

## The Age of Reason

### Description:

In this class we will study some of the key elements in the transition from tradition to modernity that emerged in Europe from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries. We will look at politics, society and culture to understand how the traditional mainstays of monarchy, aristocracy and religion began to give way—however provisionally and imperfectly—to modern notions of democracy, equality, and ideology. Although the intellectual and chronological scope of the class is broad, we will focus on several distinct events in order to understand the period, including the trial of Galileo; the Atlantic world in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century; the intellectual writings and social world of the French *philosophes* in the mid-eighteenth century; and the French Revolution of 1789. Our readings will mainly be documents and texts from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, although there were also be a number of works written by historians. The discussion of these readings will occupy central place throughout the semester.

### Subject Requirements:

Active participation in class discussions is essential to the success of our work together. Attendance is mandatory, and students are expected to arrive in class prepared to discuss common readings. There will also be four five-page papers (due **Feb. 24**, **Apr. 1\***, **Apr. 22\***, and **May 13**.) The first essay will be discussed in class and revised before a final grade is assigned. In addition, to satisfy the CI-H speaking requirement, we will stage the trial of Louis XVI in class during the week of April 27; students will be assigned a character and then participate in the trial. There will be no exams. The final grade will be calculated as follows, although these calculations will also take into account improvement over the course of the semester:

Class Participation	20 %
Four 5-page essays	15% each; 60% in total
Oral Exercise (Trial of Louis XVI, Week 12)	20 %

## Readings:

The following books are available for purchase at the MIT Bookstore; they should also be on reserve in the Hayden Library.

All other class readings, indicated with an asterisk (\*), are available online at the class website.

## Required:

Voltaire, *Treatise on Toleration and Other Writings* (Cambridge UP edition, 2000)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and the Discourses* (Everyman edition, 1973)

Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Equiano*

Jack Censer and Lynn Hunt, eds. *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*,  
(with companion CD-ROM, 2001)

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* (Penguin, 1985)

Lynn Hunt, et al., *The Making of the West: Peoples and Cultures. Vol. B: 1320-1830*

## Statement on Cheating and Plagiarism:

Copying sections from someone else's printed or online work into your own without an acknowledgement is plagiarism; submitting someone else's paper as your own work is cheating. MIT has strict policies against both activities that I will fully enforce. If you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, please contact me **before** submitting the work in question.

→ MIT Online Writing Communication Center: <<http://writing.mit.edu/wcc>>  
*This includes links on how to cite references and avoid plagiarism.*

## Class Outline and Reading Assignments:

### Week One

Feb. 3 (Tues) Introduction to course and requirements

Feb 5 (Thurs) Authority and Its Discontents: Europe after 1600

*The Making of the West*, skim Ch. 15, 525-60; read Ch. 16, 563-601

Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1496)

Trial Record of Johannes Junius (1628)

*(both handed out first day of class)*

## Week Two

Feb. 10 (Tues) Galileo's Discoveries

\*Galileo, *The Starry Messenger*, in Stillman Drake, ed. *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*, 1-58

\*John Heilbron, *The Sun in the Church: Cathedrals as Solar Observatories*, 3-23.

\*Browse "The Galileo Project", an online resource.

Feb. 12 (Thurs) (class cancelled)

read: \*Maurice Finocchiaro, *The Galileo Affair: A Documentary History*, 1-43, 256-93

## Week Three

Feb. 17 (Tues) **No Class** (*follow Monday schedule instead*)

Feb. 19 (Thurs) The English Revolution (1640-1660) and its Aftermath

\*Hobbes, 2 page excerpt from *Leviathan* (1651)

\*The Putney Debates, 1647 (pp. 349-84)

*The Making of the West*, Ch. 17, 603-43. Pay particular attention to 618-27.

Review documents in *The Making of the West*, 622-23

## Week Four

Feb 24 (Tues) The Art of the Baroque: Velazquez, Rembrandt, Vermeer

### **FIRST PAPER DUE**

Feb 26 (Thurs) Restoration, Glorious Revolution & Continental Anglophilia in the Early 18<sup>th</sup> c.

