

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE 210
Enthusiasm/Fanaticism in Transatlantic Perspective
T 4:10-7:00, CRN 17372

Instructor: Prof. Kari Lokke, kelokke@ucdavis.edu

In an era of focus on Islamic extremism, this course is designed to bring awareness to the history of fanaticism within Western religious and philosophical traditions. We will examine European Enlightenment efforts to define genuine artistic or spiritual inspiration and political idealism against the related dangers of religious zealotry and political extremism. We will also discuss the dialectic in which atheism, materialism, and commitment to philosophical analysis can themselves become matters of fanatical obsession.

The class begins with a survey of eighteenth-century European philosophical discourse on the concept of enthusiasm as religious delusion. We will then move to Anglo-American fictional treatments of religious and political fanaticism as well as French and German depictions of artistic enthusiasts. The concluding week will highlight twenty-first century, post 9/11 dialogue on religious and political extremism.

Readings will be chosen from the works below. We clearly cannot cover the entire list; it is offered here as a framework for seminar discussion and source of possible seminar paper topics.

John Locke	“Of Enthusiasm,” <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> (1690)
Jonathan Swift	<i>A Tale of a Tub</i> (1704)
Shaftesbury	<i>A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm</i> (1707)
David Hume	“Of Superstition and Enthusiasm” (1741)
Voltaire	<i>Letters Concerning the English Nation</i> (1733)
	<i>Philosophical Dictionary</i> : “Enthusiasm” “Fanaticism” (1764)
William Blake	<i>The Marriage of Heaven and Hell</i> (1793)
Ann Batten Cristall	“The Enthusiast. Arla” (1795)
Immanuel Kant	“What is Enlightenment?” (1784)
Germaine de Staël	“Enthusiasm” from <i>On Germany</i> (1813)
Sydney Owenson	<i>The Missionary: An Indian Tale</i> (1811)
E. T. A. Hoffmann	<i>Kater Murr</i> (1820)
Mary Shelley	<i>Valperga</i> (1823)
James Hogg	<i>Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner</i> (1824)
Letitia Landon	“Erinna” (1826)
Maria Jane Jewsbury	<i>The History of an Enthusiast</i> (1831)
Nathaniel Hawthorne	“My Kinsman, Major Molineux” (1832)
	“Alice Doane’s Appeal” (1835)
Nat Turner	<i>The Confessions of Nat Turner</i> (1831)
Herman Melville	<i>Benito Cereno</i> (1855)
Henry David Thoreau	“A Plea for Captain John Brown” (1859)

Contemporary Parallels:

Santosh Sivan	<i>The Terrorist</i> (1999)
Jean-François Lyotard	“The Sign of History” (1983)
Arundati Roy	“The Algebra of Infinite Justice” (2001)
Salman Rushdie	“Yes, This is About Islam” (2001)
Orphan Pamuk	“The Anger of the Damned” (2001)
Slavoj Zizek	“Welcome to the Desert of the Real” (2001)
Judith Butler	“Explanation and Exoneration” (2002)