



Enlightenment and Education

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This special issue on teaching the Enlightenment was first conceived shortly after the release of Steven Pinker's *Enlightenment Now* in 2018. The idea was to bring together works of scholarship which advanced our understanding of the relationship between Enlightenment and education, and also to give instructors of undergraduate college students ideas, incentives, and resources concerning the Enlightenment and how to teach its figures in undergraduate courses. Such a lofty goal could not be reached without the participation and help of the National Institute of Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD), which is a membership association recognized as "the country's leading provider of professional development for community college faculty, staff, and administrators." For the first time ever, *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines* will be issued electronically; and faculty, staff, and administrators at NISOD's member colleges will receive a complimentary copy.

John Eigenauer is Professor of Philosophy at Taft College. He is currently finishing a book on knowledge in Paris in the eighteenth century. In his review of Stephen Pinker's *Enlightenment Now*, he discusses the major themes of the text, focusing on the final three chapters which include discussions on the role of reason, science and the development of humanistic ideals as legacies of Enlightenment thought.

In addition to Eigenauer's review of Pinker's book, the issue boasts contributions from four outstanding scholars and instructors of Enlightenment thought. Dr. Erik Goldner is Associate Professor of History at California State University, Northridge, where he teaches courses in the Enlightenment to undergraduates. Dr. Goldner uses this experience to provide "practical tips for . . . teaching the Enlightenment in the twenty-first century college classroom" while also arguing for the importance of teaching this critical period in human history.

Laura Talamante is Professor of History at California State University, Dominguez Hills who publishes on women, politics and culture, citizenship development, revolutionary geopolitical and geosocial mapping, and proto-feminism in Enlightenment and revolutionary Marseille. Dr. Talamante brings to light the important role of women in education during

the Enlightenment. To do this, Dr. Talamante wrote the article with one of her students, Jasmine Abang, giving Ms. Abang an amazing opportunity to enter the world of scholarship alongside a trusted instructor and an outstanding scholar.

Adrian O'Connor is an Associate Professor of History at the University of South Florida, the editor of the prestigious journal, *The Historian*, and author of *In Pursuit of Politics: Education and Revolution in Eighteenth-century France*. His contribution to this issue highlights the importance of education in understanding "how the critical and collective pursuit of useful knowledge might reform or remake human society."

G. K. Noyer is an independent scholar living in Paris, France. Her book, *Voltaire's Revolution* is an outstanding introduction to one of the Enlightenment's most important thinkers. In her provocative article, "Whatever Happened to Voltaire?" Noyer seeks to answer the question of why one of the chief figures of the Enlightenment has been largely forgotten, despite the fact that Voltaire played such an important role in the formation of the American Republic.

Despite the explicitly historical bent to these articles, we are cognizant of the fact that they are being published in a journal whose emphasis is on critical thinking. The Enlightenment was, in fact, the first age of widespread critical thought, where intellectuals were questioning traditional power structures, advancing egalitarian ideals, promoting social change, forwarding the ideals of science, decrying the abuses of superstition, and insisting that education was the great means of offering humankind better opportunities, happier lives, more freedom, and increased prosperity. It is our hope that this issue inspires all its readers to bring the Enlightenment to life for students of all ages. To that end, every article incorporates the importance of critical thinking while addressing the connection between Enlightenment and education.