GLOBALIZING THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Hist 72600
MALS 70600
Professor Helena Rosenblatt
Mondays, 4:15-6:15
hrosenblatt@gc.cuny.edu

Course Description:

The Eighteenth-Century European Enlightenment is widely seen as a transformative moment in Western culture, one which gave birth to many of our most cherished ideals. We are often told, for example, that it is to the Enlightenment that we owe our modern notions of human rights, representative government, and liberal democracy. However, the recent “global turn” in scholarship has led historians to ask some new and questions. How, for example, did eighteenth-century European thinkers perceive the world beyond their own borders? How did they get their information about the outside world and to what purposes was that information put? What were there attitudes toward race, slavery, imperialism, “primitives” and gender? Did regions outside of Europe experience an Enlightenment too? With the help of both primary and secondary sources, we will ask how adopting a “global” perspective on the Enlightenment might change our view of it. Is it even correct to call the Enlightenment European?

Learning Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to

- Read texts more critically and effectively
- Identify and summarize ideas in texts in an articulate and persuasive manner, verbally and in writing
- Display a grasp of the key methodological questions involved in “globalizing” the Enlightenment
- Display a grasp of some the key concepts that can be used to illustrate the global perspective--and influence-- of European eighteenth century thinkers.

Requirements:

- Regular class participation demonstrating careful reading of all assigned texts: 30%
- 2-4 sentence summaries of the argument(s) of each (all) of the weekly readings. Sentences may be in bullet form and must be handed in in class: 20% (TEN times over the course of the term)
- Final paper: What does it mean to “globalize” the Enlightenment and what are its advantages? Are there any disadvantages? 50%
VERY MINOR CHANGES TO THIS SYLLABUS MAY BE MADE

HARD TO OBTAIN ARTICLES WILL BE PROVIDED BY INSTRUCTOR

RECOMMENDED FOR PURCHASE: David Harvey, *The French Enlightenment and its Others. The Mandarin, the Savage, and the Invention of the Human Sciences.*

**Week One: Introduction to the Course 9/5**

**Week Two: What is Enlightenment? (9/9)**

Required:


*Presentations:*

Voltaire, *Candide*

**Week Three: What is Global Intellectual History?(9/16)**

Required:


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdU_mX2K0QM


*Presentations:*

Charles W. J. Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason*, chapters 1-3

**Week Four: Production of Knowledge in the Enlightenment (9/23)**

Required:


*Presentations*


**Week Five: Cosmopolitanism (10/7)**


Presentations:

Margaret Jacob, Strangers Nowhere in the World. The Rise of Cosmopolitanism in Early Modern Europe, chapter 2 “Alchemy, Science and a Universalist Language”


**Week Six: The Noble Savage (10/16)**

Required:

David Harvey, The French Enlightenment and its Others, chapter 4: “The Last Frontiers.”


Presentations:


Denis Diderot, *Supplement to Bougainville’s Voyage*, selections.


Uday Mehta *Liberalism and Empire. A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought*, chapters 2 and 3.


**Week Seven: Commerce /Empire (10/21)**


Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire. The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France*, chapters 2 “Adam Smith on Societal Development and Colonial Rule” and 3 “Edmund Burke’s Peculiar Universalism.”


**Presentations:**


**Week Eight: Race and Slavery (10/28)**


Silvia Sebastiani, “Race as a Construction of the Other: “Native Americans” and “Negroes” in the 18th Century Editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*,” Chapter 7, 195-228.

*Presentations*


**Week Nine: Religious Enlightenment (11/4)**

Required:


Presentations:


*The Treatise of the Three Imposters*

**Week Ten: The Muslim Other (11/11)**

Required:

David Allen Harvey, chapter 1: “Philosophy in the Seraglio: Orientalism and the Enlightenment.”


*Presentations:*


Lady Montagu, Selected letters available online

https://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Texts/montagu-letters-abridged.html

(Letters I, V, X, XII, XXIV, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXIX, XXXI, XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXVIII, XXIX, XL, XLII, LI, LIII, LIV, LVI, LVIII)

**Week Eleven: Islamic Enlightenment (11/18)**

Required:

Christopher Bellaigue, *The Islamic Enlightenment*, Liveright, 2018

**Week Twelve: Haiti (11/25)**

Required:


C.L.R. James, “The Property,” in *The Black Jacobins* (1962), 6-26


*Presentations:*

Alyssa Sepinwall, “Beyond the Black Jacobins: Haitian Revolutionary Historiography Comes of Age,” *Journal of Haitian Studies*, (Spring 2017), vol. 23 (1) pp. 4-34.


**Week Thirteen: Human Rights (12/2)**

Required:

Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*

Presentations:


**Week 14: Conclusions (12/9)**

Required:

David Harvey, *The French Enlightenment and its Others*, Introduction and conclusion

Jürgen Osterhammel, *Unfabling the East*, Introduction and conclusion.


Presentations:


