



# Enlightenment: Reason, Tolerance, and Humanity (Modern Scholar)

*James Schmidt*

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## **Enlightenment: Reason, Tolerance, and Humanity (Modern Scholar)** James Schmidt

The Enlightenment stands at the threshold of the modern age. It elevated the natural sciences to the preeminent position they enjoy in modern culture. It inaugurated a skepticism toward tradition and authority that decisively shaped modern attitudes in religion, morality, and politics. And it gave birth to a vision of history that saw man, through the unfettered use of his own reason, at last escaping that state of “immaturity” to which superstition, prejudice, and dogma had condemned him. The world in which we live is, for better or worse, in large part the result of the Enlightenment. This course will explore this remarkable period. It will discuss the work of such influential thinkers as Voltaire, John Locke, Denis Diderot, Adam Smith, Immanuel Kant, and Benjamin Franklin. It will also spend some time with less well-known, but no less influential, figures such as Joseph Priestly—a clergyman, scientist, and philosopher who was one of the most passionate defenders of the American Revolution in England—and the remarkable John Toland, a man whose writings on religion changed the way many Europeans thought about the Scriptures. The Enlightenment involved more than simply books and ideas. To understand the Enlightenment we need to look not just at what people wrote but also at how they lived. During the eighteenth century, they began to congregate in coffeehouses, where they read newspapers, discussed politics, and created something known as “public opinion.” Others of them began to meet in societies that were dedicated to the advancement of the sciences and there they explored how science might be put to work improving society. Still others began to meet in strange new secret societies—for example, the Masonic lodges that spread across Europe—where they attempted to put the ideals of equality and brotherhood into practice. From the start, the Enlightenment has been controversial. In its own day, some argued that it threatened to undermine the moral and religious foundations on which society rested. It has not ceased to be controversial. In our day, some have charged that many of the maladies of modern societies can be traced to its shallow rationalism. This course offers a more balanced assessment of the Enlightenment, considering both its achievements and its shortcomings and focusing not only on its most important intellectual achievements but also on the strange and often colorful characters who populated it.

- From the Publisher

## **Enlightenment: Reason, Tolerance, and Humanity (Modern Scholar) Details**

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## **From Reader Review Enlightenment: Reason, Tolerance, and Humanity (Modern Scholar) for online ebook**

### **LemontreeLime says**

Excellent audiobook overview of a major historical epoch, with many satisfying side trips. I never realized how coffeehouses, the illicit trading of books, scientific societies (and secret ones), and even the encyclopedia of Diderot had so much impact on the modern world.

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### **Mike says**

Very disappointing to me in it's coverage of the subject.

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### **Sami Albanna says**

Good review of the enlightenment. The lectures are deficient in making connections between the intellectual development, the historical events, and social and economic changes that were happening simultaneously. I think that enlightenment in essence of people mind, productive forces in society, power structures, political thought, reexamination of religious beliefs, and changes in the power structure. All of these are dialectically intertwined to create a massive acceleration in the rate of change of science, technology, mathematics, engineering, social customize, sociology, philosophy etc. The main way-points, the historical events, in that transformation are the great revolution the UK, US, and France. The book stops shortly after the French revolution. The process has not stopped until now.

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### **Garren says**

Introduced me to Denis Diderot, a rascal I can't help but like. Nor did I know that coffee houses were such an important venue for the rise of public participation in political discussion. I doubt there's much in this series for people familiar with the Enlightenment, but I found it a nice little appetizer.

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### **Donna says**

This was very enjoyable. It made me realize how much the Enlightenment influences our current age.

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### **Mike says**

Much more a theoretical history of the beginning of the Enlightenment Era as opposed to the Era itself.

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