Title of course

The Politics of Knowledge from the Late Renaissance to the Early Enlightenment

Name/email of Convenor(s)

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Course description

The origins of the modern world can, and should, be traced to many different periods and places of human history. But the period between the late Renaissance and the early Enlightenment in Europe – what might be called the ‘long’ seventeenth century, between about 1575 and about 1725 – has a particular claim to the attention of those interested in the intellectual developments that made possible both the systematic investigation of culture, society, and belief, and also modern science and technology. This paper provides an opportunity to study some of the most important of these intellectual developments.

The acquisition of knowledge in this period was often a highly controversial affair. Discoveries and innovations in one sphere – such as astronomy, for instance – often had important repercussions in others, as contemporary critics were sometimes quick to point out. Knowledge in this period therefore has an intellectual politics that is distinct both from the political history of the period, and also from developments in the history of political thought (both of which are well covered in other papers in the Tripos). The purpose of this paper is to explore this ‘politics of knowledge’: partly through the study of certain important general themes, and partly through a selection of key primary texts – and attacks upon them.

In early modern Europe the two cultures – of humanistic inquiry on the one hand, and the natural sciences on the other – had yet to diverge, and many central figures in philosophy and the sciences, from Francis Bacon to Gottfried Leibniz, were also important writers and historians. So the natural sciences, and the transformational developments that took place in them across the period, will form an important strand of our inquiries. The seventeenth century lies at the heart of the period widely described as the ‘scientific revolution’, and for this reason study of the natural world forms a central and important part of this paper. The laborious and complex overturning of the philosophical framework provided by Aristotelianism by figures such as Francis Bacon allowed for the elaboration of a range of new and challenging doctrines. In the hands of astronomers such as Galileo, Kepler and Newton the very shape of the universe was altered. The structure of matter came increasingly to be seen in atomist terms, and its motion in mechanical ones. And new ideas of experiment allowed for a fundamental reconfiguration of both the theory and the practices of natural philosophy. Moreover, developments in the study of nature also had implications for how philosophers – Descartes in particular – thought about nature of human beings themselves: how was man like and unlike other animals? What was the relationship between the body and the soul?

In parallel with a transformation in the study of nature, the period between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment also witnessed profound changes in the realm of culture and religion. Even more, perhaps, than the impact of the New World of the Americas in the west, the world to the east of Europe offered a challenge to the Christian culture of Europe that was still bitterly divided by the impact of the Reformation. The paper therefore offers a chance to study how and why Europeans in this period sought knowledge of Islam and also how some of them used this knowledge to think critically about Christianity and its Churches. For this was also an age in which – in the hands of dangerous freethinkers such as Spinoza – the revealed authority of the Bible, and even the stability of its text, came under increasing scrutiny. Early seventeenth century Europe was living through a late Renaissance, in which the world was still seen through lenses
offered by Greek and Roman antiquity, and also through the Hebraic history provided in the Old Testament. By the end of the seventeenth century, however, this world had been transformed into one that many scholars characterise as an ‘early Enlightenment’: a time in which ‘moderns’ did intellectual battle with ‘ancients’ in order bring into being a more secular, tolerant, and critical society.

The paper therefore offers an opportunity to explore a wide variety of themes within a crucial transformative period in human self-understanding; it also encourages direct primary engagement with the texts of the most interesting, important, and often controversial works of the time.

Mode of teaching i.e. balance of lectures, classes and supervisions and the mode of supervision.

