DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

MODULE HANDBOOK

2011-2012

CONSUMPTION AND CULTURE IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY

Convenor: Professor Mark Knights
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Context of Module

This module may be taken by students on the MA in Eighteenth Century Studies, the MA in History, or any taught Master's student outside the History Department.

Module Information

The module explores the wide-ranging topic of eighteenth century consumption and culture. The focus will be on Britain, but several of the sessions broaden our gaze to France and to the Americas. Each week a different tutor will guide you through the topic, each of which will bear on the overarching theme. We hope the variety of tutors gives you an interesting array of topics and perspectives.

You can choose to write an essay about any of the topics that we cover. You can either use a title from the ones suggested or formulate one of your own in consultation with me or with the seminar tutor. Suggestions for reading are provided at the start and then for each of the seminars, but again please ask if you want more advice.

You are expected to attend the Eighteenth Century Seminar though you may also found much of interest in the Global History, Early Modern and History of Science seminars – the programmes are on the departmental website, where you will also find a forum for research activity.
**Week 1: Introduction (Mark Knights)**

For discussion

1. What do we mean by a consumer revolution?
2. What approaches might we use to study it?
3. Who were the consumers?
4. Are ‘consumption’ and a ‘consumer society’ different things?

Week 2: The Varieties of Print Culture and its Markets (Mark Knights)

In this week’s seminar we will examine the growth of print culture and its impact on consumers. We shall begin by looking at the output and types of print over the C18th in England, and try to assess how to determine reader responses. We shall explore some of the restrictions on the press and how far these were lifted to allow a ‘free press’. We shall then take a case study of playing cards and printed political images in the first part of our period.

Required Reading


Questions

1. Where was print consumed?
2. How was print consumed?
3. How was the consumption of print regulated or constrained?
4. How were print and political/popular culture intertwined?

Further Reading

- Paul Baines and Pat Rogers, Edmund Curll, Bookseller (2007)
- C.J. Calhoun (ed.), Habermas and the public sphere (1992)

**Sample essay questions** (see also seminar questions):

What was the cultural impact of increased consumption of print?
How, in the world of print, did topicality and the market intertwine?
**Week 3: High and Low Art: Visual Culture in London (Rosie Dias)**

**Required Reading**


You can get a sense of the kinds of imagery that is being produced in the second half of the eighteenth century by looking at the illustrations in additional chapters of Solkin’s *Art on the Line* and Donald’s *The Age of Caricature*, as well as the many monographs and catalogues on individual artists that you can find in the university library.

**Questions**

1. How and why did the market for art change in the course of the eighteenth century? To what extent was there conflict between the demands of the market and the artistic ideals held by painters?
2. How, and why, are audiences represented in visual imagery? What kinds of concerns do images of spectators reveal?
3. What were the functions of painting and printmaking in eighteenth-century society?

**Further Reading**

- Clayton, Timothy. *The English Print, 1688-1802* (New Haven and London,
Sample Essay Questions

What strategies did eighteenth-century artists use to make their works commercially successful?
What effect did the Royal Academy exhibitions have on the ways in which art was produced and consumed?
Was it possible for painting in the eighteenth century to be both the product of a commercial society, and its antidote?
Week 4: Gender and Consumption (Sarah Richardson)

Questions
1. In what ways is the eighteenth-century culture of consumption gendered? How are changing notions of masculinity and femininity demonstrated by the culture of consumption? Explore these questions with reference to the seminar primary source materials.
2. Consider the implications of a ‘culture-consuming’ public in this period. What are its characteristics?
3. What is the role of the government and the state? Are women able to participate in the politics of cultural consumption?
4. Assess the importance of gender and the politics of consumption by looking at particular commodities (examples might be alcohol, clothes, luxury goods etc). Do such commodities enhance or subvert the existing social order?

Readings
- Ann Bermingham and John Brewer (eds), The consumption of culture, 1600-1800: image, object, text (1997) especially chapters by Lovell, Wilson, Klein and Bermingham
- Martin J. Daunton and Matthew Hilton (eds), The politics of consumption: material culture and citizenship in Europe and America (2001), especially chapters 1 and 2
- V de Grazia and E Furlough (eds), The sex of things: gender and consumption in historical perspective (1996), especially Part I: Changing consumption regimes

Primary Sources for Seminar
- William Cobbett, Advice to young men, and (incidentally) to young women, in the middle and higher ranks of life: in a series of letters, addressed to a youth, a bachelor, a lover, a husband, a citizen or a subject (1831), Library e-book
- Adam Smith, An Inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations (1776), Library e-book, please browse the index for material relevant to the seminar questions

British Museum Prints and Drawings:
- [www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database.aspx), this online collection enables searches of the British Museum’s collections of historical, satirical and topographical prints, as well as important collections of printed ephemera, such as trade and visiting cards, fans and playing cards
- Burney collection of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century newspapers, Library e-resource

Further Reading
- Christopher Berry, The Idea of Luxury (1994)
• Claire Midgley, Women against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870 (1992)
• Amanda Vickery, The Gentleman’s Daughter (1999)
Week 5: The Debate on Luxury (Felicia Gottmann)

Questions
1. What constitutes a 'commercial nation'?
2. What is 'progress'? Is it good for societies? Good for individuals?
3. How does consumption interlink with morality? How does it relate to human nature? Do humans have a choice when it comes to consumption or luxury?
4. How do the four authors relate or respond to each other? How is their use of the same concepts different?

