History B 356

Announcements

Dr. Spang’s office hours:
Tuesdays, 2:00-3:15, Ballantine 711
and by appointment! Please come say hello.

Second Assignment (three-page paper on one of this week’s readings) is due in discussion class; see website for details

Over the next weeks, I will be making a few changes to the planned readings; check the website for updates. Information on the website always supersedes that in the printed syllabus.
Enlightenment and Society
There are basically two ways to think about “Enlightenment”:

- as content or ideas (intellectual history)
- as form or practices (social and cultural history)

If you covered this period at all in high school, you probably did the first. That is, you learned that “the Enlightenment” was a period* in which “new ideas” began to arise. People [which ones? all of them?!] adopted a critical, questioning attitude toward authority and established institutions. Science began to be as important as religion for explaining how the world worked. With the new idea that human reason could solve problems (that people did not have to rely on fate or on God), came new attitudes toward society. In *The Social Contract*, Rousseau wrote: “Man is born free but lives his life in chains.” The “chains” were not there at birth, they did not come from nature. So they could (and should?) be removed.

And then this idea of removing chains “leads to” the French Revolution.

*(ill defined, but roughly “the eighteenth century in Europe”)
BUT, there’s a little problem with that argument:

500 eighteenth-century inventories of people’s books
185 copies of La Nouvelle Héloïse
1 copy of The Social Contract

early edition of La Nouvelle Héloïse, published under the original title, Letters of Two Lovers Living in a little Village at the Foot of the Alps collected by Jean-Jacques Rousseau

title page of 1788 edition
Who Could Read? How do we know?
usually measured by signatures on wedding contracts but being able to sign your name and being able to read are two different things!

Literacy in France (average)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>men</th>
<th>women</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1686-1690</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1786-1790</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>27%</td>
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What did they read? How do we know?
We know from permissions granted by the Royal Censors’ Office—so that doesn’t tell us about the books that could not be published in France but that were published in the Netherlands or Switzerland and imported.

Religious works as % of permitted publications:
1700: 50%; 1720s: 33%; 1750s: 20%; 1780s: 10%

Prohibited Books: “philosophical”
pornographic
scandal/rumor reporting

Joseph Wright (of Derby), *Experiment on a Bird in an Air Pump* (1768)
Intellectual history
Enlightenment as content: emphasis on reason
questioning attitude
“scientific method”
may be deist or atheist

Social history
Enlightenment as practices
a model: the bourgeois public sphere (Habermas)
some examples: print media
cafés
learned academies
the Salon
freemasonic lodges
significance: changed meaning of “public”

Who could participate in this new public sphere?

Conclusion: a new concept (new vocabulary) without a precise or certain referent
Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962 in German)

from an absolutist to a “bourgeois” public

“Absolutist” is a political category, it refers to a form of the state.
“Bourgeois,” however, is a social category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>bourg</th>
<th>bourgeois (adjective)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bourgeoisie (noun)</td>
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Edinburgh  Greensboro  Danbury  Hamburg

Social History of Enlightenment: a model
“Bourgeois” refers to a social “class.” Old Regime France was a society of orders—it was based on status not class.

Old-Regime France was a society in which many of the categories people used when thinking of themselves and others were not the same categories we generally use today.

For example, pays ("homeland") meant someone’s village or region, not “country.”

It is crucial to remember that the Three Orders/Estates were not “social classes.”

In theory, at least, membership in the Second or Third Estate was determined at birth. How is this different from social class?

In theory, on what was membership in the First Estate based?

What happened in practice such that some people perhaps started to see these categories differently?
Who is the Third Estate?

wholesale merchants, international trade

professions (law, medicine, “men of letters”)

families living “in a bourgeois fashion” (investments)

farmers owning their own land

urban tradesmen and artisans

watchmakers, printers
butchers, bakers
carpenters, shoemakers

household servants

sharecroppers

rural migrant laborers, menial laborers

Are these people all part of the same social class?
Social History of Enlightenment: institutions of the bourgeois public sphere

Great Chain of Being

cafés
print media
learned academies
freemasonry
the Salon

how are these different from

God
King
clergy
aristocracy
other people
animals
plants
minerals
The Republic of Letters

How did people read? How does reading change?
Intensive and shared (a few books, read over and over again; reading aloud)?
Or extensive and personal (many books, read silently)?

How and why might it change?
increasing literacy
cheaper books
new places where people could go to read
subscription “reading rooms” (no public libraries)
cafés often had subscriptions

In the sixteenth or early seventeenth century, the people who read books and the people who wrote them were basically the same people: a tiny, tiny elite.

Expanded readership in eighteenth century also meant changes for writers. Such as?
Coffee politicians does create?

1652 first coffeehouse in London

First popular in France because exotic, foreign: Jean de Thévenot, *Voyages en Europe, Asie, et Afrique* (Paris, 1664)—several pages on “cahvé.”

