

CONTINUING STUDIES/HISTORY 136, SUMMER 2007 BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AND THE WORLD OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Printer, journalist, postmaster, scientist, inventor, diplomat, patriot, and tireless founder of civic institutions, Benjamin Franklin was the most versatile of the Founders—even more so than Jefferson. He was as famous as Washington and his classic *Autobiography*, with its celebration of the bourgeois virtues, is the only American autobiography of the eighteenth century that is still widely read today. Even the French loved him. But this master of self-presentation remains elusive: both his many pseudonyms and his bubbly wit helped him to maintain his distance from his contemporaries. This course will examine the complexity of Franklin's personality and the diversity of his achievements. In particular, it will explore Franklin's place in the transatlantic cultural world of the eighteenth century, focusing on what the Enlightenment meant to Franklin, and what Franklin meant to the Enlightenment.

1. THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS (June 27)

Reading: Franklin, *Autobiography* (ed. Kenneth Silverman)

2. PRINTER, JOURNALIST, CITIZEN (July 11)

Reading: "Part I: The Man," in Edmund Morgan (ed.), *Not Your Usual Founding Father: Selected Readings from Benjamin Franklin*, pp.1-65.

3. SCIENTIST (July 18)

Reading: "Part II: Nature Observed," in *Not Your Usual Founding Father: Selected Readings from Benjamin Franklin*, pp 67-140.

4. BREAKING WITH BRITAIN (July 25)

Reading: "Part III: A Continental Vision," in *Not Your Usual Founding Father: Selected Readings from Benjamin Franklin*, pp. 141-218.

5. POLITICIAN, DIPLOMAT, STATESMAN (August 1)

Reading: "Part IV: War, Peace, and Humanity," in *Not Your Usual Founding Father: Selected Readings from Benjamin Franklin*, pp. 221-288.

Recommended:

Edmund Morgan, *Benjamin Franklin*

Gordon Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin*

Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*

Stacy Schiff, *A Great Improvisation: Franklin, France, and the Birth of America*

Bernard Bailyn, *To Begin the World Anew: The Genius and Ambiguities of the American Founders*

H. W. Brands, *The First American: The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin*

Robert Middlekauff, *Benjamin Franklin and His Enemies*

Page Talbott (ed.), *Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World*

I. Bernard Cohen, *Benjamin Franklin's Science*