Course Overview

This course examines the pendulum swings of struggle in three realms whose conflicted history defines the American Enlightenment: democracy, racial equality, and early feminism. We will study the Great Awakening in New England, the American Revolution and the conflict over the U.S. Constitution, the impact of the French and the Haitian Revolutions in America, and the transatlantic influence of Mary Wollstonecraft. Our focus will be on a narrow historical period, less than three-quarters of a century, but we will gesture toward generalizations about the nature of Enlightenment thought as such: how its claims on behalf of universal humanity could (and can) be used as a tool to effect real social equality, and how we are to understand the relationship between political speech and social conflict. Our texts are not specifically literary, but we will pay attention to literary and rhetorical effects: our interest lies not only in the political claims of these texts, but also in how our writers make their claims. We will close the course by opening a discussion on the current state of claims for universal human rights.

Revolutions are enticing, exciting. The texts we will read in this course are often explosive. But, as the man said, the revolution will not be televised: much revolutionary writing is difficult, rich stuff that demands your attention, your concentration. We will find revolutionary energy in some familiar places: on the barricades, in the smell of burning sugar cane, in the implacable intelligence of the pamphleteer. We will also find it in less likely sites: in the quiet of a meditation on the Gospels, in the babble of a precocious school kid, in a pair of couplets coiled with tension. Our task is to read across these scenes of revolution, to connect them, to recognize how the history they bear matters to us.

Requirements and Policies

Reading. Read and reread. Then read again. Make notes in the margins, underline and circle words and phrases: be an active reader. Do this with each text in advance of our session, and arrive with a handful of points or questions for discussion.

Writing. A) Research option. This course offers a research option for students who would like to write a longer essay in fulfillment of the prerequisite for an English honors thesis. If you choose the research option, you will write a 20-25pp. essay on a topic you have discussed with me, and you will turn in components of the project -- outline, annotated bibliography, and final draft -- during the term.

B) Two essays. If you do not choose the research option, you will write two shorter essays, of 5-7pp. and 10-12pp., respectively, on either a topic I provide or one that you have discussed with me.

C) Keyword paper. Everyone -- research-option taker or otherwise -- will write one short paper (4-5pp.) discussing a keyword from the course. Start paying attention to words and concepts that appear in our texts from the first readings and keep track of them. I will provide a list of suggested keywords, but you will need to locate these and coordinate their uses and transformations across several texts. We will discuss keywords during our 1/26 session.

Discussion leaders. Each member of the seminar will pair up with another to lead discussion for one session. “Leading” discussion does not mean that you will become our Great Dictators for the day. Instead, it means several specific things. First, you will gather several passages from
the reading that you think are especially important: they may be distillations of the major themes of the text; they may be particularly difficult or confusing passages that you think we should interpret together; they may be moments that connect powerfully with other texts we have read, or that develop the idea of revolution. Second, you will not only tell us why you find these passages interesting, but you will facilitate a group discussion: posing questions and helping to connect our responses with one another. The best discussion leaders push our *collective* discussion forward: the key thing is not to be smart yourself, but rather to give occasion for the seminar as a whole to be smart.

*Participation.* This course is a seminar: we succeed or fail collectively. You should arrive at each of our sessions ready to talk and ready to listen with engagement and generosity to your fellow students. If a text excites you, talk about it. If something confuses you, ask questions. If you agree with comments someone makes, try to elaborate your agreement with the class. If a text bores you, ask yourself why and then talk about your response. If you disagree with someone, explain why. In short, move your mouth -- in ways that contribute to our common enterprise in the seminar.

*Attendance, deadlines.* More than three absences will be grounds for failing the course. All due dates are firm: extensions will be granted only in cases of serious illness or personal crisis. Don't even ask.

**Grades**

Your final grade breaks down like this:

- 60%: Two essays (5-7pp., 20%; 10-12pp., 40%) or research essay
- 20%: Participation
- 10%: Discussion leading
- 10%: Keyword paper

*Students with disabilities.* It is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, and for making requests known to me in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible (during the second week of the semester) so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at [www.wesleyan.edu/deans/disability-students.html](http://www.wesleyan.edu/deans/disability-students.html).

