Description

This course offers a thematic examination of European history spanning the years c. 1350-1650. Our focus will not simply be on events and individuals, but on patterns of continuity and engines of change. We will begin by interrogating the meaning of the term “Renaissance” as is applied to describe the dynamics of Italian humanist culture in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. We will next turn to the question of how modern scholars have used this term from the nineteenth century to the present, investigating their interpretations of “rebirth” during this era.

Subsequently, we will consider the many ways in which this historiographical paradigm of “rebirth” fits the realities of early modern society. For, while Europeans maintained many of their traditions during this period, they participated in global systems to a greater degree. This, in turn, caused social disruption and expansion, particularly in the areas of economic and environmental exchange, artistic and cultural production, religious and scientific belief and, of course, political and military governance.

Therefore, we will explore each of these four themes in sequence, treating a new theme each week. The core assignment for the course will be a research project taking the form of a traditional research paper OR a gallery presentation. Therein, student will be asked to determine the most crucial engine of change during this period—what, to them, constitutes the sine-qua-non of the Renaissance (or, conversely, shows it to be an artificial construct). By the end of the term, each student will have learned about the key historical events that demarcated this era of human exploration, while gaining insight into why it is so central to those wishing to define Western identities today.

Painting: *The Flagellation of Christ*, Piero della Francesca, c. 1455
Course Objectives/Skills Developed

As a student, you will...

- gather facts and analyze evidence about the major cultural developments in Europe from the later medieval period until the dawn of the Enlightenment.

- demonstrate your knowledge of this era by mastering timelines, reading maps, and interpreting both primary and secondary historical sources.

- sharpen your critical thinking skills and powers of verbal expression, learning to question received historiographical wisdom and to formulate creative ideas about the mentalities and material cultures of premodern people.

- improve your research and writing skills as you learn to find reputable scholarly sources and use them to form clear, logical, and specific arguments about the past.

- leave the class able to make conceptual connections between Early Modern events and the complexities of society today.

Texts

All assigned texts will be posted on Sakai via PDF file or weblink. Therefore, though intensive reading is necessary, no textbook purchase is required for this course.

Assignments (out of 100%)

Participation 15%
This includes evaluation of attendance, attentiveness, and contributions to classroom discussion.

Reading Responses 10% (5 x 2% each)
These fifteen-minute in-class writings will engage with assigned texts and address major questions in the course. They will prepare you for more in-depth discussion with your peers.

Short Tests 45% (4 total, 3 x 10%, Last is worth 15%)
These half-hour tests will consist of multiple choice questions, chronologies, and “connections,” in which you will explain how two historical concepts are related.

Research Project 30%
This culmination project can take the form of a traditional research paper or a gallery presentation. 2,000 minimum word-count and Chicago/Turabian style citation required.

Scale

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<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>94 – 100%</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90 – 93%</td>
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Policies

*Attendance.*

My philosophy: *Come to class. Each class like a short play. It unfolds in a unique manner that cannot be replicated or even described adequately to someone who was not there. Just like most performances you are paying to attend. Therefore…*

Your presence at all sessions is mandatory and will be recorded at each class meeting. Due to the accelerated nature of this Summer class, attendance is vital. Any student missing more than one class is subject to an automatic 10-point reduction of his/her participation grade. Attendance taking will occur via sign-in sheet OR by my taking account of each student who has written the in-class assignment for that day.

*Excused Absences* can only occur if

A. You have paperwork from a medical professional detailing that you have been dealing with an illness.
B. A close member of your family died, and you paid your respects.
C. You were observing a religious holiday.
D. You were attending a mandatory University-sanctioned event (i.e. an athlete in a game, etc.)
E. You were disproportionately affected by a recent weather emergency.

These absences will not count against you. Nothing else is considered an excused absence. To obtain an excused absence, please see me AFTER the class in which it occurs for a brief chat.

*Unexcused Absences.* I understand that emergencies may arise in which you have unexcused absences for a variety of reasons. We are all adults and sometimes must make difficult choices as to how to prioritize our time. That is why this syllabus states that your participation grade will not be reduced automatically until you have been absent more than once without an official excuse as listed above.

With that said, I do NOT need to know, via e-mail or otherwise, why you are not in class on your one unexcused absence day. This is not because I do not care about your presence or welfare, but because it is up to you, as an adult, to decide if circumstances warrant your non-attendance and to proceed accordingly.

