

Course Title: *Enlightenment & Romanticism in Italy*

John Alcorn, Assistant Professor of Italian Studies & Principal Lecturer in Modern Languages and Literature

Pedagogical Rationale

The course is designed as an introduction to cultural expressions of modern ideas of nature, human nature, and history in Italy. Thus the keywords *modernity*, *nature*, *human nature*, and *history* will guide our discussions of particular works. (During our ISSSC seminar, I learned that *modernity* is a contested concept; therefore I approach this keyword in an open-minded, open-ended spirit and hope to clarify my thoughts along the way.) To sharpen the focus of our keywords, we will examine a variety of paired values: science and art, aristocratic and bourgeois values, the passions and the interests, religion and secularism, crime and punishment, and revolution and reaction.

We will make one detour beyond Italy in order to incorporate the French *moralistes*, whose insights into psychology complement Machiavelli's innovations in strategy. Jointly, Machiavelli and the *moralistes* set the stage for the Enlightenment idea of methodological individualism, which will be a crux of this course. Moreover, inclusion of the *moralistes* (who become mainstays of European culture) will enable students to grasp more fully the emergence of secularism in Italian culture. As an ISSSC seminar participant aptly noted, the *moralistes* (perhaps unwittingly) secularize sin.

Although the seminar will concentrate on the keywords and paired values noted above, in what follows in this statement of pedagogical rationale I situate the course in relation to some themes that marked our ISSSC seminar about "Secularism and the Enlightenment." Throughout the seminar, I was struck by my colleagues' emphasis upon (a) the most elusive aspects of historical inquiry, namely, colligation and causal explanation and (b) the treatment of cultural expressions (paintings, poems, and so on) as dependent variables. I lack confidence in my abilities in these two areas. Therefore below I try and sketch why in my course I will be cautious in colligation and in causal analysis, and why I will mainly treat cultural expressions as independent variables - analyzing the cognitive and aesthetic value of particular works and perhaps (tentatively) how they shaped history (reception).

I am grateful to my colleagues for sharing their approaches and tolerating my preoccupations. The seminar has deepened my understanding of secularism, which will figure therefore more fully than I had planned in my new course.

I. Problems of colligation of historical events into meaningful wholes

We will ask whether the Enlightenment and Romanticism can be understood as meaningful wholes; perhaps as periods or patterns. We will consider arguments against colligation, made by William Blake and Jean-François Lyotard. Blake insists that "Art and science cannot exist but in minutely organized Particulars." Lyotard contends that colligation ("grand narrative") misleads and oppresses; he favors micro-histories that remind us of the myriad individuality of history. The seminar will strike a balance

between concentration on the particularity of individual works and (cautious, tentative) identification of patterns and relations among works.

By reading (or beholding) a range of works from Leonardo to Leopardi, we will learn how ideas and periods criss-cross in received historical categories—as we find, for example, expressions of Enlightenment ideas of nature, human nature, and history in the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, and the Romantic period.

II. Problems of causation

We will compare and contrast the natural sciences (by reading Galileo) and the humanities (in the broad sense, including the arts and social sciences). The natural sciences discover laws of nature by controlled experiment, isolation of variables, identification of primary qualities, and the like. Prediction is essential to the natural sciences.

The humanities rely on the commonsense idea that we understand social phenomena by identifying (i) what individuals do (behaviors), (ii) why they do what they do (motivations and psychological mechanisms), and (iii) how their behaviors have unintended consequences (social mechanisms). Prediction is anomalous in the humanities; as Adam Ferguson puts it, history is “the result of human action, not of human design.” We will read groundbreaking works in methodological individualism by Machiavelli (strategy), de la Rochefoucauld (psychology), and Beccaria (deviance).

III. Arts and sciences: Problems of (i) priority among disciplines and (ii) commensurability across disciplines

Methodological individualism is incompatible with general causal theories of history. We will illustrate how innovation among disciplines does not conform to any general causal pattern or order of priority. Leonardo illustrates how the visual arts and the natural sciences can be inseparably innovative. Pietro Longhi illustrates how painting can shape theater (Goldoni). Erwin Panofsky (secondary source) explains how technological innovation can divorce science from art. Leopardi illustrates how psychology and poetry can be inseparably innovative. Manzoni illustrates how historical inquiry and the novel can be inseparably innovative. And so on.

The course will explore twin problems of commensurability: (a) the fact that Enlightenment ideas or attitudes were, so to speak, “in the air,” shaping creativity and innovation across disciplines (and also across national cultures), and (b) the fact that works in any particular discipline cannot be (fully?) translated into other disciplines.