**Texts** (available at Broad Street Books; most on reserve at Olin Library):

- Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Hackett)
- Charles Brockden Brown, *Ormond; or, The Secret Witness* (Broadview)
- Dubois and Garrigus, ed., *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford-St. Martin’s)
- Leonora Sansay, *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo and Laura* (Broadview)
- Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Vindications* (Broadview)
- Hannah Foster, *The Coquette* (Oxford UP)
Schedule (texts marked with an asterisk will be available on the course Blackboard site)

Week 1
Tuesday, 1/21 – Introduction: The History and Language of Revolutions
Overview of Enlightenment, discussion of the status of events in history and of the global context of American Enlightenment. Introduction to the units of the course.

Week 2
Tuesday, 1/26 - Enlightenment and Revolution

I. DEMOCRACY 1: GREAT AWAKEENINGS

Thursday, 1/28 - New Lights vs. Old Lights in New England
Charles Chauncy, “Enthusiasm Described and Caution’d Against” (1742)*

Week 3
Tuesday, 2/2 - Pietism, Persuasion, and Desire in the British Empire
Edwards, “Apostrophe to Sarah Pierpont” (c.1723)*
Sarah Pierpont Edwards, personal narrative (1742)*

Thursday, 2/4 - Emancipatory Conversions 1
Elizabeth Ashbridge, “Some Account of the Fore-part of the Life” (1755)*

Week 4
Tuesday, 2/9 -- Emancipatory Conversions 2
James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars In the LIFE* (1772) (Carretta 32-58; bio. note 393)
Benjamin Franklin, from the *Autobiography*, Part Three (1788-89)*
Jupiter Hammon, poems (Carretta 26-31; bio. note 394)
II. DEMOCRACY 2: THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Thursday, 2/11 -- Representation and Political Revolution 1
Ruth H. Bloch, “The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America”
Jefferson, from the Autobiography (1821)
Paul Revere, engraving of the Boston Massacre

Week 5
Tuesday, 2/16 -- Representation and Political Revolution 2
Samuel Johnson, Taxation No Tyranny (1775)
Revolutionary-period cartoons

Thursday, 2/18 -- Common Sense?
Thomas Paine, Common Sense (1776) (Paine Reader pp. 65-115)
Phillis Wheatley, “To the King’s Most Excellent Majesty. 1768,” “To the Right Honorable William, Early of Dartmouth,” “To His Excellency General Washington” (Carretta 62, 65, 67-68)

III. DEMOCRACY?: THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

Week 6
Tuesday, 2/23 – Democracy and National Consolidation
Articles of Confederation (1777)
U.S. Constitution (1787)
Franklin, Speech at the Convention (1787)
“Z Replies to Franklin’s Speech” (1787)
Fisher Ames, “The Volcano of Democracy” (1788)
Amos Singletary and Jonathan Smith, “Leviathan” (1788)
William Findley and James Wilson, exchange on consolidation and slavery (1787)
Gary J. Kornblith and John M. Murrin, “The Making and Unmaking of an American Ruling Class” (optional)

Thursday, 2/25 – Constitutional Language
Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, James Madison, The Federalist preface and numbers 1, 2, 10, 51, 85 (1787)
Dissent of the Minority of the Pennsylvania Convention (1787)
“America” (Noah Webster), Reply to the Pennsylvania Minority (1787)
“K” (Benjamin Franklin) on Antifederalists (1788)
James Wilson, Speech at the Philadelphia Meeting (1787)
Francis Hopkinson, “The Raising: A New Song for Federal Mechanics” (1788)

IV. RIGHTS OF MAN 1: THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND AMERICA

Week 7
Tuesday, 3/2 – Revolution and the Old Regime
Edmund Burke, from Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790)

Thursday, 3/4 – Rights of Man
Paine, from Rights of Man (1791-92) (Paine Reader)
Engl 302/Amst 346 – Spring 2010

Paine cartoons
French Revolutionary calendar

**Friday, 3/5 - First essay (5-7pp.) due via email at 5pm.**

**Weeks 8 and 9:** Spring Break

**Week 10**
Tuesday, 3/23 – Revolution, Seduction, and the Gothic
Charles Brockden Brown, *Ormond; or, The Secret Witness* (1799) (Read intro. and novel through p. 152)

Thursday, 3/25 – *Ormond* (finish the novel)