Primary Sources (essential reading):

- Voltaire, *Lettres philosophiques* trans. as *Letters Concerning the English Nation*: Letters 1-7 (on religious groups), 10-11 (on trade and on inoculation), 20 (on the nobility and literature), 23 (on the regard due to men of letters), and 25 (on Pascal) (available in paperback in French (Garnier or Folio classique) and in English from Oxford University Press)
- Voltaire, *Le Mondain* and *La Défense du Mondain*, usually trans. as 'The Worldling' (available online in French: [www.voltaireintegral.com](http://www.voltaireintegral.com), and in English: [http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2240/211136](http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2240/211136))
- Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*: Part IV chapter 1 ('Of the beauty which the appearance of Utility bestows upon all the productions of art, and of the extensive influence of this species of Beauty') also available online: [http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/192/200137](http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/192/200137)
- Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*: Book I, chapter 1-2 ('Of the Division of Labour' and 'Of the Principle Which Gives Occasion to the Division of Labour'); and Book V, chapter 1 ('Of the Expences of the Sovereign Or Commonwealth') parts I and II also available online from the libertyfund.org

Secondary Sources (recommended reading):


**Further reading:**
- Ellen Ross, 'Mandeville, Melon and Voltaire: The Origins of the Luxury Controversy in France', *SVEC*, 155 (1976), 1897-1912
- Donald Winch, 'Adam Smith: Scottish Moral Philosopher as Political Economist', *The Historical Journal*, 35 (1992), 91-113
**Week 7: Consumption, Sociability, and Individualism (Jon Mee)**

**Primary Texts**
- William Cowper, *The Task* (1785). Book 1

**Secondary Reading**
- Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA, 1989), pp. 159-175.

**Further Reading**
- Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization* (New York, NY, 1994), chaps 8 and 9
- You may also find it useful to refer to C. S. Matheson’s article again from week 3 and David Solkin’s chapter , “This Great Mart of genius”: the Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780-1836,’ in the same volume.

**Questions:**
1. In what ways might Ackermann’s book have added to what Hume calls ‘the fund of conversation’? What role do you think it may have played in Ackermann's business?
2. How do you read it in terms of its representations of sociability in a commercial society? Look at the relationship between the letterpress and the aquatints.
3. How does its representation of urban sociability compare to the account of London in Book 1 The Task? Think about the contrast between the domestic and the urban in Cowper’s poem in this regard, including the role of Cowper’s poem itself as a commercial item.
4. Compare the aquatint of ‘Exhibition, Somerset House’ with Rowlandson’s ‘Exhibition Stare Case’ (1811) caricature at [http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/pd/t/thomas_rowlandson_ex](http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/pd/t/thomas_rowlandson_ex)
5. What do you understand by Habermas’s idea of ‘public communication unravel[ing] into acts of individual reception, however uniform in mode’? (p. 161) How convincing an account do you find it of the transition from the eighteenth into the nineteenth century?

6. How would Hazlitt account of Londoners compare with the Ackermann volume and Habermas’s claim?
Week 8: Consuming Natural History and Travel (Hanna Hodacs)

The 18th century saw a huge influx of natural history material to Europe, this included everything from living creatures and plants to seeds, herbariums, minerals, insects mounted on pins, skins and larger animals – stuffed or conserved in spirit. The landscape in Europe was sampled in a similar manner. In this session we will study this flow of exotic and domestic material, how it was gathered on the field by naturalists, how it was conserved and displayed in private collections, museums and gardens and how it came to shape identities associated with being e.g. a gentleman, a lady, an amateur or a professional. We will discuss European as well as more specific British developments focusing particularly on the latter half of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century.

The seminar covers two themes. The first half (question 1 and 2) are concerned with social, economic and geographical developments. First we will be discussing the connection between natural history knowledge and development in long distance trade and travelling. Secondly we will look at how the consumption and production of natural history shaped class and gender identities in 18th and early 19th century Britain.

In the second half we will turn the table around and talk about how the consumption of natural history shaped scientific developments. Question 3 is about the connection between the great influx of natural history material and the categorisation of this material and its display in museums in the late 18th and early 19th century. Question 4 is about the handling of natural history material, how objects were conserved and stored and how such issues can help us understand how collections developed.

