

HISTORY BC 3368
Spring 2024
Tuesdays 12:10-2:00 pm

Prof. Deborah Valenze
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office hours: M 3-4 pm, W 11-12 & by appt.

History of the Senses in Britain and France, 1680 – 1830



Jean Mariège, *Views of Imaginary Ports with Statues and Oriental Figures* (1720s)

This course will trace the evolution of European awareness of the human senses and their power by exploring the production and reception of different forms of art, music, literature, food, and sensual enjoyments. Beginning in the late seventeenth century, new theories of human understanding and sense perception ushered in a quest to define the senses as determinative of what it meant to be human. Theorists debated whether such capacities were linked to moral faculties or social tendencies, and they pondered their value as good in and of themselves. With confidence in the power of reason, Europeans gradually relinquished fears relating to the power of the passions, entertaining the notion of their potential for beneficial influence. The popularity of novels, growing enthusiasm for travel, and the development of leisure activities in the public sphere signaled a greater value placed on contemplating an awareness of interiority and its connections to a variety of sensations. Readings will explore ideas associated with aesthetic value and the championing of taste, which worked to categorize responses to art, music, and nature. We will also examine cultural activities as they absorbed aspects of national and civic interests, exhibited in the professions of art, music, and literature.

The course will require regular attendance (absence requires consultation with the instructor; more than two will impinge on your grade), weekly participation in discussion, a one-page report on a musical field trip (TBD), and one class presentation (30%); one essay of five pages, due March 5, on a topic of your choice, to be drawn from *any* unit of the syllabus (30%); and a lengthy *research* paper (primary sources are required) extending the earlier essay (15 pages), due on April 30th (40%). You may choose between several possible music performances for your required field trip; in addition, we will visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art as a group during class time at the very end of the term.

Textbooks to be available for optional purchase at Book Culture, 536 W. 112th St.:

Rebecca Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant*.

James Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History*.

Mary Hays, *Emma Courtney*. (Oxford UP paperback ed.)

Learning objectives, or what you can expect to learn from taking this course:

- an appreciation for the diversity and complexity of human experience
- a critical understanding of the relationship between past events and modern life
- an ability to conduct close readings of key texts, primary and secondary
- an ability to analyze and interpret historical material
- the skill of responding constructively and critically to the views of others
- the skill of presenting arguments cogently and logically in writing and speaking

Some of you may wish to supplement your knowledge with a general text on the Enlightenment. There are several available, most notably, by Roy Porter and Daniel Roche, another by Peter Gay, and a short student-styled text (*Enlightenment*, published in 1990) by Roy Porter. If you want to refresh your memory with a general text on European history, try the following:

Isser Woloch and Gregory S. Brown, *Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Norton, 2012).

Readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be available on Courseworks and (in most cases) on the shelves of the Barnard Library and at Butler Library.

Use of an AI text generator when an assignment does not explicitly ask or allow for it is plagiarism. In this class, students will not be allowed to use AI in order to complete writing assignments. Using such tools will prevent you from developing your own capabilities of reasoning, research, and analysis. AI cannot generate the kind of reflection on historical data that this course is trying to teach you how to do. Moreover, AI tools raise serious questions of integrity and ethics: as regulatory laws in Europe have argued, ChatGBT scrapes information from sources without giving attribution, a form of plagiarism that is equivalent to stealing. In some instances, AI will generate fictional footnotes and sources, which you as an inexperienced historian won't realize are false. AI often leads students down irrelevant and even incorrect pathways of thinking, thus defeating the purpose of an assignment. In your own best interests, you should aim to be engaged in a college-level learning process and AI will interfere with your gaining a college education. Please don't be fooled; instructors easily detect the use of ChatGBT and other AI tools. For all these reasons, students who use AI in this class will be penalized.

