“If one examines carefully the mid-point of the century in which we live, the events which excite us or at any rate occupy our minds, our customs, our achievements, and even our diversions, it is difficult not to see that in some respects a very remarkable change in our ideas is taking place, a change whose rapidity seems to promise an even greater transformation to come. Time alone will tell what will be the goal, the nature, and the limits of this revolution whose shortcomings and merits will be better known to posterity than to us...Our century is called, accordingly, the century of philosophy par excellence.”

—d’Alembert, *Elements of Philosophy, 1759*

This course examines the most important interactions to take place within and among society, politics, and culture that characterized the intellectual and philosophical transformation known as the Enlightenment. Influenced by revolutionary advancements in science and medicine, inflamed by seditious political treatises, and distrustful of Catholic reforms, enlightened thinkers of the eighteenth century sparked the emergence of a new political and literary culture. Ultimately, the intellectual advancements that excited d’Alembert and his fellow *philosophes* helped to shape the ideological foundations of the American and French Revolutions.

**Texts**

Pierre de Beaumarchais, *The Marriage of Figaro*
Cesare Beccaria, *On Crimes and Punishments*
Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*
Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle, *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds*
Arlette Farge and Jacques Revel, *The Vanishing Children of Paris*
John Locke, *Second Treatise on Civil Government*
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*
Voltaire, *Philosophical Letters*
Voltaire, *Candide*

URL numbers designate Internet readings
Movies
Amadeus
Ridicule
The Madness of King George
All movies will be shown on Monday evenings, not during class.

Learning Objectives:
In this class you will be expected to:
1. Demonstrate an understanding of the differences among social, cultural, and intellectual histories of the Enlightenment. Ideas can and do foment change, but they need social and cultural contexts in which to do it. Through written assignments and class presentations and discussions, you will demonstrate your ability to think critically about how early modern societies arrived at and dealt with this transitional moment in European history.

2. Assess and analyze the writing and rhetoric of the leading intellectuals of eighteenth-century Europe.

3. Employ various forms of written and oral argumentation and construct your own historical analyses.

4. Work on collaborative projects.

Assignments
The class will be divided into five groups with three students per group. Each group will be assigned three topics, one for each individual. During the semester you will be responsible for researching and analyzing your own topic. You will then synthesize your topic with your group’s other two topics and present your synthesis to the class. Ultimately, all five groups will incorporate their syntheses into the final, collaborative Social Contract that the class will compose as a whole.

Over the course of the semester each of you will submit:
1. Five brief commentaries on the assigned reading.
2. A proposal for your individual essay, which will include a thesis statement, an outline, and a preliminary bibliography.
3. A critical analysis of the most important article in your bibliography.
4. A longer analysis of your topic that places it in the broader context of the Age of Enlightenment.
5. A portfolio of all of your corrected written work along with a synthesis and assessment of the various themes covered over the course of the semester.
Each group:
1. Will submit a collaborative essay synthesizing its three topics and a proposal for an oral presentation.
2. Will present its collaborative work to the class.

Social Contract

The purpose of these assignments:
1. To teach you how to write effective outlines, theses, and analytical reviews as well as how to construct historical and historiographical arguments. The purpose of the portfolio is for you to have the opportunity to correct your work and to discuss it with me in individual conferences at the end of the semester.
2. To work together to create an eighteenth-century Social Contract on which all course participants must agree. Understanding this collaborative process is a major component in comprehending the nature of the Enlightenment’s ideals.

Schedule of Classes

Week I

Introduction
Tuesday
Read: Gay, The Enlightenment, Introduction
Read: Immanuel Kant, What is Enlightenment?
http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/kant-whatis.html

Thursday
Read: Darnton, The Great Cat Massacre, Introduction, chapters 1-2

Week II

Human Nature and Political Philosophy: The Early Leaders
Tuesday
Read: Locke, The Second Treatise on Civil Government

Thursday
Read: Hobbes, Elements of Law, Natural and Politic
http://www.constitution.org/th/elements.htm
Week III  The Pursuit of Modernity
Tuesday    Read: Gay, The Enlightenment chapters I & II

Thursday   Read: The Great Cat Massacre, Chapter 5
Read: Jean Le Rond d'Alembert: Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia of Diderot
Essay proposal due on Friday by 5pm

Week IV    The Emancipation of Art and Literature
Monday     Movie: Amadeus

Tuesday    Read: Chapters V & VI, Gay, The Enlightenment

Thursday   Read: Beaumarchais, The Marriage of Figaro
Read: Salon Life
http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/18salons.html
Salon: Was Beaumarchais’ play seditious?

Week V     The First Social Scientists
Tuesday    Read: Read: Fontenelle, Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds

Thursday   Read: Voltaire, Candide
Critical Article Analysis due on Friday by 5pm

Week VI    The Politics of Toleration and Liberal Justice
Monday     Movie: The Madness of King George

Tuesday    John Locke, Letter Concerning Toleration
http://www.constitution.org/jl/tolerati.htm

Thursday   Voltaire, Philosophical Letters

Week VII   The Politics of Experience
Tuesday    Read: Chapter IX, Gay, The Enlightenment

Thursday   Sutcliffe, Judaism and Enlightenment, Introduction and Part III
Read: Baron Montesquieu, Spirit of the Laws, 1748, excerpts
http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/montesquieu-spirit.html

Week VIII  Spring Break
Week IX  The Politics of Crime and Punishment
Tuesday  Read: Farge and Revel, *The Vanishing Children of Paris*
Thursday  Read: Beccaria, *Of Crimes and Punishments*
          Longer Topic Analysis due Friday by 5pm

Week X  Read: Rousseau, *The Social Contract*
Tuesday  Read: Rousseau, *The Social Contract*
Thursday  Read: Rousseau, *The Social Contract*

Week XI  The Politics of Education
Monday  Movie: *Ridicule*
Tuesday  Read: Chapter X, and Finale, Gay, *The Enlightenment*
Thursday  Read: Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*
          [http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/mw-vind.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/mw-vind.html)
          Read: Daniel Defoe, *On the Education of Women*

Week XII  Presentations and discussions of Group Syntheses
Read: Materials to be determined and distributed by presenters
          Group Synthesis due

Week XIII  Writing a Social Contract
Read: Group Syntheses

Week XIV  Summing up and individual conferences
          Portfolio due

Participation
The success of this course will depend on your active participation in class discussions.
In addition to our weekly conversations, you will be invited on one occasion during the
semester to a “Salon” in my home where we will discuss the issue of the day. This will
give you an opportunity to take a stand on certain topics and argue them constructively.

Grading
Written assignments
Reading Commentaries  10 points combined
Essay Proposal      5 points
Article Analysis    15 points
Longer Topic Analysis 25 points
Portfolio          15 points
Collaborative Essay 10 points

Note: To pass this course you must submit all of the above written assignments.
Participation
Presentation 10 points
Social Contract 10 points

Grading criteria for class participation
- You should read all of the assigned materials before they are due.
- I will expect you to formulate questions about the materials and offer them for discussion during class time.
- You should be able to demonstrate that you understand how to assess the materials in the context of the themes of the course. You can accomplish this by considering why I have included a certain source, article, or book on the syllabus. I encourage you to criticize the materials, and I expect you to defend your critiques.
- Your rigorous attention to the reading will mean that you will be able to ask better questions and be a more engaged member of the class discussions.
- I expect you to draw on our discussions in your written work.
- Class participation enhances the writing component of the course; it may never replace it.