The paper will be taught by means of a course of twelve lectures (Michaelmas term), outlining some of the key themes; and eight seminars (Lent term), focusing both on these themes and on key texts from the period that speak to them. The normal supervision arrangements for this paper are to offer seven hour-long one-on-one supervisions. Supervisions for the course will primarily be provided by Michael Edwards, Scott Mandelbrote, and Richard Serjeantson. We are confident that we will be able to meet likely demands.
The Politics of Knowledge
from the
Late Renaissance to the Early Enlightenment

Specified Subject
Cambridge University Historical Tripos (2018–19)
Part II, Paper 17


Logic
Arithmetic
Astronomy
Music
Grammar

Geometry

Rhetoric
The origins of the modern world can, and should, be traced to many different periods and places of human history. But the period between the late Renaissance and the early Enlightenment in Europe – what might be called the ‘long’ seventeenth century, between about 1575 and about 1725 – has a particular claim to the attention of those interested in the intellectual developments that made possible both the systematic investigation of culture, society, and belief, and also modern science and technology. This paper provides an opportunity to study some of the most important of these intellectual developments.

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In parallel with a transformation in the study of nature, the period between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment also witnessed profound changes in the realm of culture and religion. Even more, perhaps, than the impact of the New World of the Americas in the west, the world to the east of Europe offered a challenge to the Christian culture of Europe that was still bitterly divided by the impact of the Reformation. The paper therefore offers a chance to study how and why Europeans in this period sought to gain knowledge of the east, and of Islam in particular; and also how some of them used this knowledge to think critically about Christianity and its Churches. For this was also an age in which – in the hands of dangerous freethinkers such as Spinoza – the revealed authority of the Bible, and even the stability of its text, came under increasing scrutiny. Early seventeenth century Europe was living through a late Renaissance, in which the world was still seen through lenses offered by Greek and Roman antiquity, and also through the Hebraic history provided in the Old Testament. By the end of the seventeenth century, however, this world had been transformed into one that scholars have increasingly characterised as the ‘early Enlightenment’: a time in which ‘moderns’ were doing battle with ‘ancients’ in order bring into being a more secular, tolerant, and critical society.
The paper therefore offers an opportunity to explore a wide variety of themes within a crucial transformative period in human self-understanding; it also encourages direct primary engagement with the texts of the most interesting, important, and often controversial works of the time.

Teaching arrangements:

The paper will be taught by means of a course of twelve lectures (Michaelmas term), outlining some of the key themes; and eight seminars (Lent term), focusing both on these themes and on key texts from the period that speak to them. The normal supervision arrangements for this paper are to offer seven hour-long one-on-one supervisions, and so long as there are not too many takers it should be possible to repeat this pattern. Supervisions for the course will be provided by Michael Edwards, Scott Mandelbrote, and Richard Serjeantson.

Classes and Supervision Topics

The sixteen supervision topics for this paper are divided into two categories. ‘A’ topics are thematic and relatively wide-ranging, and are best approached through the relevant secondary literature, with forays made into the suggested extracts from primary sources. ‘B’ topics, by contrast, deal with a particular author, text, or set of texts; they are best approached through the set primary reading supplemented by biographical and other historiographical materials. Each week students may study and write an essay on either an ‘A’ topic, or a ‘B’ topic, according to preference. The eight Faculty classes in the Lent Term will follow the same pattern, with each seminar offering students an opportunity to consolidate their thematic reading with reference to the set text(s), or to develop their understanding of the set text(s) in the light of the week’s larger themes.

Essay questions and materials relating to each week’s work will be available via the Politics of Knowledge CamTools site to all students taking the paper.

Week I
1(a). The intellectual culture of the late Renaissance
1(b). Michel de Montaigne and late Renaissance philosophy

Week II
2(a). The universities and their knowledge
2(b). Francis Bacon and the advancement of learning

Week III
3(a). Late Renaissance natural philosophy
3(b). Galileo and Copernicanism

Week IV
4(a). ‘Human nature’ and reason
4(b). René Descartes and the Discourse on Method

Week V
5(a). New natural philosophies
5(b). The early Royal Society and its critics

Week VI
6(a). Biblical criticism
6(b). Spinoza and the bible

Week VII
7(a). Knowledge of the East
7(b). Islam and imposture

Week VIII
8(a). The intellectual culture of the early Enlightenment
8(b). Pierre Bayle
Jan Saenredam (engraver), after Hendrik Goltzius (artist), 'Scientia' [Knowledge] (1615)
General Studies

