THE AGE OF REASON

Subject Description. Has there ever been an “Age of Reason?” In the western tradition, one might make claims for various moments during Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance. In this class, however, we will focus on the two centuries from the early 1600s to the early 1800s, a period when insights first developed in the natural sciences and mathematics were seized upon by social theorists, institutional reformers and political revolutionaries who sought to change themselves and the society in which they lived. Through the study of trials, art, literature, music, politics, philosophy, and culture more generally, we will consider evolution and revolution (and their opponents) in these two centuries.

Subject Requirements. Active class participation is central to our work together. Attendance is mandatory, and students are expected to arrive in class on time and prepared to discuss common readings. Students will write three seven-page papers during the term. Half the class members will rewrite the first essay, and half will have an opportunity to rewrite either the first or the second essay. In addition, to satisfy the CI-H speaking requirement, we will conduct three debates at the end of the term; each student will have a central speaking role in one of the debates. Instructions for the papers and debates will be distributed later in the term. There will be no midterm and no final. Each assignment will be weighted as follows in the calculation of the final grade, although these calculations will also take into account improved performance during the course of the semester:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three 7-page essays</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Debates</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>200</td>
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Required Reading. The following books are available for purchase at the MIT Bookstore; they will also be on reserve in the Hayden Library. All other class readings, indicated with an asterisk (*), are available online at the class website.

Peter A. Morton, ed. The Trial of Tempel Anneke (Broadview, 2006)
René Descartes, Discourse on Method (Hackett, 1998, 3rd ed.)
Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia (Bedford/St Martins, 2002)

Criteria for HASS CI Subjects. Communication intensive subjects in the humanities, arts, and social sciences should require at least 20 pages of writing divided among 3-5 assignments. Of
these 3-5 assignments, at least one should be revised and resubmitted. HASS CI subjects should further offer students substantial opportunity for oral expression, through presentations, student-led discussion, or class participation. In order to guarantee sufficient attention to student writing and substantial opportunity for oral expression, the maximum number of students per section in a HASS CI subject is 18, except in the case of a subject taught without sections (where the faculty member in charge is the only instructor). In that case, enrollments can rise to 25, if a writing fellow is attached to the subject.

**Statement on Cheating and Plagiarism:** The web now hosts many sites which offer college-level papers of varying quality on a variety of topics. I am well acquainted with these sites, and with others that offer detection services to professors. **Buying a paper and submitting it as your own work is cheating. Copying sections from someone else’s print or online work into your own without an acknowledgement is plagiarism.** MIT has strict policies against both activities that I will fully enforce. For the appropriate MIT definitions and policies, visit the following websites. If you are uncertain about what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, please contact me before submitting the work in question.

- MIT Online Writing Communication Center:  [http://writing.mit.edu/wcc](http://writing.mit.edu/wcc)
- Avoiding Plagiarism:  [http://writing.mit.edu/wcc/avoidingplagiarism](http://writing.mit.edu/wcc/avoidingplagiarism)

**Class Meetings and Reading Assignments**

**Week One**

2/4. Introduction: Ages of Reason


**Week Two**

2/9. The Waning of the Renaissance


2/11. The Cartesian Method
1. René Descartes, *The Discourse on Method*, all
2. *Optional: browse the “Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy” site on Descartes at [http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/d/descarte.htm](http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/d/descarte.htm)

**Week Three**

2/16.  No Class – Presidents’ Day

2/17. English Radicalism and *The Trial of Charles I, 1647-1649* [Monday schedule of classes]

1. *The Making of the West*, 540-7

2/18. More Trials: Galileo and Tempel Anneke

1. *The Making of the West*, 509-20
3. *The Trial of Tempel Anneke*, xiii-xliii (introduction)
4. First Paper Due

**Week Four**

2/23. Discussion of the Trial of Tempel Anneke

1. *The Trial of Tempel Anneke*, 3-151

2/25. Writing Workshop


3/4. Louis XIV, Versailles, and the Culture of Absolutism

1. Rewrite of First Paper Due (half the class)
Week Five

3/2. The Leibniz-Newton Debates: Religion, Politics, Science, Society (Guest Discussant: J.B. Shank, University of Minnesota)
    3. **"Excerpts, G.W. Leibniz and Samuel Clarke, Correspondence (Indianapolis, 2000), 4-22.

Week Six


3/11. No Class Meeting

3/14. Visit to the Museum of Fine Arts, 12-3 PM (Two visits of 1.5 hours each)

Week Seven

3/16. Encyclopedia Articles
    1. *Browse the online web site for English translations of Encyclopedia articles: http://www.hti.umich.edu/d/did/; read “Artichoke,” “Sunday,” “Philosopher,” “Tailor of Suits” and accompanying plates. [See stellar web site.]
    2. *Browse the French online version of the Encyclopedia at http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/ARTFL/projects/encyc/. Be sure to look at the engravings for “chirurgie” and “imprimerie.”

3/18. No Class Meeting
    1. Second Paper Due
Week Eight

3/30. A North American Perspective
1. *Read the English translation of the Encyclopedia article “Virginia” online:
   http://www.hti.umich.edu/d/did/

4/1. Discussion of Notes on the State of Virginia

Week Nine

4/6. The 1760s: Voltaire and Rousseau
3. *Optional: browse the “Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy” site on Rousseau at
   http://www.iep.utm.edu/r/rousseau.htm

4/8. Revolution in France I
1. The Making of the West, 747-52
   http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/, chapters 1-3, and browse the documents and images in the left-hand side-bar.
3. Rewrite of First or Second Paper Due (half the class)

Week Ten

4/13. Revolution in France II
1. The Making of the West, 752-73
   http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/, chapters 4-6, and browse the documents and images in the left-hand side-bar.

4/15. The Industrial “Revolution”
1. *The Making of the West*, review 714-23

**Week Eleven**

4/20. Patriots Day – No Class

4/22. From Saint Domingue to Haiti
   1. *The Making of the West*, review 567-77

**Week Twelve**

4/27. Inventing Human Rights I

4/29. Inventing Human Rights II

**Week Thirteen**

5/4. Debate I (Topic TBA)

5/6. Debate II (Topic TBA)

**Week Fourteen**

5/11. Debate III (Topic TBA)
5/13. Conclusion
1. Paper 3 Due

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NO FINAL EXAMINATION