

HST 496/742 Seminar Fall 2017

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Learning, Conversation, Politeness and Politics: The Enlightenment and the Republic of letters

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The seminar is essentially a chance to read and discuss books and articles on topics that are not normally part of our daily conversations. Historians are at their best (and happiest) when they reflect on themes that seem quite bookish and remote at first, but turn out to be part of the fabric of history and relevant to present times. This semester we will examine the social practices and political ambitions of the Republic of letters within the historical context of the Enlightenment. Other than reading and commenting on the readings, the main focus of the seminar is writing a 20-25pp paper. Keep in mind that a well-defined topic that you enjoy researching will lead to a good paper, which should ultimately result in an article or a chapter in your thesis/dissertation. Each student will comment on one's colleague's draft before the end of the semester.

Assignments: A brief oral report on your chosen topic (5%), an oral critique of a colleague's paper (5%). One page of reading notes will accompany the readings for each class, and must be turned in at the beginning of each class. These will be part of the attendance grade (15%). Class attendance and participation are essential. Look at the syllabus now to make sure you are able to make a serious commitment to this course. The paper (75%) will be your main focus during this class. Remember that a good, clear topic leads to a good paper. Choose carefully, find a topic you would like to study and consult with me before making your decision. Your argument must be developed from primary sources, and refined through the use of secondary sources. The paper must conform to prevailing standards of form and style (Chicago Manual of Style preferred).

Getting information: As a rule of thumb you should look for at least TEN sources, including:

PRIMARY SOURCES: sources from the time and places we are studying

SECONDARY SOURCES: scholarly research by experts in the field, such as monographs, articles in scholarly journals, scholarly internet sites (by college instructors)

TERTIARY SOURCES: general information in condensed or summary form (textbooks, encyclopedia articles, general interest websites or newspaper articles). Tertiary sources are a good place to start when you are browsing for background information for a topic, but for this project such sources are

insufficient. Remember, your argument must be rooted in primary sources and developed with the aid of secondary sources.

Please see below the schedule of readings, to which we will add a number of other texts, posted on Blackboard or distributed in class. **Titles in bold letters are for graduate students only.** One or two students will be responsible for preparing two/three questions on the readings to help the discussion move along. In addition, **each graduate student** will bring to class and present one book or one article that s/he found to be particularly intriguing, helpful, thought-provoking, noteworthy, or just relevant to our main theme.

A thematically organized bibliography is posted on Blackboard under Resources. Please come see me for additional suggestions.

Required books

Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing process*

Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*

Dena Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters*

Susanne Schmid, *British Literary Salons*

Deborah Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin*

Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics*

Other texts are posted on Blackboard under Course Materials or available on internet as indicated below.

Schedule of readings and discussions.

August 31. Organization of the class and preliminary discussion. Immanuel Kant 'What is Enlightenment' (1784)

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/kant/enlightenment.htm>

September 7. An over view of the 18th century and the Enlightenment

September 14. **Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (on Blackboard).**

Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters* (chapter 1); Roger Chartier, *Public Sphere and Public Opinion* and Dorinda Outram, *Coffee Houses and consumers* (both on Blackboard).

September 21. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*. Vol. I, part 1.

September 28. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*. Vol. 1, part 2.

October 5. Articles “Salon Life” from <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook10.html> Internet Modern History Sourcebook. The Enlightenment; Jonathan Swift, *Hints towards an essay on conversation*: Internet Modern History Sourcebook. The Enlightenment <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1713swift-conversation.asp>

Lawrence Klein, *Enlightenment as conversation* (on Blackboard)

Optional Daniel Gordon, *Citizens Without Sovereignty* (chapters 1,2,3) (on Blackboard)

October 12. Dena Goodman, *The Republic of letters*, chapters 2 and 3 and Dena Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters* (excerpts TBA).

October 19. Coffee Houses – the anti-salons? Lawrence Klein, “Coffeehouse Civility, 1660-1714: An Aspect of Post-Courtly Culture in England” *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (1996), pp. 30-51; Brian Cowan, *Mr. Spectator and Coffeehouse Public Sphere*, Project Muse (both articles on Blackboard). The First English Coffeehouses at: <http://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/Halsall/mod/1670coffee.asp> +Letter #49, Vol. I (Thursday April 26, 1711) in *The Spectator* (Addison and Steele): <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/12030/12030-h/SV1/Spectator1.html#section49>

Optional: Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

October 26. Susanne Schmid, *British Literary Salons* (excerpts TBA) **Lawrence Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness* (on Blackboard)**; Helen Berry, “Rethinking Politeness in Eighteenth-Century England: Moll King's Coffee House and the Significance of 'Flash Talk” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 11 (2001): 65-81 (on Blackboard)

November 2. Deborah Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin*.

November 9. Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics* (Excerpts TBA); *Correspondence Anne Bingham –Thomas Jefferson* (on Blackboard); American coffee-houses at:

<https://b-womeninamericanhistory18.blogspot.com/2013/06/coffee-houses-revolution.html>

Joseph Ellis, “Habits of the Mind and an American Enlightenment” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2 [Special Issue: An American Enlightenment(Summer, 1976)]: 150-164 (on Blackboard)

November 16. Oral presentation of abstracts and peer critiques.

November 23. Thanksgiving break

November 30 – December 7: No class. Please use the time to write your paper. Harsanyi will be available in the office for consultations and any kind of questions.

Final papers are due on the scheduled exam day. Please think ahead: all students should present their **papers at SCREE (April 2018)**

Extra readings more connected to American topics (optional):

Peter Quennell, editor. *Affairs of the Mind: The Salon in Europe and America From the 18th to the 20th Century*. Washington D.C.: New Republic Books, 1980.

David Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America*. Chapel Hill, N.C., 1997.

Related: John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. Chicago, 2000.

Deborah Heller, "Bluestocking Salons and the Public Sphere" *Eighteenth Century Life* 22/2 (1998): 59-82.

Rufus Griswold, *Republican Court*. New York, 1856.

Stacy Schiff, *A Great Improvisation: Franklin, France, and the Birth of America* (2006)

A good review article: Anthony J. La Vopa. "Conceiving a Public: Ideas and Society in Eighteenth-Century Europe" *The Journal of Modern History*, V. 64, 1 (Mar. 1991): 79-116.