**Week 11**
Tuesday, 3/30 – Black Atlantic Writing in Turbulent Times
Introduction to Carretta 1-16
John Marrant, *A Narrative* (1785) (Carretta 110-133; bio. note 396)
Johnson Green, *Life and Confession* (1786) (Carretta 134-141; bio. note 392-393)
Belinda, “Petition of an African Slave” (1782) (Carretta 142-144; bio. note 389-390)
Quobna Ottobah Cugoano, “Thoughts and Sentiments on…Slavery” (1787) (Carretta 145-184; bio. note 390)
Benjamin Banneker, letter to the Secretary of State (1792) (Carretta 319-324; bio. 389)

Thursday, 4/1 – Class visit to Special Collections

**V. RIGHTS OF MAN 2: RACE, SLAVERY, REVOLUTION, HAITI**

**Week 12**
Tuesday, 4/6 – Revolution in Saint-Domingue
Readings from Dubois and Garrigus:
   “Introduction: Revolution, Emancipation, and Independence” (7-45)
The *Code Noir* (1685) (49-54)
Free Citizens of Color, Address to the Nat'l Assembly (1789) (67-70)
Abbé Grégoire, “Letter to Those Who Love Mankind” (1790) (73-75)
Letters from the Uprising of Vincent Ogé (1790) (75-78)
Julien Raimond, “Observations” (1791) (78-82)
The Debate of May 15, 1791 (82-83)
Jean-Paul Marat, from *The Friend of the People* (1792) (111-112)
Thomas Clarkson, “The True State of the Case” (1792) (113-115)
Laurent Jolicoeur, petition (1793) (119-120)
Léger Félicité Sonthonax, *Decree of General Liberty* (1793) (120-125)
Insurgent responses to emancipation (1793) (125-128)
Nat'l Convention, abolition of slavery (1794) (129-132)
“Defining Emancipation, 1794-1798” (133-158)
Toussaint Louverture, from *Constitution* (1801) (167-170)
Louis Delgrès, proclamation (1802) (171-172)
Jean-François-Xavier de Ménard, on Delgrès' final stand (1802) (173-175)
Haitian Declaration of Independence and Constitution (1804, 1805) (188-196)
Robin Blackburn, from *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (optional)
Aimé Césaire, from *Toussaint Louverture* (optional)

Thursday, 4/8 – Enlightenment Racism
- Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query XIV (1785)*
- Jefferson letters (Dubois and Garrigus 159-162)
- Phillis Wheatley, “On Imagination” (Carretta 64-65), “To S.M. a Young African Painter, on Seeing his Works” (Carretta 66-67)
- Francis Williams, “An Ode” (1774) (Carretta 72-76; bio. note 398-400)
- Portrait of Francis Williams (c.1745)

**Friday, 4/10 - Keyword paper due via email by 5pm.**

Week 13
Tuesday, 4/13 – White Terror
- Leonora Sansay, *The Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo* (1808) (pp. 1-89)

Thursday, 4/15 – White Terror
- *The Secret History* (pp. 89-154)
- *Philadelphia General Advertiser* reports (Dubois and Garrigus 95-99)
- Petition of Refugees in Charleston, S.C. (Dubois and Garrigus 162-164)
- Charles Brockden Brown, “St. Domingo” (1804) (Dubois and Garrigus 164-166)

VI. RIGHTS OF WOMAN: MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT IN AMERICA

Week 14
Tuesday, 4/20 – Declaring Female Independence
- Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

Thursday, 4/22 – American Orientalism and Patriarchal Reaction
- *A Vindication*
- Benjamin Silliman, *Letters of Shahcoolen, a Hindu Philosopher, Living in Philadelphia; to His Friend El Hassan, an Inhabitant of Delhi* (1802)*

Week 15
Tuesday, 4/27 – Seductions of Patriarchy
- Hannah Foster, *The Coquette* (read intro. and through p. 94)

Thursday, 4/29 – Seductions of Patriarchy
- *The Coquette* (finish the novel)

VII. THE AFTERLIFE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Week 16
Tuesday, 5/4 – Critical Reflections
- Slavoj Žižek, “Against Human Rights”*

**Friday, 5/7 - Final and research essays due via email by 5pm.**