This will lead us to the final question, question 5, which touches on material culture as an approach in which we can incorporate history of science with history of consumption, class, gender and culture.

Questions

1. What were the reasons for collecting natural history on journeys? Discuss the overlapping of colonial, scientific, social and professional reasons behind such activities.
   Instructions: Read articles by Miller and Koerner listed under Required Reading, There are several texts listed under Further Reading I, which also are relevant, e.g. Schiebinger and Camerini’s articles are good starting points.

2. How did the production and consumption of natural history shape identities and how did different groups engaged in exploring the natural world relate to one another?
   Instructions: Read article by Allen listed under Required Reading; see also other texts by Allen, Secord and Shteir listed under Further Reading III.

3. How did 18th century reforms of scientific nomenclature and taxonomy (e.g. Linnaeus’) influence the culture of collection and display?
   Instructions: Read Allen, Alberti and Koerner listed under Required Reading. The books on Joseph Banks (by Gascoigne and Chambers) or on James Edwards Smith (by Walker and White) listed under Further Reading I and II are also good.

4. How did techniques for conservation of natural history material change over time and how did it influence the culture of collection and display?
   Instructions: Read articles by McCracken Peck and Alberti listed under Required Reading. The book by Asma is funny although have some flaws. Belk and Altick gives good over views and Haynes article is also informative, you find them under Further reading II.

5. Explain the notion of “object biography”.
   Instructions: Read text by Alberti listed under Required Reading.
Required Reading

- Samuel J. M. M. Alberti “Objects and the museum”, *Isis* 96 (2005), pp. 559-571

Further Reading

I. On travelling and natural history


II. On the material culture of science

• Victoria Carroll,”The natural history of visiting: responses to Charles Waterton and Walton Hall”, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* Volume 35, Issue 1, March 2004, pp. 31-64

III. On natural history and society


Week 9: Print Culture in France (Kate Atsbury)

In this seminar we will extend our gaze to France and compare the print culture and consumption there with the situation in Britain. We will take as our starting point some of the articles in Diderot’s *Encyclopédie*, the most significant text of the century, written with the express aim of changing the way people think. Using extracts from the work of historians such as Robert Darnton and Roger Chartier alongside the primary material will enable us to explore the consumption of knowledge in France in the second half of the 18th century and engage with the role of the enlightenment in a progressive desacralisation of the monarchy that found its apogee during the French Revolution. The second half of the seminar will explore the role of pamphlets and prints in the downfall of the monarchy in the early 1790s.

**Required reading:**

- Diderot’s *Encyclopédie*: The entries for
  1) Luxury
  2) Philosopher
  3) Intolerance
  4) Commerce
  5) France

To be consulted online in English at the collaborative translation project here: [http://quod.lib.umich.edu/d/did/](http://quod.lib.umich.edu/d/did/) or in French at [http://encyclopedie.uchicago.edu/](http://encyclopedie.uchicago.edu/)

- Two chapters from *The French Revolution: the essential readings* by Ronald Schechter:
  1) Robert Chartier, The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution, pp.75-10
  2) Robert Darnton, Forbidden bestsellers of pre-Revolutionary France, pp. 106-137

- Two chapters from *Queen of Fashion: What Marie-Antoinette wore to the Revolution* by Caroline Weber:
  1) Chapter 8: Revolutionary redress, pp. 193-22
  2) Chapter 9: True colours, pp.223-252

**Questions**

1. How and where was print consumed in 18th-century France. Does this differ to Britain?
2. How were print and political culture intertwined and how did this evolve during the Revolution?
3. For Roy Porter, the *Encyclopédie* was the ‘Trojan horse of the ancien régime’ – discuss.
4. How did print culture contribute to the desacralisation of the monarchy?
5. How convincing are the arguments linking material culture and print culture to Revolution?

**Further reading**

- *On France in the 18th century*
- Henri Sée, ‘Economic and Social Conditions in France During the Eighteenth Century’, [http://www.efm.bris.ac.uk/het/see/18thCentury.pdf](http://www.efm.bris.ac.uk/het/see/18thCentury.pdf) (originally published 1927)
- *On the Encyclopédie*
- Daniel Brewer, ‘Remembering the Encyclopédie’, *SEVC* 2005:10, pp.100-12
- On the book trade

- On the French Revolution

- On Marie-Antoinette
Week 10: Consuming Colonialism (Rebecca Earle)

Questions

1. How useful is Arnold Bauer’s concept of ‘civilising goods’?
2. What is the relationship between colonialism and consumption? Discuss with reference to a particular region.
3. To what extent did shared cultures of consumption create more homogenous colonial societies? Discuss with reference to a particular region.

Readings

Illustrative Bibliography

- Craig Calhoun (ed), *Habermas and the public sphere* (1992)