* Starred items are those which it may be particularly helpful to begin by reading

The intellectual culture of the period:


Selected period overviews:

Selected biographical sources:

Selected reference works:
1(a). The Intellectual Culture of the Late Renaissance

If the 'high' Renaissance came about in Italy in the latter years of the fifteenth century, by the period c. 1570-c. 1630 the energies that had led to the 'rebirth' of Roman and Greek antiquity had arguably moved north, to France, to the Low Countries, and slowly even to England. This period of 'late' Renaissance saw humanist scholars direct their energies towards critical editions of ancient texts, the study of history and chronology, antiquarianism, and in the application of their reading to practical action. Philosophically, the Aristotelianism of the schools competed with the revival of other ancient philosophical sects, leading to neo-stoicism (most prominently represented by the figure of Justus Lipsius), neo-scepticism (Michel de Montaigne), and, by the 1640s, even neo-Epicureanism (Pierre Gassendi).

Indicative primary reading:

Justus Lipsius, On Constancy [1584], trans. Sir John Stradling [1594], ed. by John Sellars (Exeter, 2006) or on EEBO [selections]


Secondary readings:

* * Baldwin, G., 'Individual and self in the late Renaissance', Historical Journal, 44 (2001), 341-64


* * Boustcher, W., The School of Montaigne, 2 vols (Oxford, 2017), especially vol. 2

* * Bouwsma, W. J., The Waning of the Renaissance, 1550-1640 (New Haven, 2001)


Floridi, L., Sextus Empiricus: The transmission and recovery of Pyrrhonism (Oxford, 2002)


* * Grafton, A., Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450-1800 (Cambridge, MA, 1991), esp. chs 1, 2, 5

------, 'Portrait of Justus Lipsius', in Bring Out Your Dead: The Past as Revelation (Cambridge, MA, 2001), ch. 12 (first publ. in American Scholar, 56 (1987), 382-90)


McCuaig, W., Carlo Sigonio: The changing world of the late Renaissance (Princeton, 1989), esp. ch. 1

* * Morford, M., Stoics and Neostoics: Rubens and the Circle of Lipsius (Princeton, 1991)
Montaigne is one of the most celebrated of all late Renaissance philosophers and authors - and certainly the most enjoyable to read. He invented the modern genre of the essay, but there is nothing laborious or indeed even argued about how he wrote. Flitting from topic to topic like a bee visiting flowers, he drew upon his reading in Roman poetry and Greek philosophy, and on his experience of the political and religious upheavals of his own lifetime, in order to articulate a philosophy that draws upon elements of both neo-scepticism and neo-stoicism, but which is always highly personal.

Primary Reading:
Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, *Essais* (1580, 1588, 1595). Begin by reading 'Of the education of children', 'A Defense of Seneca and Plutarch', and the (much longer) 'Apology for Raymond Sebond'; then explore at will.

There are several modern editions of the *Essays*: either trans. M. A. Screech (Penguin, 1991); or trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford University Press, 1958; repr. Everyman, 2003); or trans. John Florio [1603], 3 vols (Everyman's Library; London: Dent, 1980) (this early modern translation has much charm and in some ways is closest to Montaigne's original, but may be heavier going); or read the *Essais* in French if you prefer.