Barnard College Wellness Statement:

It is important for undergraduates to recognize and identify the different pressures, burdens, and stressors you may be facing, whether personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. We as a community urge you to make yourself--your own health, sanity, and wellness--your priority throughout this term and your career here. Sleep, exercise, and eating well can all be a part of a healthy regimen to cope with stress. Resources exist to support you

in several sectors of your life, and we encourage you to make use of them. Should you have any questions about navigating these resources, please visit these sites:

- <http://barnard.edu/primarycare>
- <https://barnard.edu/furman-counseling/about-counseling>
- <http://barnard.edu/wellwoman/about>
- <https://www.health.columbia.edu/content/patient-resources>
- <https://www.health.columbia.edu/services/individual-counseling>
- [Stressbusters Support Network <pdf>](#)

All students are expected to adhere to the Barnard College Honor Code:

Approved by the student body in 1912 and updated in 2016, the Code states:

We, the students of Barnard College, resolve to uphold the honor of the College by engaging with integrity in all of our academic pursuits. We affirm that academic integrity is the honorable creation and presentation of our own work. We acknowledge that it is our responsibility to seek clarification of proper forms of collaboration and use of academic resources in all assignments or exams. We consider academic integrity to include the proper use and care for all print, electronic, or other academic resources. We will respect the rights of others to engage in pursuit of learning in order to uphold our commitment to honor. We pledge to do all that is in our power to create a spirit of honesty and honor for its own sake.

There will be zero tolerance for plagiarism of any kind. Assignments that reflect any form of direct copying without quotation marks and attribution will receive no credit. It is not advisable to copy and paste passages from published materials into your laptop notes and then into your written work. Even if you think you will remember to footnote such pasted passages, you may easily forget to add a citation. This is the most common way students “accidentally” plagiarize, a mistake your instructors will not accept as an accident. If you want to take notes with your computer, do so in a way that will not lead to oversights like this. Please ask me or your Teaching Assistant if you are uncertain about any aspect of how to use and cite secondary sources.

I. Identifying the Senses in Historical Context: Visuality, Sound, and the Self (January 23)

*Adam Gopnik, “Feel Me,” *The New Yorker*, May 16, 2016:

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/05/16/what-the-science-of-touch-says-about-us>

*Jonathan Rée, *I See a Voice: Deafness, Language and the Senses, a Philosophical History* (1999), Introduction and Chaps. 1-6, pp. 1-64.

*Daniel Roche, *France and the Enlightenment*, the section beginning with “Happiness, Energy, Anxiety” to end of chapter, pp. 595-607 [12] and Chap 19, “Materializing the Intelligence,” pp. 608-40 [32].

II. The Sensory Imaginary: The Ear and the Nose (January 30)

*Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment*, “Introduction” and Chap. 1, “Hearing Loss,” pp. 1-37.

*Alain Corbin, *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the 19th-century Countryside*, Chap. 1, “An Impossible Revolution in the Culture of the Senses,” pp. 3-44.

*Mark S.R. Jenner, “Follow Your Nose? Smell, Smelling, and Their Histories,” *American Historical Review* [AHR] Vol. 116, No. 2 (April, 2011), pp. 335-51.

Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* [E-book available through CLIO]: Introduction and all of Part I (chaps. 1-5), pp. 1-88.

III. The Senses and the Sciences: Connecting Body and Mind (February 6)

*Ann C. Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France*, Chap. 3, “The Medicalization of the Enlightenment,” pp. 80-107; Chap. 7, “Moral Anthropology,” 225-56 [58]

Jessica Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility: The Sentimental Empiricists of the French Enlightenment*, Chap. 1, “Introduction,” and Chap. 2, “The Blind and the Mathematically Inclined,” pp. 1-67. Available as an e-Book through CLIO:

<http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/lib/columbia/docDetail.action?docID=10433763>

*Berys Gaut and D. M. Lopes, eds., *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* “Empiricism,” pp. 37-47. [10]

*John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), Book 2, Chap. 1, sec. 1-2; Chap. 2, sec. 1-3; Chap. 8, sec. 8-13.; Book 4, chap. 11, sec. 1-3. [ca 15 in all] [this can also be read on line through electronic sources via CLIO]

*Julien Offray de la Mettrie, *Man a Machine* (1747) and

*Jean d’Alembert, ‘Preliminary Discourse’ to the Encyclopedia (1751), in Paul Hyland, et al., eds., *The Enlightenment*, pp. 15-17; 49-53 (continued on next page)

*E. Fubini, ed., *Music and Culture in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, Chap. 8, "Sensism and Empirical Currents," pp. 320-39. (19)

IV. The Sense of Taste: Food and the Body (February 13)

*Mark M. Smith, *Sensing the Past*, Chap. 4, "Tasting," pp. 75-92.