\*The English Bill of Rights, 1689, from *Rationalism and Revolution, 1660-1815*, eds. T.G. Barnes and G.D. Feldman, 75

\*John Locke, Excerpt from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (from Herbert H. Rowen and Carl J. Ekberg, eds., *Early Modern Europe: A Book of Source Readings*, Peacock Publishers, 1973), 274-8

\*Voltaire, Excerpts from *Letters Concerning the English Nation*, from Jacob, *The Enlightenment*, 114-37

## Week Five

Mar. 2 (Tues) The Absolutism of Louis XIV: Bureaucracy and War

Review *The Making of the West*, 605-12

\*William Beik, *Louis XIV and Absolutism: A Brief Study with Documents*, 1-16, 82-107

Mar. 4 (Thurs) The Absolutism of Louis XIV: Versailles and Culture  
Duc de St Simon, *Mémoires*, excerpts posted on the course website.

### Week Six

Mar. 9 (Tues) The *Encyclopedia* of Diderot and d'Alembert: Preliminary Discourse  
*The Making of the West*, Ch. 18, 645-81  
\*“Preliminary Discourse”, in Denis Diderot's *The Encyclopedia*; selections.  
Edited and translated by Stephen J. Gendzier, pp. 1-53  
Browse the online version of the *Encyclopédie* (on the course website).  
Be sure to look at some of the plates.

Mar. 11 (Thurs) The *Encyclopedia* of Diderot and d'Alembert: Articles and Circulation  
*The Making of the West*, Ch. 19, 683-720  
\*Articles, in English translation, online. Read “Intolerance”, “Law of Nature”,  
“Philosopher”, “Sunday”.

**REVISED FIRST PAPER DUE** (*moved from 3/9*)

### Week Seven

Mar. 16 (Tues) The Enlightenment and the World: The Critique of Colonialism and Slavery?  
Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative*, 19-97, 166-78.  
\*Vincent Carretta, “Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa? New Light on an  
Eighteenth-Century Question of Identity,” *Slavery and Abolition: A Journal of  
Slave and Post-Slave Societies* 20 (December 1999): 96-105.

Mar. 18 (Thurs) The Enlightenment and the World: The Rise of "Race"?

**Spring Break (March 22-26)**

### Week Eight

Mar. 30 (Tues) Discussion: Voltaire  
Voltaire, *Treatise on Tolerance*, vi-xix, 3-105  
\*Review “Intolerance”, from the *Encyclopedia*.

Apr. 1 (Thurs) Film: *Ridicule* (102 min.)  
**SECOND PAPER DUE** (*moved from 3/18*)

### Week Nine

- Apr. 6 (Tues) The Enlightenment from Below  
\*Robert Darnton, "The High Enlightenment and the Low-Life of Literature in Pre-Revolutionary France" *Past & Present* 51 (May, 1971): 81-115. (J-STOR)  
\*Darrin McMahon, "A Century Blinded by Light", in *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford, 2001), 18-53.  
\*Review "Philosopher" from the *Encyclopedia*.

- Apr. 8 (Thurs) The legend of the *Ancien Regime* and the role of public opinion  
Film: second half of *Ridicule* (102 min.) and discussion

### **Week Ten**

- Apr. 13 (Tues) The Political Thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau  
\*Brief online biography of Rousseau  
\*Review "Natural Law" from the *Encyclopedia*.  
*Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, 49-61, 84-117  
*The Social Contract*, 181-2, 229-60

- Apr. 15 (Thurs) Origins of the French Revolution

### **Week Eleven**

- Apr. 20 (Tues) No Class (Patriot's Day)

- Apr. 22 (Thurs) The French Revolution: Events  
*The Making of the West*, Ch. 20, 723-61  
*Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*, skim 1-114  
(browse accompanying CD-ROM)  
plus supplementary reading for each student

**THIRD PAPER DUE** (preliminary sketch for the Trial of Louis XVI)

### **Week Twelve**

- Apr. 27 (Tues) The Trial of Louis XVI  
*Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*, focus on 62-66 in the text, and Chapter 6, "The Monarchy Falls" on the CD-ROM. Be sure to study all documents, images and songs that accompany Ch. 6 on the CD-ROM.
- Apr. 29 (Thurs) The Trial of Louis XVI

**Week Thirteen**

May 4 (Tues) Romanticism

*The Making of the West*, 763-801

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 3-68

May 6 (Thurs) Discussion: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 69-144

**Week Fourteen**

May 11 (Tues) Discussion: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 145-214

May 13 (Thurs) last day of classes

**FOURTH PAPER DUE**

*There is no Final Examination for this class*

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21H.433 The Age of Reason: Europe from the 17th to the Early 19th Centuries  
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