Secondary reading:
* * Boucher, W., *The School of Montaigne*, 2 vols (Oxford, 2017)
* Cameron. K. (ed.), *Montaigne and his Age* (Exeter, 1981)
* Green, F., 'Reading Montaigne in the twenty-first century', *Historical Journal*, 52 (2009), 1085-1109
* Jordan, C., 'Montaigne on property, public service, and political servitude', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 56 (2003), 408-35
Keohane, N., 'Montaigne's individualism', Political Theory, 5 (1977), 363-90


------, Montaigne philosophe (Paris, 1996) [in French]


Popkin, R. H., The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza (Berkeley, CA, 1979)


Scholar, R., Montaigne and the Art of Free-Thinking (Oxford, 2010)

Screech, M. A., Montaigne and Melancholy (London, 1983)

Starobinski, J., Montaigne in Motion, trans. A. Goldhammer (Chicago, 1985)

2(a). Aristotelianism and the Universities

After the revival of interest in his writings in the later thirteenth century Aristotle became such a dominant presence in later medieval and early modern philosophy that he was simply known as 'the Philosopher'. In the late Renaissance he remained the dominant authority in European universities, where his writings were increasingly studied in their original Greek as well as in Latin translation, and the recovery of this phenomenon has been an important development in the historiography of early modern Europe. But dissenting voices were raised throughout our period, and by the end of the seventeenth century they had become so forceful that Aristotle was, to use a common image from the time, 'overthrown'. In this topic we consider the nature and causes of this process.

Indicative primary reading:

Pierre Gassendi, Unorthodox Essays against the Aristotelians (1624), in Descartes' Meditations: Background source materials, ed. R. Ariew, et al. (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 166-75


Secondary sources:


At least since the time of his death the English philosopher and statesman Francis Bacon (1561-1626) has been regarded as a central voice in seventeenth-century calls for a new approach to the study of nature and the overthrow of Aristotle. In this topic we will consider both his encyclopedic account of the deficiencies of contemporary knowledge, *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), and his programme for the renewal of natural philosophy by means of a 'New Instrument' (*Novum Organum*, 1620) for investigating nature, one that would replace the old tools of Aristotelian logic. This was the Bacon who came in due course to be set up as a central intellectual inspiration behind the new Royal Society of London for the Promotion of Natural Knowledge in 1660.

**Set texts:**


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------, *John Case and Aristotelianism in Renaissance England* (Toronto, 1983)


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2(b). Francis Bacon and the Advancement of Learning

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(ii) Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum* (London, 1620), esp. the preliminaries and bk i


Secondary reading:


Henry, J., *Knowledge is Power: How magic, the government and an apocalyptic vision inspired Francis Bacon to create modern science* (Cambridge, 2002)

Leary, J. E., Jr., *Francis Bacon and the Politics of Science* (Ames, IA, 1994)


Serjeantson, R.W., 'Francis Bacon and the "Interpretation of Nature" in the Late Renaissance', *Isis*, 105 (2014), 681-705

Late Renaissance natural philosophers tackled their subject from a range of perspectives and used a variety of methods -- experimental, alchemical, astrological, biblical, philological, and mathematical -- to do so. The impetus to investigate and understand nature was not simply a product of a 'scientific revolution', and indeed the achievements attributed to the latter need to be understood in the broad context of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, rather than with the hindsight brought by later developments. Resulting preoccupations do not always fit neatly into stories about the mechanisation or mathematisation of nature, and need to be understood in ways that respect contemporary ideas: both about intellectual disciplines and appropriate methods of representing new forms of understanding.

Indicative primary reading:

Daniel Sennert, *Thirteen Books of Natural Philosophy* [first publ. as *Epitome naturalis scientiae* (Wittenberg, 1618)], trans. by Nicholas Culpeper and Abdiah Cole (London, 1660), pp. 6-11 (bk i, ch. 2: 'Of the Nature of Physica, or Natural Phylosophy')


Secondary reading:


-----, 'Mosaic physics and the search for a pious natural philosophy in the late Renaissance', *Isis*, 91 (2000), 32-58


Edwards, M., 'Digressing with Aristotle: Hieronymus Dandinus' *De corpore animato* (1610) and the expansion of late Aristotelian philosophy', *Early Science and Medicine*, 13 (2008), 127-70


Gingerich, O., *An Annotated Census of Copernicus* De Revolutionibus (Leiden, 2002)

