

# The Enlightenment and its Critics

Professor Nicholas Tampio

Fordham University

POSC 1300, Fall 2012

Jogues Hall 128, M 11:30-12:45

Office hours: Faber 665, M 3-5

tampio@fordham.edu



## Course Overview

The Enlightenment was an eighteenth century European and American intellectual and political movement dedicated to avoiding religious violence. The Enlightenment proclaimed the ideals of majority governance (democracy) and individual rights (liberalism) and attained some success in creating secular political regimes. And yet the Enlightenment has been criticized from its inception for overlooking the importance of religion and spirituality. What did the Enlightenment philosophers say about politics, religion, and culture? How did their critics respond? And, how may post-Enlightenment political theorists today respond to the arguments and actions of contemporary religious activists?

This course begins by drawing an analogy between the religious wars of the seventeenth and twenty-first century. Then, we follow the exchange between Immanuel Kant and his student, Georg Hamann, about the Enlightenment ideal of thinking for oneself. Next, we consider John Locke's arguments for reinterpreting the Bible to support the ideals of tolerance and the social contract and Mary Wollstonecraft's arguments for female equality. The second half of the course looks at contemporary debates among Muslims that parallel and diverge from those of the eighteenth century Euro-American Enlightenment. Sayyid Qutb and Saba Mahmood think that Enlightenment concepts such as liberty, autonomy, and feminism go against Islamic concepts such as divine Law (*shariah*) and piety (*taqwa*). Yet Khaled Abou El Fadl and Fatima Mernissi think the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition may be interpreted to support creative thinking (*ijtihad*) and the unveiling of women. At the end of the course, I present an argument for how heirs of the Enlightenment may renew its project of preventing sectarian violence.

## Texts

*What is Enlightenment?*, ed. James Schmidt (California 1996) 8-0520202269

John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Yale 2003) 978-0300100181

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Norton 2009) 0393929744

Sayyid Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam* (Islamic Publications International 2000) 1889999113

Khaled Abou El Fadl, *The Place of Tolerance in Islam* (Beacon 2002)

Saba Mahmood, *The Politics of Piety* (Princeton 2012) 0691149801

Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite* (Basic Books 1992) 0201632217

Nicholas Tampio, *Kantian Courage* (Fordham 2012) 0823245012

## Course Requirements

1. Class participation. Students are expected to come to class on time and prepared to discuss the readings.
2. On **September 10**, submit a 6-8 page essay comparing and contrasting Kant and Hamann. Begin with a hook that explains why we should care about this debate, identify points of contact and disagreement between the authors, and conclude by analyzing a contemporary news story of Kantians and Hamannians, or secularists and religious fundamentalists, fighting.
3. Throughout the semester, students will present research papers on how the author would interpret a current event. For example, you could exam how Locke would interpret Romney's presidential campaign or how Qutb would interpret the Arab spring. The paper should be 8-10 pages long and cite articles from top newspapers (e.g. New York Times, Wall Street Journal) and at least 4 academic books or articles. Students have up to one week after the paper has been returned to revise the paper for up to a one-letter grade improvement.
4. One week before the midterm, I will distribute 6 questions. On the day of the exam, we will roll a die to determine two questions to answer in one hour. You may study in groups but the exam is closed book.
5. The final has the same format as the midterm.
6. On **December 6**, submit a 12-15 page paper contrasting two authors we have read this semester on the same topic. For instance, compare Qutb and Abou El Fald on the place of tolerance within Islam or Mernissi and Mahmood on the politics of veiling. The purpose of a research paper is to go beyond the material covered in a course. So, plan to read widely on the topic and authors that you choose. Plan to meet with me during office hours before **November 8** to discuss your paper. Before the meeting, send me a 1-2 page document with a question, section headings, and a reading list.

## Grade Distribution

Paper on Kant and Hamann	10
Presentation paper	10
Class presentation	10
Midterm	20
Final	20
Research Paper	20
Class participation	10

## 1. August 30 – The Background(s) to the Enlightenment

Peter H. Wilson, "The Causes of the Thirty Years War," *English Historical Review* (2008) CXXIII (502): 554-586.

Mark Juergensmeyer, "Religious Terror and the Secular State," *Harvard International Review*, Winter 2004.

## **2. September 5 – Kant's Case for the Enlightenment**

Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" in Schmidt, 58-64

## **3. September 6 – Hamann's Critique of the Enlightenment**

Hamann, "Letter to Christian Jacob Kraus" and "Metacritique on the Purism of Reason" in Schmidt, 145-67

## **4. September 10 – Locke on Toleration**

Locke, "Letter Concerning Toleration"

- First Paper Due

## **5. September 13 – Locke on Scripture**

First Treatise, Chapters 1-3, 7, 8

## **6. September 17 – Locke on the Social Contract**

Second Treatise, Chapters 1-9

## **7. September 20 – Locke Presentations**

## **8. September 24 – Wollstonecraft on the Rights of Woman, Part 1**

Vindication, Introduction, Chapters 1-5

## **9. September 27 – Wollstonecraft on the Rights of Woman, Part 2**

Vindication, Chapters 6-12

## **10. October 1 – Wollstonecraft Presentations**

## **11. October 4 – Midterm**

\* October 5 – Trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to see art of the European Enlightenment

## **12. October 11 – Qutb on Christianity and the Enlightenment**

Social Justice in Islam, Chapters 1, 2

**13. October 15 – Qutb on Social Justice in Islam**

Social Justice in Islam, Chapters 3-5

**14. October 18 – Qutb on the History and Prospects of Islam**

Social Justice in Islam, Chapters 7-9

**15. October 22 – Qutb Presentations**

**16. October 25 – Tariq Ramadan on Scriptural Interpretation**

*Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, Chapter 1

**17. October 29 – Tariq Ramadan on Political Participation**

*Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, Chapter 7

**18. November 1 – Tariq Ramadan on Interreligious Dialogue**

*Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, Chapter 9

**19. November 5 – Ramadan Presentations**

**20. November 8 – Mahmood on Liberal Presuppositions**

*Politics of Piety*, Preface, Chapter 1

**November 9 – Trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to see the “New Galleries for the Art of the Arab Lands”**

**21. November 12 – Mahmood on the Da’wa Movement**

*Politics of Piety*, Chapters 4, 5, Epilogue

**22. November 15 – Mahmood Presentations**

**23. November 19 – Mernissi on Islamic Feminism**

*The Veil and the Male Elite*, Introduction, Part I

**24. November 26 – Mernissi on the Hijab**

The Veil and the Male Elite, Part II

**25. November 29 – Mernissi Presentations**

**26. December 3 – Tampio on the Enlightenment**

*Kantian Courage*, Introduction, Chapter 1

**27. December 6 – Tampio on Islam and the Enlightenment**

*Kantian Courage*, Chapter 4

**\* Research papers due.**

**28. December 12 – Final exam**