1669 arrival in France of Ottoman ambassador; extensive discussion of “medical” benefits

But what was probably more important than the drink itself was that for the price of a cup of coffee, could sit for hours and read the *affiches*, other printed material, or talk to other customers.

Who *would* go into a café? Who *would not*? (How do we know?)
State-sponsored Academies
Académie Française (1635)
Académie Royale des Sciences (1666)

Dijon Academy of Arts, Sciences, and Literature—Essay Contests
1743: Can natural law perfect mankind without the assistance of political laws?
1744: What is the cause of fever?
1750: Did the restoration of the sciences and the arts lead to the purification of moeurs [habits and manners]?
1755: What are the origins of inequality?
1784: On the shame associated with capital punishment
1787: Are there ways of making Jews more useful?

1990: What role should computers play in daily life?
2008: Do we have a duty to remember?

Why are these essay contests significant?

Bourgeois public sphere: learned academies
Bourgeois public sphere: the Salon
You could only attend the Salon in Paris. But you could read about it anywhere:

“An enormous painting and an enormous piece of foolishness. Imagine a table in the center of a large room… around it, the Provost of the Trade Guilds, or maybe it’s a huge pregnant woman in disguise, stands with all the city’s officials…. all eyes turn upward, to where… a small shrunken Peace scatters flowers over genies of the arts and sciences. …

This work is truly cumbersome… the aldermen are just woolen sacks or ridiculous colossi made of whipped cream. … It really looks like Monsieur the Provost has invited Minerva and Peace to come have some hot chocolate… The genies are a yellowish green, just like the flowers. All is heavy handed and lacking in finesse. The monotony is so general, so unbearable, that one cannot stand here for long without starting to yawn. …

This bad painting does demonstrate a mastery of perspective, however, and the figures in the background recede convincingly…”

Diderot, *The Salon of 1767*

Noel Hallé, *Minerva Leading Peace to the City Hall* (1767);
Freemasonry: what we all know about it is that it’s secret! How could it be part of the new “public sphere”?

How do you get to be a freemason? What do the symbols mean?

Number of freemasonic lodges in France

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Lodges</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1749</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1759</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1769</td>
<td>312</td>
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Number of freemasons in 1789 > 50,000; perhaps 1/30 of adult men
“A meeting of Freemasons for the initiation of new apprentices”

Bourgeois public sphere: freemasonry
Features of the new public sphere as defined by Habermas:

1. It disregarded status: “the power and prestige of public office were held in suspense; economic dependencies also in principle had no influence.”

2. Cultural products became available for purchase, which meant they could lose their aura of sacredness; “private” people determined a play or a painting’s meaning on their own, through rational communication, and were then in a position to define the source of a product’s value and authority.

3. “The same process that converted culture into a commodity … established the public as, in principle, inclusive. However exclusive the public might be in any given instance, it could never close itself off entirely. There was also a more inclusive public, one made up of all the private persons who—insofar as they were educated and propertied—could avail themselves via the market of the objects that were subject to discussion.”

This is the theory. What happened in practice?
Provincial Academies (31 in 1789)

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Clergy (%)</th>
<th>Nobles (%)</th>
<th>Commoners (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>honorary members</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>full members</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>associate members</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>55</td>
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“View of the City of Rouen, capital of the province of Normandy” (1770)

bourgeois public sphere: who could participate?
Jean Pierre Brissot, the would-be *philosophe*

1754  born in Chartres, thirteenth child of an innkeeper

1774  goes to Paris

entered and won essay contests on legal rights of the wrongly accused and against capital punishment; published works disputing the authority of Saint Paul and calling for the abolition of slavery;

failed the bar exam; attended chemistry and physics lectures

1779  goes to London to establish the *Lycée*, a planned philosophes’ club

1784  returns to France; arrested on suspicion of authoring satirical pamphlets
Conclusion:
In the 1750s-1780s, there was a great expansion in number of appeals to “the public” and to model of the public as rational, as a basis for learning and the improvement of society. Yet, on the other hand, no one really knew who or what the public was; “public” was a word that could be used to a variety of ends, from selling cosmetics or parrots to calling for the abolition of slavery or an increase in taxes.

What happens in the Revolution is that lots of different individuals and groups claim to represent “the public.”
1. Hôtel de l’Escoville, Caen (Calvados), France—for much of the eighteenth century, this was the meeting place of the local learned society, the Académie des Sciences, Arts, et Belles Lettres de Caen; photo from fr.wikipedia.org
2. gallica.bnf.fr
3. commons.wikimedia.org
5. illustration from the Encyclopédie; http://encyclopedia.uchicago.edu/
8. anon, “Perspective View of the Salon at the Louvre,” (1767), gallica.bnf.fr
13. Joseph Wright of Derby, Experiment with a Bird in an Airpump (1768), oil on canvas; wikimedia.org
15. “J. P. Brissot, deputy to the Legislative Assembly from Paris” (detail); engraving by Maviez; photo gallica.bnf.fr