

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 late 1600s to the mid 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, 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 two in-class debates on 3/11 and 4/22; 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:

Class Participation	20 points
Three 7-page essays	50 points each, 150 points total
Class Debates	30 points
<hr/> TOTAL	200 points

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.

Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs and Margaret C. Jacob, *Newton and the Culture of Newtonianism*

Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle, *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds*

Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Bedford/St Martins, 2002)

Optional: Lynn Hunt, *et al.*, *The Making of the West: Peoples and Cultures*, 2nd ed. Vol. II: *Since 1340*

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>>
- Avoiding Plagiarism: <http://writing.mit.edu/wcc/avoidingplagiarism>

Class Meetings and Reading Assignments

Week One

2/2. Introduction: Ages of Reason

1. * Robin Briggs, "Embattled Faiths, Religion and Natural Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century," in Euan Cameron, ed. *Early Modern Europe: An Oxford History* (Oxford, 1999), 171-205.

2/4. Catholic Theology, Politics, and Atheism ca. 1700

1. * Bishop Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, *Politics Derived from the Holy Scripture*, in Keith M. Baker, ed. *University of Chicago Readings in Western Civilization. Volume 7: The Old Regime and the French Revolution* (Chicago, 1987), 31-47.
2. * *The Treatise of the Three Impostors*, in Margaret Jacob, ed. *The Enlightenment: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford/St Martins, 2001), 94-114

Week Two

2/9. Newtonianism

1. Dobbs and Jacob, *Newton and the Culture of Newtonianism*, 3-37, 61-104.

2/11. The Leibniz-Clark Disputes

1. * Steven Shapin, "Of Gods and Kings: Natural Philosophy and Politics in the Leibniz-Clarke Disputes," *Isis*, 72 (1981), 187-215
2. * "Excerpts, G.W. Leibniz and Samuel Clarke, *Correspondence* (Indianapolis, 2000), 4-22.

Week Three

2/16. No Class – Presidents' Day [Monday Schedule of Classes]

2/18. European Media ca. 1700: Books and Theater

1. **First Paper Due**

Week Four

2/23. Fontenelle: Science as Seduction

1. Fontenelle, *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds*, 3-73

2/25. Writing Workshop

Week Five

3/2. *Encyclopédie* I: The Structure of Knowledge

1. *Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse*, all
2. **Encyclopédie*, Frontispiece and Explanation
3. **Encyclopédie*, "Tree of Knowledge"
4. *Robert Darnton, "Philosophers Trim the Tree of Knowledge: The Epistemological Strategy of the *Encyclopédie*," in Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York, 1984), 191-213.

3/4. Visit to the Maihaugen Gallery and the MIT Archives and Special Collections

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

Week Six

3/9. *Encyclopédie* II: The Place of the Mechanical Arts

1. *Denis Diderot, "Art," *Encyclopédie* Vol. 1 (1751), pp. 713-17.
2. *Cynthia Koepp, "The Alphabetical Order: Work in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*," in Koepp and Kaplan, eds. *Work in France: Representations, Meanings, Organization, and Practice* (Cornell UP, 1986), 229-57
3. *John R. Pannebaker, "Representing Mechanical Arts in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*," *Technology and Culture* 39-1 (Jan. 1998), 33-73
4. *Joachim Faiguet de Villeneuve, "Sunday," *Encyclopédie* Vol. 4 (1754), 1007-9

3/11. First Debate: "The editors, writers, and illustrators of the *Encyclopédie* were first and foremost committed to political democracy and economic equality."

Week Seven

3/16. "Enlightened" Europe Imagines the Rest of the World

1. *Denis Diderot, *Supplement to Bougainville's Voyage*, in *Diderot: Political Writings*, eds. John Hope Mason and Robert Wokler (Cambridge UP, 1992), 31-75.

