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)

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)

5. POLITICIAN, DIPLOMAT, STATESMAN (August 1)

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