Rebecca Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant*, Intro., pp. 1-11; Chap. 2, pp. 34-63; Chap. 7, pp. 170-206; Chap. 8, pp. 207-33; Epilogue, pp. 234-45. [c. 110]

John Wesley, *Primitive Physick* (1747), Preface, available on line:

<http://gbgm-umc.org/health/johnwesley.stm#glossary>

Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism*, Chap. 5, "Mary Fletcher on the Cross: Gender and the Suffering Body," 171-218.

V. The Senses and the Intellect: The Emergence of Taste Hierarchies in the Eighteenth Century (February 20)

*Peter de Bolla, *Education of the Eye*, Introduction and Chapter 1, "The Culture of Visuality," pp. 1-71.

*Morris H. Abrams, "Art-as-Such," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 38, No. 6 (March, 1985), pp. 8-33.

*Denis Dutton, "Aesthetic Universals," *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*.

*Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, "The Senses of Taste," *AHR*, Vol. 116, No. 2 (April, 2011), pp. 371-84.

*Carolyn Korsmeyer, "Taste," *Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, 193-202.

VI. Mastering the Passions: Disciplines of the Sensible Individual (February 27)

*Joseph Addison, "The Pleasures of the Imagination," *Spectator*, Nos. 412 and 416.

*John Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, Chap. 15, "'Queen Muse of Britain': Anna Seward of Lichfield and the Literary Provinces," pp. 573-612. [49]

James Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History*, Introduction and Parts 1 through 3, pp. 1-161.

VII. Policing the Senses: Touch and Sensuality (March 5)

***** First essay assignment due this week *****

*G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, Chapter 2, “The Reformation of Male Manners,” pp. 37-65 and 98-103 only. [33]

*Thomas Laqueur, *Solitary Sex*, Chap. 4, “The Problem with Masturbation,” pp. 185-245. [60]

*Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Chap. 1, “Repressive Hypothesis,” pp. 17-35. [18]

Mark M. Smith, *Sensing the Past*, Chap. 5, “Touching,” pp. 93-116.

Just a reminder:

Musical Field Trip: Two or possibly three options, TBA

VIII. A Feeling for Others: The Rise of Humanitarian Projects (March 19)

*Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, “New Sensibilities,” pp. 173-91. [18]

John Lawrence (1753-1839), *A Philosophical and Practical Treatise on Horses and on the Moral Duties of Man Towards the Brute Creation*, Vol. 1 (1802), pp. 126-63.
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433061837948&view=1up&seq=5>

*Marchese di Beccaria, *On Crimes and Punishments* (1764), excerpts in *The Enlightenment*, Paul Hyland et al., pp. 216-20. [4]

*Mary Wollstonecraft, *Original Stories from Real Life* [1788; repr., 1796], Chaps. I-VI.

*Thomas Laqueur, “Bodies, Details, and the Humanitarian Narrative,” in Lynn Hunt, *The New Cultural History*, pp. 176-204. [28]

IX. “Feeling” and the Senses : Fictional Worlds and the Emotions (March 26)

Mary Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* [1796], available in modern paperback or here: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433074864178&view=1up&seq=7>

Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction*, Chap. 1, “History and Emotions: An Introduction,” pp. 1-39, e-book in CLIO. SKIM THIS!

X. Exercising the Senses: Travel (April 2)

* [David Howes], “Aestheticization Takes Command” and Victor Carl Friesen, “A Tonic of Wildness: Sensuousness in Henry David Thoreau,” *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, ed. David Howes (2005), 245-50 and 251-64.

