of Figaro*, 1778]
- Denis Diderot: *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* (written around 1779) [*Supplement to Bougainville's Voyage*, in: *Rameau's Nephew and Other Works*, in translation by Jacques Barzun and Ralph H. Bowen, Hackett Publishing Company 2001]
- *The Encyclopedie of Diderot and D'Alembert: Selected Articles*, edited by John Lough, Cambridge University Press 2009
- Françoise de Graffigny: *Letters of a Peruvian Woman* translated by Jonathan Mallinson. O.U.P. 2020
- Marivaux, *La Dispute*, Paris 1744 [*The Dispute, a Comedy* 1744]
- Charles-Louis de Montesquieu: *Lettres Persanes*, Cologne 1721 [*Persian Letters*, translation Margaret Mauldon, Oxford University Press, 2008]
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau : *Les Confessions*, Paris 1783 (written 1765-1770) posthumously published. [*The Confessions*, translated by J. Cohen London 1973]
- Voltaire, *Œdipe, une tragédie*, Paris 1718 [*Oedipus, a Tragedy*, 1718]
- *Lettres philosophiques ou lettres angloises* Londres/ Paris 1734 [*Letters on England*]
- *Candide ou de l'optimisme traduit de l'allemand de M. le docteur Ralph*, Minden 1759 [*Candide, Or Optimism*]

#### Anthologies of Short Texts of the Eighteenth-Century:

*The Idea of Europe. Enlightenment Perspectives*, texts selected by Catriona Seth, Rotraud von Kulesa,

Open Book Publishers 2017

*Tolerance. The Beacon of the Enlightenment*, ed. and translated by Caroline Warman, Open Book Publishers 2016

Secondary Literature:

Srinivas Aravamudan : *Enlightenment Orientalism. Resisting the Rise of the Novel*, Chicago University Press, 2011

- , « Trop(icaliz)ing the Enlightenment”, *Diacritics* 23.3., 48-68

-Bronislaw Baczko, Michel Porret, François Rosset : *Dictionnaire critique de l'utopie aux temps des Lumières*, Geneva 2016

-David Brewer: *The Enlightenment past. Reconstructing Eighteenth-Century French Thought*, Cambridge 2008

-*The French Enlightenment*, ed by Daniel Brewer, Cambridge University Press 2014

-Robert Darnton: *George Washington's False Teeth: An Unconventional Guide to the Eighteenth Century*, London (Norton) 2003

- , *The Great Cat Massacre and other episode in French cultural history* London 1984 (Ch. 5

“Philosophers trim. The tree of Knowledge. The epistemological strategy of the *Encyclopédie*,

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-Antoine Lilti : *L'héritage des Lumières. Ambivalences de la modernité*, Paris 2019

-John Robertson: *The Enlightenment: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 2015

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-Tzvetan Todorov: *On human diversity: nationalism, racism, and exoticism in French thought*, translated by Catherine Porter Harvard University Press, 1993