

Reason and Passion in the 18th Century

R.C. Hums 344 (cross listed with History of Art 342)

Winter 2019 – M/W 1:00-2:30 – Tappan Hall 130

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Jean-Baptiste Chardin, *House of Cards* (c. 1736-1737)

This course examines and compares works of visual art, literature and philosophy produced in Europe during the 18th century. In the midst of radical changes in political institutions and social life, works of creative imagination such as paintings, novels and speculative essays helped to define and re-define the nature of human nature. Often called The Age of Reason, this was equally an age of feeling, and rational approaches to the improvement of human life went hand in hand with confidence in the truth of the emotions. An experimental attitude charges much of the religious, political and philosophical writing of the period, and “thought experiments” of various kinds were carried out in the subject matter and technical innovations of engravings, paintings and architectural designs. The belief that liberty of thought should not be constrained by established doctrine was closely associated with the idea that human beings are creatures of nature, subject to the laws of physics and driven by passions. Course requirements: 2 short papers; 2 slide-essay exams; 1 term paper (10 to 15 pages). Students are expected to have their own copies the following books *in the editions indicated*:

Descartes, René, *Discourse on Method*, trans. Desmond M. Clark, Penguin Books, 1999. ISBN: 0140446990
Defoe, Daniel, *Robinson Crusoe*, ed. John Richetti, Penguin Books, 2001. ISBN: 0141439823
Pope, Alexander, *Essay on Man and Other Poems*, Dover Publications, 1994. ISBN: 0486280535
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *A Discourse on Inequality*, trans. Maurice Cranston, Penguin Books, 1984. ISBN: 0140444394
Voltaire, *Candide and Other Stories*, trans. Roger Pearson, Oxford University Press, 1998. ISBN: 9780192834263
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang, *Sorrows of Young Werther*, trans. Michael Hulse, Penguin Books, 1989. ISBN: 014044503X
Wollstonecraft, Mary, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, revised ed., Penguin Books, 2004. ISBN: 0141441259
Shelley, Mary, *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, revised ed., Penguin Books, 2003. ISBN: 9780141439471
Outram, Dorinda, *The Enlightenment*, 3rd ed., Cambridge University Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-1107636576