IV. Problems of affinity between Enlightenment and Secularism

The seminar will examine relations between Enlightenment attitudes and secularism. The latter may be (a) institutional (separation of church and state) or (b) individual (making sense of life and the world without reference to God).

Italy, unlike England, the United State, and France, did not experience major constitution-making episodes involving institutional secularism until the Napoleonic wars and the Risorgimento. Nonetheless we may examine institutional secularism through

Galileo's defence of science's autonomy and Beccaria's innovative approach to crime and punishment.

We will explore artistic expressions on the individual, psychological dimension of secularism. A fascinating puzzle is why some innovators in methodological individualism—which makes sense of behavior and history without reference to God—are personally religious and others not. These matters will be studied in some depth by sustained comparison and contrast of Manzoni (religious psychology) and Leopardi (secular psychology).

Course description:

An introduction to cultural expressions of modern ideas of nature, human nature, and history in Italy. The course covers the period from the Scientific Revolution to Italy's national revolution and concentrates on original works (primary sources) from the period. Topics include science and art, aristocratic and bourgeois values, the passions and the interests, religion and secularism, crime and punishment, and revolution and reaction.

We will study in depth two literary masterpieces: Alessandro Manzoni's historical novel, *The Betrothed*, and Giacomo Leopardi's collection of poems, *Canti*.

Authors and artists in other genres include Cesare Beccaria (politics), Carlo Goldoni (theater), Pietro Longhi (visual arts), and Giambattista Vico (philosophy).

We will begin with a few key short works - by Leonardo Da Vinci, Niccolò Machiavelli, Galileo, and the French *moralistes* François de la Rochefoucauld and Blaise Pascal - that provide foundations from the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution.

Seminar format. Enrollment is limited to 25 students. Students majoring in Italian will meet separately for a supplementary session in Italian and will do coursework in Italian.

Course requirements:

- Four papers (one for each Part of the syllabus).
- Class participation, consisting in regular attendance, discussion, and two oral reports (one about a primary source, the other about a secondary source). Oral reports should encapsulate the assignment and invite discussion.

Grade policy:

- The cumulative score is on a scale of 100 points and may be graded on a curve.
- Papers amount to 60% of the course grade. Each paper is worth 15% (15 points available). Each paper should be five pages. Papers are graded on five criteria: focus, integration of assigned materials, argument or analysis, evidence, and prose. Each criterion is graded on a 3-point scale. 3 points = excellent. 2 points = satisfactory. 1 point = poor.
- Class participation amounts to 40% of the course grade. (The two oral reports are worth 15% each and discussion is worth 10%.)
- Penalties apply to students who miss more than three classes.

Purchase list. (All books are paperback):

- Cesare Beccaria, *On Crimes and Punishments* (Cambridge U. Press, 1995)
- *Leonardo's Notebooks* (H. Anna Suh, ed., Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2005)
- Carlo Goldoni, *The Coffee House* (bilingual edition, Marsilio Classics, 1999)
- Giacomo Leopardi, *Poems* (translated by Arturo Vivante, Delphinium Press, 1988)
- Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Cambridge U. Press, 1988)
- Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed: I Promessi Sposi* (Penguin Classics, 1984)
- François de la Rochefoucauld, *Collected Maxims and Other Reflections* (bilingual edition, Oxford World's Classics, 2007)

SYLLABUS

An asterisk denotes materials available online at course BlackBoard site

Part One: Foundations

I.	1/21	Introduction to the course	
	1/23	Leonardo 1: Nature	<i>Notebooks</i>
II.	1/26	Leonardo 2: Human nature	<i>Notebooks</i>
	1/28	Machiavelli 1: Human nature	<i>The Prince</i> , Skinner (1988)*
	1/30	Machiavelli 2: History	<i>The Prince</i> , Anderson (1974)*
III.	2/2	Galileo: Nature	Letter to G. Duchess
	Christina*		Panofsky (1962)*
	2/4	Rochefoucauld: Motivations	<i>Maxims</i>
	2/6	Rochefoucauld: Mechanisms	<i>Maxims</i> , Elster (1999) 76-107*
IV.	2/9	Pascal: Rationality	Pascal's Wager*, Elster (2003)*
		1st paper due: Tuesday, February 10th	
	2/11	<u>Discussion of papers</u>	
	2/13	<u>Discussion of papers (cont.)</u>	