------, 'Johannes Kepler: the new astronomer reads ancient texts', in Commerce With the Classics: Ancient books and Renaissance readers (Ann Arbor, 1997), pp. 185-224


Kusukawa, S., Picturing the Book of Nature (Chicago, 2012)


3(b). Galileo and Copernicanism

Within in his own lifetime Galileo became celebrated across Europe both for his defence of Copernicus's view that the earth moved round the sun, and for his trial and imprisonment as a consequence of those views. This topic explores the the different ways in which he handled the Copernican thesis in his Dialogue on the Two Great World Systems (1632), and considers more generally the complex relations between natural philosophy and the Roman Catholic church in the earlier part of the seventeenth century.

Set texts:


Suggested further reading:


Secondary studies:

Biagioli, M., Galileo, Courtier: The practice of science in the culture of absolutism (Chicago, 1993)

Blackwell, R. J., Galileo, Bellarmine, and the Bible: including a translation of Foscarini’s Letter on the motion of the earth (Notre Dame, IN, 1991)
Whereas by the mid-eighteenth century the study of 'human nature' had become principally a moral and social endeavour, in our period it was still closely bound up with natural philosophy. This topic explores some of the ways in which human beings were conceived in relation to other beings - such as animals, angels, and God - and also how women and men were conceived in relation to one another.

Indicative primary reading:

René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method* [1637], ed. and trans. Ian Maclean (Oxford, 2006), parts v and vi

François Poulain de la Barre, *Three Cartesian Feminist Treatises* (Chicago, 2002), extracts
George Sibscota, 'A Discourse Concerning the Reason and Speech of Beasts', in The Deaf and Dumb Man's Discourse (London, 1670), pp. 48-89 [on CamTools]


Secondary reading:


Hatfield, G., 'The passions of the soul and Descartes's machine psychology', Studies in History and Philosophy of Science, 38 (2007), 1-55

Hotson, H., Johann Heinrich Alsted 1588-1638: Between Renaissance, Reformation, and Universal Reform (Oxford, 2000), pp. 67-82 (part of ch. 2)


Maclean, I., The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A study in the fortunes of scholasticism and medical science in European intellectual life (Cambridge, 1980)


4(b). René Descartes and the *Discourse on Method*

Perhaps more than any other seventeenth-century philosopher the French Catholic René Descartes - who lived for much of his life in the intellectually tolerant Protestant Dutch republic - was the figure who came to displace Aristotle as an intellectual authority. Descartes's *Discourse on Method* (1637) forms a kind of intellectual autobiography as well as introducing the nature of his interests in natural philosophy, mathematics, and the human mind, as well as on philosophical method and human nature.

*Set text:*

René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method* (1637)

Many translations are available: recommended are those by Ian Maclean (Oxford: World's Classics, 2006) or the one in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. J. Cottingham et al., 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984-85), vol. I, pp. 111-51; or read it in the original French

*Suggested further primary reading:*


*Secondary reading:*

Ariew, R., *Descartes and the Last Scholastics* (Ithaca, NY, 1999)


------, *Descartes: A biography* (Cambridge, 2006)


* * Dear, Peter, *Revolutionizing the Sciences: European knowledge and its ambitions, 1500-1700* (Princeton, 2001), esp. pp. 80-100 (ch. 5)


* * Edwards, M., 'Aristotelianism, Descartes, and Hobbes', *Historical Journal*, 50 (2007), 449-64


------, *Descartes' System of Natural Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2002)

Grafton, A., 'Descartes the dreamer', in *Bring Out Your Dead: The Past as Revelation* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001), pp. 244-58

-----, 'The Passions of the Soul and Descartes's machine psychology', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, 38 (2007), 1-35


5(a). Experimental Natural Philosophy

From the middle years of the seventeenth century a new form of natural philosophy began to emerge and rapidly rise to prominence, especially outside the universities. 'Experimental' natural philosophy emphasised experimentally-derived matters of fact over a generalised experience of what occurred in nature all or most of the time; experimental philosophers also drew systematically upon new philosophical instruments, such as the microscope and the air-pump; and they increasingly published their findings in the new genre of the learned journal.

