

*The Modern and the Mediterranean: The Age of Enlightenment in Europe and the Middle East.*



One might say that the Enlightenment changed everything. It is credited with fashioning the intellectual foundations of modernity, bringing reason and science to the forefront of public life, hastening the end of the ancien regime, pioneering constitutional government, sparking the American and French Revolutions along with modern nationalism, and much more. It has also been accused of thoughtlessly demolishing traditional societies, diminishing religious life, rationalising the imposition of European imperialism and colonialism upon the globe, and bringing about many of the ills of life as we know it. So which is it?

This course would seek to establish a balanced, critical assessment of what, exactly, the Enlightenment meant in the decades after it first appeared in print, along with its far-reaching influence across the centuries. Following trends in global history, this class would attempt to “de-centre” the Enlightenment from its typical European moorings and investigate what it meant for the inhabitants of Cairo and Alexandria, Istanbul and Baghdad. Intellectual, cultural, and social interchange and transformation in Europe and the Middle East in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will be examined. The first half of the course will cover primarily the intellectual foundations in Europe of the diffuse movement called the Enlightenment, and the second half will migrate across the Mediterranean to see how Egypt and the wider Ottoman world contributed, responded, and reacted to *les lumières* during an era when the world was turned upside down.

Through careful analysis of primary texts, historical interpretation, and competing interpretative frameworks, this class would seek to arrive at a deeper, multilayered understanding of this complex epoch; that will perhaps shed insight into the birth pains of the modern world, what was gained, and what was lost.

*Mateo Arevalo studied Modern European History at the University of St Andrews and went on to receive a Masters degree in Modern History at the University of Oxford, specialising in the Enlightenment and eighteenth-century intellectual history in the Atlantic World.*

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Tentative courseflow:

- 1. What is Enlightenment?**
- 2. Ethics, aspirations, and Enlightenment sociability.**
- 3. The Scientific Revolution and Concepts of Science.**
- 4. Religion and Enlightenment in Europe.**
- 5. Religion and Enlightenment in the Muslim World.**
- 6. Progress, Imperialism, and Invasion in eighteenth century Egypt.**
- 7. The nineteenth century response: Muhammed Ali, and Islamic Modernism.**
- 8. Counter Enlightenment across the Mediterranean, and other critiques of the Enlightenment.**

**Selected Readings:**

Kant, Immanuel. "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?" (1784), in Schmidt, James. *What Is Enlightenment?: Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*. University of California Press, 1996,

Heilbron, J. L. "The Measure of Enlightenment", in Frängsmyr, Tore, J. L. Heilbron, and Robin E. Rider. *The Quantifying Spirit in the Eighteenth Century*.

Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. "Reclamation of the Freedom of Thought from the Princes of Europe, Who Have Oppressed It Until Now" (1793)

Moser, Friedrich Karl von. "True and False Political Enlightenment" (1792)

Klein, Ernst Ferdinand. "On Freedom of Thought and of the Press: For Princes, Ministers, and Writers" (1784)

Cassirer, Ernst. *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*. Edited by James P. Pettegrove. Translated by Fritz C. A. Koelin. Princeton University Press, 1968

Conrad, Sebastian. Enlightenment in Global History: a Historiographical Critique. *The American Historical Review*, Volume 117, Issue 4, October 2012, Pages 999–1027. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/117.4.999> Accessed: 21 August 2022

Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale University Press, 1998.

Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760–1840* (Austin, Tex., 1979).

Irene A. Bierman, ed., *Napoleon in Egypt* (Reading, 2003).

Juan Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East* (New York, 2007)

Newman, Daniel L. *An Imam in Paris: Account of a Stay in France by an Egyptian Cleric (1826-1831)*. Saqi Essentials, 2012

Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton, N.J., 2003)

Berlin, Isaiah. *Three Critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder*. Edited by Henry Hardy. First ed. Princeton University Press, 2000, pp. 255-358.

Robert B. Loudon, *The World We Want: How and Why the Ideals of the*

*Enlightenment Still Elude Us* (Oxford, 2007).

Daniel Carey and Lynn Festa, eds., *The Postcolonial Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Colonialism and Postcolonial Theory* (Oxford, 2009).

John M. Headley, *The Europeanization of the World: On the Origins of Human Rights and Democracy* (Princeton, N.J., 2008)

Byrne, James M. *Religion and the Enlightenment: From Descartes to Kant*. 1996