

# Historical Context



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# Enlightenment Era

The enlightenment was a period of time in the late 17th and 18th centuries which saw immense success in the fields of science, philosophy, and social development that transformed the world.

Enlightenment thinkers questioned traditional authority and embraced the notion that humanity could be improved through rational change.



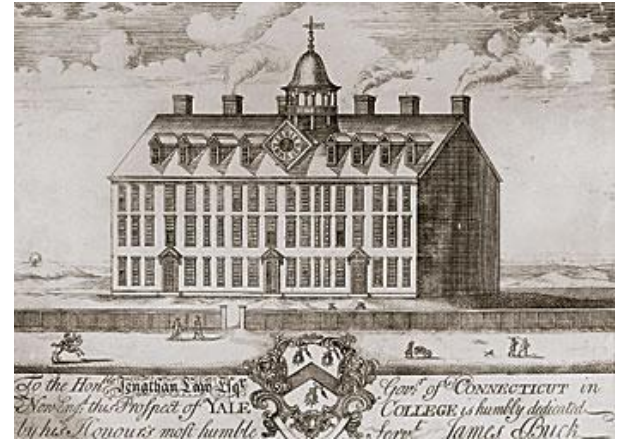
# Education

By 1700, Europe had around 105 colleges and universities, and North America had 44.

The vast majority of university students were men from affluent families seeking to pursue a career as a physician, lawyer, or member of the clergy.

In the first decades of the 18th century, live demonstrations began to be added to university lectures.

Science was called 'natural philosophy' and was comprised of physics, chemistry, and natural history.



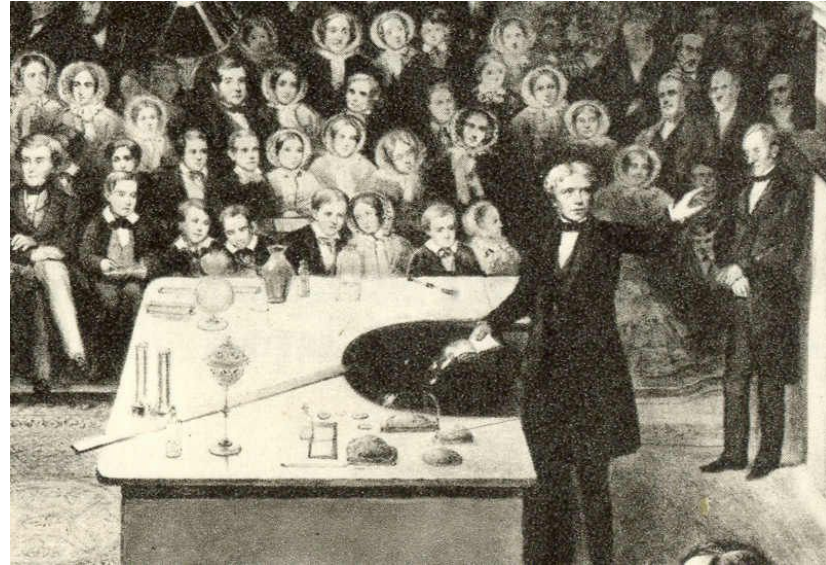
*The original university building at Yale 1718-82.*

# Public lectures

Public lecture courses offered some scientists forum to transmit scientific knowledge, at times even their own ideas, and the opportunity to carve out a reputation.

The importance of the lectures was not teaching complex mathematical information, but rather demonstrating to the wider public the principles of physics and encouraging discussion and debate.

Certain lectures offered viewers certain demonstrations using physical principles to entertain the audience. 18th century Lecturers insisted on these peculiar marvels, stating that there were useful for the good of society.



# Women in science

Throughout the enlightenment era, women were prohibited from being part of scientific societies, universities, and learned professions.

They were only educated in a home environment, and if they had a father or other educated male relative they might be able to be educated that way.

In the 18th century they were so extensively restricted from access to scientific knowledge that they were even banned from using microscopes or forceps.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau said: A woman's education must... be planned in relation to man. To be pleasing in his sight, to win his respect and love, to train him in childhood, to tend him in manhood, to counsel and console, to make his life pleasant and happy, these are the duties of woman for all time, and this is what she should be taught while she is young.

# Immanuel Kant

**22 April 1724 - 12 February 1804**

Highly influential German philosopher who wrote about epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and aesthetics.

Kant's theory of the Categorical Imperative states that, for any given action to be justified as morally sound, it must be congruent with one's reasoning for all of one's other actions.

*"There is... only a single Categorical Imperative and it is this: Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."*





# Jean-Jacques Rousseau

**28 June 1712 – 2 July 1778**

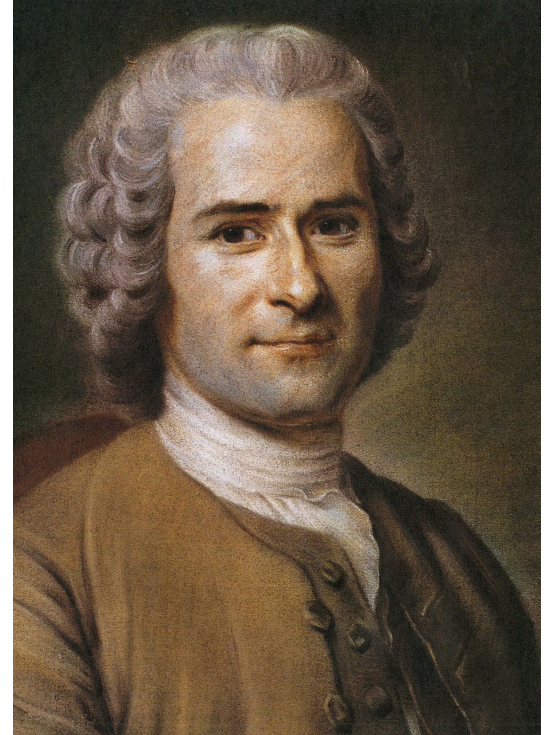
Rousseau was one of the most intelligent philosophers of the 18th century as he determinedly looked at ways to understand society and the acquisition of knowledge.

His political philosophy had a big influence of the enlightenment period in Europe and the development of economic and educational understanding.

Jean looked studied human nature and published the “Social Contract” in 1762 which theorized about the best way to establish a political community in the face of problems that society creates.

*“Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains.”*

With this quote Rousseau talks about the restraints that modern society have on our physical freedom since to when we are born to when we die.



# John Locke

**29 August 1632 – 28 October 1704**

- English philosopher and physician
  - Studied logic, metaphysics, classics - trained in medicine
  - A key advocate of the Scientific Revolution
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- Created the concept known as Tabula Rasa, meaning a blank sheet of paper
  - The Blank Slate Theory links to Frankenstein as the Creature is portrayed as a blank slate, and is shaped by the people that he encounters.
  - His theory ignores the effects of genetics on the human personality, and instead focuses on the idea that we are all born with the ability to become anyone and do anything.
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- Mary Shelley was influenced by John Locke's Blank Slate Theory, and implements it into the novel Frankenstein in order to warn readers that our actions have reactions, and that we subconsciously shape other people's thoughts and the way they view the world.

