

## The *philosophes* and the public in Enlightenment France

**Course Code:**

**Module Title:** The *philosophes* and the public in Enlightenment France

**ECTS allocation** 10 ECTS

**Co-Ordinator:** Dr. Joseph Clarke

**Teaching Staff:** Dr. Joseph Clarke

**Course Overview and Aims:** The nature of the Enlightenment in France remains one of the most contentious questions in cultural history. This course introduces students to some of the major themes in, and most influential interpretations of, the French Enlightenment through a selection of texts by authors such as Voltaire, Montesquieu, Diderot and Rousseau.

In addition to these canonical texts, the course will also look at less familiar sources, the *ancien régime's* 'forbidden bestsellers', its periodical literature and private correspondence, in order to explore the relationship between writers and the reading public in its eighteenth-century context, and the problems of interpretation this poses for our understanding of the Enlightenment as a whole.

**Working Methods:** The course consists of a series of weekly two-hour graduate seminars. Students are required to attend all seminars, make presentations based on their own research and submit research-based essays.

**Syllabus:** The syllabus reflects key questions and recent research on the Enlightenment in France. In the coming academic year, the weekly programme will be as follows:

- I An Introduction to Enlightenment in France
- II The *Philosophes* and their *Encyclopédie*
- III The Idea of Nature in Enlightened Thought
- IV Nature and Nature's God: the Problem of Belief
- V Nature and its Contradictions I: The Problem of Gender

- VI Nature and its Contradictions II: The *Philosophes* and the Wider World
- VII Nature, Reason and Sentiment: Rousseau and his Readers
- VIII Human Nature and Progress: The Future Imagined by the *Philosophes*
- IX *Fin de siècle* reflections on *la philosophie*

**Assessment:** Students will be assessed on the basis of their participation in seminars and on the completion of two major research-based essays of between 2,500 and 3,000 words in length.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Students will

- Acquire a research led understanding of the French Enlightenment and its place in wider European history.
- Become acquainted with the relevant historical sources
- Become acquainted with relevant historical debate and interpretations, and learn to communicate their findings to an interested audience.

**Introductory Reading:**

- K. M. Baker, *What's left of Enlightenment? A Postmodern Question*, (Stanford, 2001)
- D. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: a cultural history of the French enlightenment*, (Ithaca, 1994)
- N. Hampson, *The Enlightenment*, (Harmondsworth, 1968)
- J. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: philosophy and the making of modernity, 1650-1750*, (Oxford, 2001)
- D. Outram, *The Enlightenment*, (Cambridge, 1995)
- D. Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, (New Haven, 1998)