*Tobias Smollett, *Travels through France and Italy* (1771), Letter X (Nov. 10, 1763); Letter XXXI (March 5, 1765). [15]

*Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (1796), Letter V; Letter XI. [20].

Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Pt. I; Pt. II (look at “Power” and “Vastness”); Pt. III; Pt. V (skim), available on line at <http://www.bartleby.com/24/2/>. (print out important passages)

*Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, “Cultivation or Wilderness?”, pp. 254-69. [15]

[To be handed out in class: excerpts from William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye and Several Parts of Wales . . . in the year 1770* (1800), Sections I-V: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=cool.ark:/13960/t92811m2g&view=1up&seq=23>]

XI. Building a Self: What were the senses “good for”? (April 9)

James Johnson, *Listening in Paris*, Chaps.12 through 16, pp. 206-280.

*Tim Blanning, *The Romantic Revolution*, Introduction and Chaps. 1-2.

*Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, Second Walk and Seventh Walk.

Gilbert White, *The Natural History of Selbourne*, Letters 1-22, 46-66. (This can be read as an ebook, though a very good edition by Oxford Univ. Press is available through the internet at a reasonable price.)

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1408>

XII. Professions of the Senses (April 16)

*Gillen d’Arcy Wood, *The Shock of the Real: Romanticism and Visual Culture, 1760-1860*, “Introduction: Belzoni’s Tomb” and Chap. 4, “Ruins and Museums.”

*Patrick Noon, ed., *Crossing the Channel: British and French Painting in the Age of Romanticism*, pp. 46-123 and pp. 192-7. (Introduction, “The Raft of the Medusa,” “Art on View,” “Landscape Painting”)

XIII. Metropolitan Museum of Art field trip during class time, April 23. Final paper due no later than April 30th by midnight

HOW TO GIVE YOUR ORAL PRESENTATION

Time limit: 8-10 minutes, strictly enforced.

Aim: To develop (1) an ability to synthesize historical literature and
(2) a mature speaking style.

Content: What is the **largest generalization** you can make about the reading? As you work on the assignment for the week, keep a list of the general points you might want to make. You'll notice that you'll improve this skill as you go along, advancing from statements that are very close to the material ("Joseph Addison's "Pleasures of the Imagination" talks about "greatness . . .") to more general ones, which might apply to several readings ("This week's readings focus on the power of the intellect to perceive natural wonders . . ."). When you try to boil down your ideas to a few statements (which is all anyone can manage in 8 to 10 minutes), try to enter into a spirit of debate.

Other things to look out for: What **arguments** do you see emerging from the readings? That is, what have writers of the period or historians been quarreling about when thinking about the issues in the reading? (If you're not reading secondary sources, see if you can guess what historians have had to say about the documents you're using.) Sometimes you need to read between the lines. Try to find one central debate in the assignments and highlight it. Simplify the issues for your classmates by identifying the issues at stake.

What **linkages** do you see emerging from the readings? Do the various authors or works have common concerns? Help the class make connections. This is a really important part of understanding the material, even though it may not feel that way while you read. Don't worry so much about retaining all the "facts" of the assignment. Jot down only what appear to be **the most important or striking examples** of the topic of the week.

Finally, give an **opinion** on what you've read; make your report unique, drawing on your own knowledge and perspective. And end with a **set of questions** for discussion.

What to avoid: Please do not summarize the readings, one by one, for your classmates. If you take this approach, you will violate the time limit and (sorry to say) bore your classmates. Instead, allow your chosen themes to govern how you present **examples** from the readings.

Style and Presentation: Write out your opening so that you can get yourself on the proper track right away. Start with a startling or burning question, if you can. This helps your listeners get into your chosen frame of mind. Include choice quotes from the authors you've read. Number your points, if necessary. And practice in front of a mirror or standing on a chair, with a recorder, if you feel like it. See yourself as an instructor and try to enjoy the experience.

What to avoid: Don't drone or use a monotone. Don't let your voice rise at the end of statements. Try not to bury yourself in your notes. And please don't violate the time limit! Practice giving your presentation with a stopwatch or recording device.