Was it the eighteenth-century Enlightenment that finally brought human beings to their senses — a revolt against authority which taught us to think for ourselves and to abandon prejudice and superstition? Or was its trust in reason, secular authority, and universal principles in fact misguided and oppressive, leading us to disregard the needs of individuals, specific cultural traditions, even the environment? Either way, this European transformation reimagined how the modern world might work. We will examine the key arguments and literary qualities of writers like Daniel Defoe, John Locke, Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Thomas Jefferson, and end with Daniel Kehlmann’s best-selling *Measuring the World* — a novel that rethinks the Enlightenment through the lives of the South-American explorer Wilhelm von Humboldt and the legendary mathematician Carl Friedrich Gauss.

Prerequisites: None

GE (old): AH & WE

GE (new): AH, WC & WE