*Indicative primary reading:*


Isaac Newton, 'A Letter ... containing his New Theory about Light and Colors', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, 80 (19 Feb. 1671/2), pp. 3075-87 [on CamTools or via http://www.newtonproject.sussex.ac.uk/view/texts/normalized/NATP00006]

*Secondary reading:*

Beretta, M., 'At the source of western science: the organization of experimentalism at the Accademia del Cimento (1657-1667)', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 54 (2000), 131-51


Dear, P., 'Jesuit mathematical science and the reconstitution of experience in the early seventeenth century', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, 18 (1987), 133-75

-----, 'Miracles, experiments, and the ordinary course of nature', *Isis*, 81 (1990), 663-83

-----, *Discipline and Experience: The mathematical way in the scientific revolution* (Chicago, 1995), esp. pp. 180-250 (*i.e.* chs. 7-8 and Conclusion)

* * ----, *Revolutionizing the Sciences: European knowledge and its ambitions, 1500-1700* (Princeton, 2001), esp. pp. 80-148 (*chs.* 5-7)


Garber, D., 'Experiment, community, and the constitution of nature in the seventeenth century', *Perspectives on Science*, 3 (1995), 173-205


Shapiro, A. E., 'Newton's "experimental philosophy"', *Early Science and Medicine*, 9 (2004), 185-217

5(b). The Early Royal Society and its Critics

A phenomenon closely associated with the emergence of experimental philosophy was the philosophical society. The Royal Society of London for the Promotion of Natural Knowledge, founded in 1660, was one of the earliest and has been (so far) the longest-lasting of these. But its early years were precarious and controversial. What sort of challenge did the Royal Society pose to existing institutions, such as the universities? How did its view of knowledge challenge those held by its critics? How did its apologists, including the cleric Thomas Sprat, go about legitimating its existence?

Set Texts:


Secondary studies:

If you have not studied the 1660s before you may find it helpful to begin by reading some accounts of the period as well as biographies of the principal protagonists:


* * ----, 'Lattitudinarianism and the "ideology" of the early Royal Society: Thomas Sprat’s *History of the Royal Society* (1667) reconsidered’, in *Establishing the New Science: The experience of the early Royal Society* (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 45-71

* * and J.A. Bennett, *The Image of Restoration Science: The Frontispiece to Thomas Sprat’s History of the Royal Society* (Abingdon, 2016)


* * Morgan, J., 'Science, England’s "interest” and universal monarchy: the making of Thomas Sprat’s *History of the Royal Society*, *History of Science*, 47 (2009), 27-54

* * ----, 'Religious conventions and science in the early Restoration: reformation and "Israel" in Thomas Sprat’s *History of the Royal Society* (1667)’, *British Journal for the History of Science*, 42 (2009), 321-44


6(a). Biblical Criticism

In many ways the intellectual life of seventeenth-century Europe revolved around the Old and New Testaments of the Christian Bible: as the immediate word of God, it served as a repository of sacred history, a source of irrefragable authority, and a set of texts that generated an enormous body of commentary. But this was also the period when, for the first time in a sustained way, the Bible’s claims to Revelation came under sustained, though rarely direct, scrutiny. In parallel with these processes the chronology suggested by the Old Testament was both established in unprecedented detail - and also, gradually, brought into doubt.
Indicative primary readings:


Secondary reading:

Barr, J., 'Why the world was created in 4004 bc: Archbishop Ussher and Biblical chronology', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 67 (1985), 575-608


Miert, Dirk van, *et al. (eds), Scriptural Authority and Biblical Criticism in the Dutch Golden Age* (Oxford, 2017), especially the introduction and the essay by Grafton

One of the most dramatically original - though for that reason also uncharacteristic - later-seventeenth century critics of the Bible (mostly the Old, but also implicitly the New Testament) was the excommunicate Jewish philosopher Benedict de Spinoza. What were the principles that informed the interpretations he offered? How significant is his invocation of natural philosophy as the model for Biblical interpretation? How did he arrive at his views on the authorship of the Old Testament books? What were the implications of his conclusions?