Part Two: Beccaria, Goldoni, Longhi

V.	2/16	Beccaria 1: Crime	<i>On Crimes ...</i> chs. 1-16
	2/18	Beccaria 2: Punishment	<i>On Crimes...</i> chs. 17-32 Duff (1999)*
	2/20	Beccaria 3: Deterrence	<i>On Crimes ...</i> chs. 33-47
VI.	2/23	Vico: Human nature	<i>New Science</i> selections TBA Bellamy (1995)*
	2/25	Vico: History	<i>New Science</i> selections TBA McCullagh (2008)*
	2/27	No class - Trinity Day	
VII.	3/2	Goldoni 1: Comedy	<i>The Coffee House</i>
	3/4	Goldoni 2: Social norms	<i>The Coffee House</i> Sohm (1982)*
	3/6	Longhi	Images at ArtStor
VIII.	3/9	Tiepolo, Canaletto, Canova	Images at ArtStor
		2nd paper due: Tuesday, March 10th	
	3/11	<u>Discussion of papers</u>	
	3/13	<u>Discussion of papers</u>	

IX. SPRING VACATION

Part Three: Manzoni, *The Betrothed*

X.	3/23	Chapters 1-6	McCullagh (1993)*
	3/25	Chapters 7-12	
	3/27	Chapters 13-18	
XI.	3/30	Chapters 19-24	
	4/1	Chapters 25-30	
	4/3	Chapters 31-36	
XII.	4/6	Chapters 37-38	
		3rd paper due: Tuesday, April 7th	
	4/8	<u>Discussion of papers</u>	
	4/10	<u>Discussion of papers</u>	

Part four: Leopardi, *Canti*

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| XIII. | 4/13 | <i>Infinity</i> | Timpanaro (1979)* |
| | 4/15 | <i>First Love</i> | Alcorn (2008b)* |
| | 4/17 | <i>To Silvia</i> | |
| XIV. | 4/20 | <i>Saturday</i> | |
| | 4/22 | <i>Night Song</i> | Alcorn (2008a)* |
| | 4/24 | <i>Memories</i> | Alcorn (1996)* |
| XV. | 4/27 | <i>Wild Broom</i> | Alcorn & Del Puppo (1994)* |
| | 4/29 | <u>Review</u> | |

4th paper due: Tuesday, May 6th

Bibliography of secondary sources

- Alcorn (1996).** John Alcorn, “Giacomo Leopardi’s Art and Science of Emotion in Memory and Anticipation,” *MLN* 111:1 (January 1996) 89-122.
- Alcorn (2008a).** John Alcorn, “The Search for Meaning without God in Giacomo Leopardi’s *Canto Notturmo*,” *Secularism and the Enlightenment* (ISSSC, forthcoming 2008).
- Alcorn (2008b).** John Alcorn, “Giacomo Leopardi—Poet of Unspoken, Unrequited Love,” MS (2008).
- Alcorn & Del Puppo (1994).** John Alcorn & Dario Del Puppo, “Giacomo Leopardi’s *La ginestra* as Social Art,” *MLR* 89:4 (October 1994) 865-88.
- Anderson (1974).** Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (New Left Books, 1974) 143-72.
- Bellamy (1995).** Richard Bellamy, “Introduction,” in *Beccaria: On Crimes and Punishments*, edited by Richard Bellamy (Cambridge U. Press, 1995) ix-xxx.
- Duff (1999).** R. A. Duff, “Punishment, Communication, and Community,” in *Punishment and Political Theory*, edited by M. Matravers (Hart Publishing, 1999) 48-68.
- Elster (1999).** Jon Elster, *Alchemies of the Mind* (Cambridge U. Press, 1999) 76-107.
- Elster (2003).** Jon Elster, “Pascal and Decision Theory,” in *Cambridge Companion to Pascal*, edited by Nicholas Hammond (Cambridge U. Press, 2003) 53-74.
- McCullagh (1993).** C. Behan McCullagh, “Truth and Metaphor in History,” *Clio* 23:1 (1993) 23-49.
- McCullagh (2008).** C. Behan McCullagh, “The Lessons of History: Generalizations, Traditions, and Inspirations,” MS (2008).
- Skinner (1988).** Quentin Skinner & Richard Price, “Introduction,” in *Machiavelli: The Prince*, edited by Quentin Skinner and Richard Price (Cambridge U. Press, 1988) ix-xxiv.
- Sohm (1982).** Philip L. Sohm, “Pietro Longhi and Carlo Goldoni: Relations between Painting and Theater,” *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 45:3 (1982) 256-73.
- Timpanaro (1979).** Sebastiano Timpanaro, “The Pessimistic Materialism of Giacomo Leopardi,” *New Left Review* 1: 116 (July-August 1979).