

HNRS 2030.64 • Spring 2022 • Professor J. Leichman

# GLOBAL FRENCH ENLIGHTENMENT

MW 12:00-1:20 • Prescott 234a



In this course, we'll read exemplary texts from the French Enlightenment that each borrow the voices of non-Europeans to articulate critiques of European society. We'll look at how Native American, Middle Eastern, and Pacific Islander perspectives are mobilized in order to skirt the prohibition on directly criticizing the institutions and traditions of a highly conservative European society undergoing a revolution in its conception of freedom and equality. We'll read works by Lahontan, Montesquieu, Graffigny, and Diderot that all articulate strikingly modern ideas around religion, political rights, gender equality, and sexuality – but do so exclusively in the voice of a foreign other. Our goal will be to grasp how these authors simultaneously challenged European hegemony through comparison to other civilizations, while perpetuating a tradition of cultural ventriloquism.

This is a seminar class in which student interests drive the discussion – come join us to discover these classic works, and to explore their continuing relevance to our own world!