3/18. Introduction to Thomas Jefferson and the Enlightenment in the Americas

1. **Second Paper Due**

SPRING VACATION, MARCH 22-26

Week Eight

3/30. Thomas Jefferson I

1. *Read the English translation of the *Encyclopedia* article “Virginia” online:
<http://www.hti.umich.edu/d/did/>
2. Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ed. David Waldstreicher (Bedford/St Martin’s, 2002), 43-77

4/1. Thomas Jefferson II

1. Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ed. David Waldstreicher (Bedford/St Martin’s, 2002), 79-213

Week Nine

4/6. French Revolution I: The Ideals of 1789

1. **Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*, Ch 1, “Social Causes of the Revolution,” Ch. 2, “Monarchy Embattled,” and Ch 3, “The Enlightenment and Human Rights,” Ch. 5, “Women and the Revolution,” (<http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution>)
2. * “Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen” (1789)
3. * “Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen” (1791)
4. * “The Constitution of 1791”

4/8. French Revolution II: The Lessons of 1793-1794

1. * *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*, Ch 4, “Paris and the Politics of Rebellion,” Ch 6, “The Monarchy Falls,” and Ch 7, “War, Terror, and Resistance to the Revolution.” (<http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution>)
2. * Documents on the Terror, in Laura Mason and Tracey Rizzo, *The French Revolution: A Document Collection* (Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 225-43.
3. * “Why Terror in 1793-1794?” in Frank A. Kafker, et al., *The French Revolution: Conflicting Interpretations* (Krieger, 5th ed., 2002), 185-226.
4. **Rewrite of First or Second Paper Due (half the class)**

Week Ten

4/13. Haitian Revolution I: The Slave Uprising of 1791

1. * Laurent Dubois and John D. Garrigus, “Introduction: Revolution, Emancipation, and Independence,” in *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean 1789-1804* (Bedford/St Martin’s, 2006), 7-42.
2. * Documents on the Slave Uprising of 1791, in Dubois and Geggus, *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean*, 86-107
3. * “Inside the Insurgency: Gros’s *Historick Recital*,” in Jeremy D. Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection* (University of Chicago

Press, 2007), 105-55

4/15. Haitian Revolution II: 1804 and Beyond

1. * “War and Independence, 1801-1804,” in Dubois and Geggus, *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean*, 167-87.
2. * Haitian Constitution of 1801
3. * The Haitian Declaration of Independence, 1804
4. * The Haitian Constitution, 1805
5. * Mark Danner, “To Heal Haiti, Look to History, Not Nature,” *New York Times*, January 22, 2010

Week Eleven

4/20. Patriots Day – No Class

4/22. Second Debate: The Atlantic Revolutions at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century did NOT lead to more political freedom and material equality for people in Europe and the Americas”

Week Twelve

4/27. The Political Backlash: Conservatism

1. *Massimo Boffa, “Counter-Revolution,” in *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, eds. François Furet and Mona Ozouf (Harvard, 1989), 640-8
2. *Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Excerpted in Keith Michael Baker, ed. *The University of Chicago Readings in Western Civilization. Vol. 7: The Old Regime and the French Revolution* (University of Chicago Press, 1987), 428-45.
3. *Joseph de Maistre, *Considerations on France*, excerpts in *University of Chicago Readings in Western Civilization, Vol. 7: The Old Regime and the French Revolution* (Chicago, 1987), 445-52.

4/29. The Cultural Backlash: Romanticism

1. * Warren Breckman, “Introduction: A Revolution in Culture,” in *European Romanticism: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford/St Martin’s, 2008), 1-41
2. *William Wordsworth, *Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting The Banks Of The Wye During A Tour. July 13, 1798*,
<http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww138.html>

Week Thirteen

5/4. The Way Forward? Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century

1. *John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, excerpted in *Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West* (Columbia University Press, 3rd ed., 1961), 592-619.
2. Optional: browse the “Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy” site on Mill at <http://www.iep.utm.edu/m/milljs.htm>

5/6. An Industrial Revolution, or an Industrious One?

1. *Kevin Reilly, ed. *Readings in World Civilizations. Volume 2: The Development of the Modern World* (St. Martins, 1992), 121-34
2. *Katharine J. Lualdi, ed. *Sources of the Making of the West. Peoples and Cultures: Volume 2: Since 1500* (St Martins, 2005, 2nd ed.), 119-29
3. *Jan de Vries, “The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution,” *The Journal of Economic History* 54-2 (June 1994): 249-70.

Week Fourteen

5/11. Marx

1. *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, all. (Consult online or buy your own copy. There are many cheap editions available new and used.)

5/13. Conclusion

1. **Paper 3 Due**

NO FINAL EXAMINATION

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

21H.433 The Age of Reason: Europe from the 17th to the Early 19th Centuries
Spring 2011

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.