

## 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 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, 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 3/10 and 4/21; 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
<u>Class Debates</u>	<u>30 points</u>
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.

Kathryn A. Edwards & Susie Speakman Sutch, eds. *Leonarde’s Ghost: Popular Piety and “The Appearance of a Spirit” in 1628*

René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* (Hackett, 1998, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)

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

Julien Offray de la Mettrie, *Man a Machine* (Hackett, 1994)

**Optional:** Lynn Hunt, *et al.*, *The Making of the West: Peoples and Cultures*, 3rd ed. Vol. II: *Since 1340* (Bedford/St Martin's, 2010)

**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**

#### **2/1. Introduction**

#### **2/3. Witchcraft and Magic**

1. \*Guido Ruggiero, "Witchcraft and Magic," in Guido Ruggiero, ed. *A Companion to the Worlds of the Renaissance* (Oxford, 2002), 475-90.

2. Edwards and Sutch, *Leonarde's Ghost*, 1-45.
3. OPTIONAL: Hunt, 468-76.

## **Week Two**

### **2/8. Leonarde's Ghost**

1. Edwards and Sutch, *Leonarde's Ghost*, 46-119

**2/10. No Class (Instructor out of town)**

## **Week Three**

### **2/15. The Cartesian Insight**

1. René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, all.

### **2/17. Cartesianism in the Seventeenth Century**

1. **First Paper Due**

## **Week Four**

**2/22. No Class – Presidents' Day [Monday Schedule of Classes]**

**2/24. Writing Workshop**

## **Week Five**

### **3/1. English Radicalism and The Trial of Charles I, 1647-1649**

1. *The Making of the West*, 540-7
2. \* "An Agreement of the People," in Eric Cochrane, Charles M. Gray, and Mark Kishlansky, eds. *University of Chicago Readings in Western Civilization. Volume 6, Early Modern Europe: Crisis of Authority* (Chicago, 1987), 342-49.
3. \* "The Putney Debates, 1647," in Eric Cochrane, Charles M. Gray, and Mark Kishlansky, eds. *University of Chicago Readings in Western Civilization. Volume 6, Early Modern Europe: Crisis of Authority* (Chicago, 1987), 349-84.
4. OPTIONAL: Hunt, 497-504.

### **3/3. 1688 in England**

1. \* “The Declaration of Rights. 1689,” in Steven C. A. Pincus, ed. *England’s Glorious Revolution, 1688-1689: A Brief History With Documents* (Bedford/St Martin’s, 2006), 69-71
2. \* “Roger L’Estrange and John Locke as Case Study,” in Steven C. A. Pincus, ed. *England’s Glorious Revolution, 1688-1689: A Brief History With Documents* (Bedford/St Martin’s, 2006), 139-67.
3. **Rewrite of First Paper Due (half the class)**

### **3/5. Visit to the MFA**

1. Details to be announced in class

## **Week Six**

### **3/8. Newtonianism**

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

### **3/10. First Debate**

1. Details to be announced in class

## **Week Seven**

### **3/15. State and Art in the Dutch Golden Age**

1. \* Sir William Temple, “The United Provinces: A Description and an Analysis,” in Herbert H. Rowen, ed. *The Low Countries in Early Modern Times: A Documentary History* (New York, 1972), 213-23.
2. \* Svetlana Alpers, “With a Sincere Hand and a Faithful Eye: The Craft of Representation,” in *The Art of Describing: Dutch Seventeenth-Century Art* (Chicago, 1983), pp. 72-118.
3. OPTIONAL: Hunt, 504-7.

### **3/17. Spinozism and the Idea of a “Radical” Enlightenment**

1. \*Baruch Spinoza, “Preface,” and “Chapter 1: On Prophecy,” from *Theological-Political Treatise*, ed. Jonathan Israel (Cambridge, 2007), 3-26.
2. \*Jonathan Israel, “Introduction,” in *Theological-Political Treatise*, ed. Jonathan Israel (Cambridge, 2007), viii-xxxiv

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**SPRING VACATION, MARCH 21-25**

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## Week Eight

### **3/29. Enlightenment France**

#### **1. Second Paper Due**

### **3/31. Voltaire Goes to England, and Persians Come to Paris**

1. \*Voltaire, *The Philosophical Letters*, Letters 8-11, trans. Leonard Tancock (Penguin Classics, 1980), pp. 44-56.
2. \*Montesquieu, *The Persian Letters*, letters 1-4, 11-14, 24-35, 147-161.
3. OPTIONAL: Hunt, 561-80.

## Week Nine

### **4/5. Are Men Machines? Are Machines Alive?**

1. Julien Offray de la Mettrie, *Man a Machine*, 20-76
2. \*Jessica Riskin, "Eighteenth-Century Wetware," *Representations* 83 (Summer 2003): 97-125.

### **4/7. 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. \*Denis Diderot, "Art," *Encyclopédie* Vol. 1 (1751), pp. 713-17.
5. \*Joachim Faiguet de Villeneuve, "Sunday," *Encyclopédie* Vol. 4 (1754), 1007-9

## Week Ten

### **4/12. Encyclopédie II: The Place of the Mechanical Arts (Visit to MIT's Rare Books and Special Collections Room)**

1. \*Web site: "Technology and Enlightenment: The Mechanical Arts in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*."
2. **Rewrite of First or Second Paper Due (half the class)**

### **4/14. Jean-Jacques Rousseau vs. The French Enlightenment**

1. \*Rousseau, *A Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* (1750), in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and the Discourses* (London, 1973), 3-29.
2. \*Rousseau, Educational theories excerpted from various writings, in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, His Educational Theories Selected from Emile, Julie, and Other Writings* ed. R.L. Archer (Woodbury NY, 1964), 55-75.

## Week Eleven

### **4/19. Patriots Day – No Class**

### **4/21. Second Debate**

1. Details to be announced in class

## Week Twelve

### **4/26. 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”
5. OPTIONAL: Hunt, 581-608.

### **4/28. 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, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., 2002), 185-226.
4. OPTIONAL: Hunt, 608-20.

## Week Thirteen

### **5/3. 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. OPTIONAL: Hunt, 621-37, 651-59.

**5/5. The Cultural Backlash: Romanticism**

1. \*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>
2. OPTIONAL: Hunt, 659-61.

**Week Fourteen**

**5/10. What is Enlightenment? (1784 & 1984)**

1. \*Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment? (1784)" in Margaret C. Jacob, ed. *The Enlightenment: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston, 2001), 202-8.
2. \*Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment? (1984)" in Paul Rabinow, ed. *A Michel Foucault Reader* (New York, 1984), 32-50.

**5/12. Conclusion**

1. **Paper 3 Due**

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**No Final Exam**

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<http://ocw.mit.edu>

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