

Welcome to HUMA 1160!

Hello to everyone in HUMA 1160 9.0, a LA&PS foundations course. My name is Stanley Tweyman (stweyman@yorku.ca), and I am the Course Director.

Please note that this will be a **remotely delivered** course for lectures and some tutorials using Zoom (**at least in the Fall session**). *The format for the Winter term will be decided by the University at a later date.*

Course Description

A fundamental feature of the Enlightenment (roughly the period covering 17th and 18th century European thought) is the view that human experience is the foundation of obtaining knowledge and truth. In this course, we focus on selected Enlightenment writers and thinkers in order to understand this approach to learning. This course, which is interdisciplinary in its approach, will begin with an examination of pre-Enlightenment views of method and truth. In particular, we will examine how the pre-Enlightenment period holds that all truths are already contained in the Bible, and in the writings of the Ancient Greek Philosophers, specifically Plato and Aristotle. Learning, therefore, was largely regarded as exegesis, the study of texts, in order to understand the true meaning behind these works, and to attempt to render them consistent.

The thinkers in the Enlightenment are characterized by the fact that they abandon completely this approach to learning, holding that nothing short of a complete break with the past will enable learning to develop in a systematic way. It is not that they thought that no truths had emerged from Pre-Enlightenment thinkers; rather, they hold that no method had yet been developed by which we can establish if a claim is true or false.

But how will this revolutionary approach be undertaken? The Enlightenment thinkers all agree (we begin with Rene Descartes, 1595-1650, and end with David Hume, 1711-1776) that the method needed to generate the revolution in learning must be adapted from already existing successful areas of learning. Some, for example, Descartes, turned to mathematics to find their method; others, for example John Locke, Bishop George Berkeley, and David Hume, believed that the empirical sciences hold the key to a new method for learning. In our course, we will examine methods in mathematics and empirical science (respectively), which form the basis of method development among the thinkers we will be studying.

And after we develop a suitable method, to what should we direct our attention. That is, what is the first object of study? All Enlightenment thinkers, without exception, agree that the method should, in the first instance, be directed to studying the knower, or human nature, for only in this way can we establish answers to questions such as, how can we know?, what can we know?, what is good?, what ought we to do?, and what are the limits of human knowledge? Our inquiry will take us into natural philosophy, natural religion, politics, and morality.

The thinkers to be studied in the course include Rene Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, and David Hume. Students are strongly encouraged to read any two of the following books in order to obtain needed background for this course: Richard Popkin, *Scepticism and the Enlightenment*; Isidore Schneider, *The Culture of the 18th Century*; Peter Jones, *Philosophy and Science in the Scottish Enlightenment*; Hugh Dunthorne, *The Enlightenment*.

Required Reading Material

Students will need to purchase

- a) the Course Kit for HUMA 1160 9.0, available at the bookstore; as well as
- b) Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, edited and with an introduction by Stanley Tweyman, K J and E Publisher, 2021; and
- c) David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, edited and with an introduction by Stanley Tweyman, K J and E Publisher, 2021.

These books are available through the York University Bookstore.

Several platforms will be used in this course, such as Moodle and Zoom, through which students will interact with the course materials, the course instructor, TA's, as well as with each another.

To fully participate in this course, you will need the following technological resources. For further details about each resource, please click on the resource links:

- Moodle: [Student Guide to Moodle](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions](#).
- Zoom: [Zoom@YorkU User Reference Guide](#) and [Zoom@YorkU Best Practices](#).
- If there are technical difficulties with accessing your Zoom class, please download the [Zoom application](#) and install it on your device. Once installed, you can join your Zoom meetings with the SSO option. Please [click here](#) for full instructions.
- If you need technical assistance, please consult the [Computing for Students Website](#).

Assignments:

Students will be required to complete 4 written assignments throughout the year, which will be discussed at the first lecture.