**Set text:**

Benedict de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise* [1670], trans. Michael Silverthorne and Jonathan Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), esp. chs. i-xv

**Secondary Reading:**

Chappell, V. (ed.), *Baruch de Spinoza* (New York, 1992)


de Deugd, C. (ed.), *Spinoza's Political and Theological Thought* (Amsterdam, 1984)


found in 'Leviathan, the Pentateuch, and the origins of modern biblical criticism', in *Leviathan After 350 Years*, ed. T. Sorell and L. Foisneau (Oxford, 2004), pp. 241-64

Miert, Dirk van, *et al.* (eds), *Scriptural Authority and Biblical Criticism in the Dutch Golden Age* (Oxford, 2017), especially the introduction and the essay by Grafton


-----, *Spinoza and the Irrelevance of Biblical Authority* (Cambridge, 2001)


---, *Spinoza and the Irrelevance of Biblical Authority* (Cambridge, 2001)

7(a). Knowledge of the East

By the end of the seventeenth century, readers could turn to a wide range of sources for information about distant lands in the East. Alongside scholars who mined oriental texts for guidance in making sense of the scriptures, several other 'experts' emerged as important authorities on the East: roving travellers like Ambrosio Bembo (1625-1705), merchant-scholars like John Chardin (1643-1713) (who rubbed shoulders daily with unidentified Persian informants), and even news writers and hacks who churched out fanciful stories about the East in cheap printed texts and novels. This diverse and growing body of information about the worlds of Islam, Judaism, and Eastern Christianity also reflected the increased importance of autopsy, eye-witness accounts, and information obtained from native informants and intermediaries like Ibrahim al-Hakilani (1605-1664). In this period too, universities, traditionally the centres of oriental studies, were joined by new institutions that served as clearinghouses of information about the East, such as the Royal Society, the Royal Exchange, especially the trading companies that gathered there, not to mention the vast correspondence networks that comprised the Republic of Letters.

**Indicative primary reading:**

*The Travels and Journal of Ambrosio Bembo*, ed. C. Bargellini and A. Welch (Berkeley, 2007)


P. Rycaut, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire, Containing the Maxims of the Turkish Politie, the Most Material Points of the Mahometan Religion, &c.* (London, 1668)

---, *Spinoza and the Irrelevance of Biblical Authority* (Cambridge, 2001)

**Secondary literature:**


Hamilton, A., William Bedwell the Arabist, 1563-1632 (Leiden, 1985)


* * Irwin, R., For Lust of Knowing: The orientalists and their enemies (London, 2006)

Loop, J., Johann Heinrich Hottinger (Oxford, 2013)


Rubies, J.-P., Travel and Ethnology in the Renaissance: South India through European Eyes, 1250-1625 (Cambridge, 2000)

* * ----, 'Oriental despotism and European orientalism: Botero to Montesquieu', Journal of Early Modern History, 9 (2005), 109-180


Shalev. Z., 'Measurer of all things: John Greaves (1602-1652), the Great Pyramid, and early modern metrology', Journal of the History of Ideas, 63 (2002), 555-75


Wunder, A., 'Western travelers, eastern antiquities, and the image of the Turk in early modern Europe', Journal of Early Modern History, 7 (2003), 89-119

