Culture and Society in the Scottish Enlightenment (Non-credit)

Summary
This course will let you explore the culture and society of 18th century Edinburgh and how this context led to the major developments in the Scottish Enlightenment.

You will be introduced to the social, political, and religious thought of the period and investigate key areas of development in the Scottish Enlightenment, including philosophy, aesthetics, medicine, and literature. Special consideration will also be given to the influence of Scottish thinking on America, and the circumstances which led to the eclipse of Enlightenment thinking.

Course Description
The course is interdisciplinary: thinkers such as David Hume and Adam Smith studied and wrote on a wide range of academic disciplines, on the basis that each discipline is helpful to shed explanatory light on the others. This is a traditional Scottish approach to study, which predates the Scottish Enlightenment – and it is the approach which this course will adopt. As philosophy was the central discipline of the Scottish Enlightenment, a philosophical approach will be used to consider each of the other key themes and developments.

You will consider the enduring relevance of the Enlightenment, including current approaches to its study, and areas of contemporary debate among scholars. This approach will let you enhance your critical, discursive and analytical skills.

There will be the opportunity for guided tours of museums and galleries, as well as locations in Edinburgh which relate to the period of the Scottish Enlightenment. You will also take part in a philosophical walking tour of Edinburgh, visiting key sites and locations across the city, and helping you understand the context of the ground-breaking developments of this period.

Course Format and Teaching Method
The course will be delivered via structured seminar sessions, with an introductory lecture and tutorials in the first week. There will be prescribed and optional readings for all classes, which you will be expected to read outside of class time. You will also take part in museum and gallery visits across Edinburgh, and a philosophical walking tour of the city.
Learning Outcomes
By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand key themes, issues, and ideas associated with the Scottish Enlightenment
- Show awareness of the cultural and intellectual legacy of the Scottish Enlightenment
- Demonstrate enhanced critical, discursive and analytical skills, gained through tutorial participation and completion of written assessments
- Appreciate the intellectual, cultural and historical significance of Edinburgh and Scotland

Assessment Method
Informal assessment will take place through group discussion, classroom activities, questions and answers sessions as guided by tutor.