7(b). Islam and Imposture

Transformations in the state of knowledge about the East armed European critics with a wider set of tools to draw on in their own intellectual, religious, and philosophical exchanges. The notion of imposture - or false prophethood - for example, had a long history in the Christian tradition, one that went back at least as far as the Old Testament. But as reports of impostors in the East circulated into Europe in the 1660s, apologists and sceptics alike would draw on such information in framing their own ideas about religion and revelation. This seventeenth-century tradition would have an important, but subtle, afterlife in some of the key Enlightenment works of the early eighteenth century, such as Montesquieu’s Persian Letters (1721) and the Treatise of the Three Impostors.
Set texts:


Humphrey Prideaux, *The True Nature of Imposture fully Displayed in the Life of Mohomet* (London, 1697)


Secondary literature:


Frassetto, M., and D. R. Blanks, *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke, 1999)


Pailin, D. A., *Attitudes to Other Religions: Comparative religion in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain* (Manchester, 1984)


Southern, R., *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA, 1978)
8(a) The Intellectual Culture of the 'Early Enlightenment' 

Recent writing on the later-seventeenth and earlier-eighteenth centuries has increasingly drawn upon the category of 'early Enlightenment' to classify the period - not always as self-consciously, perhaps, as such a leading term deserves. How justified is it to see this period in this way? Do the advantages accrued outweigh the teleological peril inherent in the term? If its participants did not regard themselves as living in an 'early' enlightened era how did they conceive of the intellectual nature of their age? How valuable do the insights remain of Paul Hazard’s classic book on the crisis of the Europe mind, originally published in 1935?

Secondary Reading:


* * -----. The Enlightenment: A Genealogy (Chicago, 2010)

* * Fitzpatrick, M., P. Jones, C. Knellwolf and I. McCalman (eds.), The Enlightenment World (London, 2004), parts I & II


Hochstrasser, T. J., Natural Law Theories in the Early Enlightenment (Cambridge, 2000)

Hunter, I., Rival Enlightenments: Civil and metaphysical philosophy in early modern Germany (Cambridge, 2001)

Israel, J., Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the making of modernity, 1650-1750 (Oxford, 2001), esp. part i

------, Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity and the Emanicipation of Man 1670-1752 (Oxford, 2006), esp. part i

------, 'John Locke and the intellectual legacy of the early Enlightenment', Eighteenth Century Thought, 3 (2007)


Marshall, J., John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture (Cambridge, 2006)


Sutcliffe, A., 'Judaism in the anti-religious thought of the clandestine French early Enlightenment', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 64 (2003), 97-118


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**8(b). Pierre Bayle**

If the early Enlightenment exists, Pierre Bayle is widely agreed to be a central figure in it. This Huguenot refugee from Catholic France was editor of the journal *Nouvelles de la république des lettres*, a professor of philosophy, and a critical and controversial historian. His *Critical and Historical Dictionary* (1697) constituted a major compendium of European knowledge at the close of the seventeenth century - but not an impartial one. Often ironic, sometimes scathing, always critical, both its tone and its encyclopedic ambitions were picked up and admired in the high Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. But scholars still debate Bayle's ultimate allegiances and purposes: was he a Huguenot, but a very sceptical one - or the infidel that both his Protestant and his Catholic enemies accused him of being?

**Set text:**


**Secondary reading:**

Bunge, W. van, and H. Bots (eds.), *Pierre Bayle (1647-1706), le philosophe de Rotterdam: Philosophy, religion and reception* (Leiden, 2008)


Hickson, M., and T. Lennon, 'The real significance of Bayle's authorship of the Avis', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 17 (2009), 191-205

Lennon, T. M., 'What kind of a skeptic was Bayle?' *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 26 (2002), 258-79

James, E. D., 'Scepticism and fideism in Bayle's Dictionnaire', in *Port-Royal to Bayle*, ed. by Vere Chappell (New York, 1992), pp. 267-83


* * * ------*, *Bayle*, trans. Denys Potts (Oxford, 1983)


Soll, J., 'Empirical history and the transformation of political criticism in France from Bodin to Bayle', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 64 (2003), 297-316