*Late Arrivals/Early Departures.* Being on time is important. Therefore, two tardy arrivals to class (six minutes or later after the hour) count as one unexcused absence in terms of your participation grade. The same applies for any early departure that is not for reasons that would excuse a full absence. Class is only fifty minutes long, so make sure to focus all of your energy on it for the short time that we are there. Since our classrooms are relatively small, anyone coming
in or going out creates an inevitable distraction. Please help me to create an optimal learning environment for all students.

* **Make-Up Work.** It is never the responsibility of the instructor to catch you up if you miss class. Make sure that you do the assigned reading for the day that you miss and ask a classmate to borrow their notes so that you know what subjects we covered. “Catch-up” is not the purpose of office hours or outside meetings. These are meant to enrich your understanding of the material, not replace your class experience.

* **Participation** is a vital component of your grade. To do well in this area you must:

  - **Check** your e-mail every day for class-related messages.

  - **Read** the assigned textbook chapters and primary documents PRIOR to each class session. Re-read when you study.

  - **Focus** in class. Show up. Be an engaged and considerate listener who values all opinions.

  - **Speak** up. Class is a space that is meant to be both open and safe. Your feedback is welcome and important. I am also available to talk with you one-on-one at a mutually convenient time. These meetings can be invaluable!

Please know that if you do not participate in class discussion with your peers, talk with me after class, or meet during office hours, it is impossible to receive higher than a “C” on the participation component of your grade.

  - **Ask** questions about the material and ask me for help right away if something is confusing.

  - **Try.** Consistent effort, even in the face of difficulty, shows character. It will be rewarded.

* **Electronics Policy:** in order to foster a positive and respectful learning environment, every person in our classroom MUST turn their phone OFF prior to the beginning of class. Earbuds should be taken out as well. Laptops and tablets can be used for note taking, small-group research, and text-book/source consultation ONLY. In my experience, promising students who pay attention to their phones instead of lecture miss enough material to reduce their scores by at least one full letter grade, even prior to the damage this practice does to participation scores.

  - **Make-up tests** are not offered except in the case of circumstances that would warrant an EXCUSED absence. (See criteria above.)

  - **Late assignments:** In-class writings cannot be made up. Late papers cannot be accepted past 7/30 due to the compressed grading timeline for Summer II. If you are ever struggling with class assignments and deadlines, contact me immediately and we will discuss your options.

**Ethics**

One of URI’s Cornerstone Values is to “pursue knowledge with honesty, integrity and courage.” Therefore, I have a no-tolerance policy on plagiarism in my classroom. University regulations on the subject are to be found in Chapter 8 of the University Manual, available here:
Note particularly the following:

“8.27.12 Material taken word for word from the written or oral statement of another person must be enclosed in quotation marks or otherwise clearly distinguished from the body of the text and the source cited.”

“8.27.14 Written work presented as personal creation is assumed to involve no assistance other than incidental criticism from others…”

“8.27.17… The instructor shall have the right to fail a student on the assignment on which the instructor has determined that a student has cheated or plagiarized.”

**Resources**

*Know that there are multiple resources on campus put in place to ensure that no individual is subject to discrimination. For further information see the website of The Office of Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity and Diversity at: https://web.uri.edu/affirmativeaction/*

*If you are a student with a disability and wish to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, please register with Disability Services for Students: http://web.uri.edu/disability/Then follow up with me so that I can make sure that you receive the help to which you are entitled.*

*If you are a veteran of the US armed services and need assistance, you can find resources here: http://web.uri.edu/prov/veterans/*

*Given the argumentative writing involved in this course, all students are encouraged to both ask me for help and to take advantage of the services at the Writing Center. Further information can be found at: https://web.uri.edu/aec/writing/*

*Students should also be aware of the free and confidential services available at the Counseling Center which “provides confidential support for the personal, emotional, and academic well-being of…students.” Take a look at http://web.uri.edu/counseling/*

**Notes**

*On Names.* Please address me as Dr. Bush in person and in all correspondence. Let me know if you have a preference as to how I address you, whether it is a nickname you prefer or a set of pronouns that works for you.

*On Difficulty:* The subject matter of this course is designed to be challenging, and it is compressed into a short time frame. Premodern material, even in translation, can be a struggle for students, even those who excel in other academic pursuits. Therefore, I entreat you to set aside enough time in your schedule to succeed in 305 this Summer, including a minimum of 12 hours a week outside of classroom sessions.

**Schedule**

*Please note that this schedule can be modified in order to best suit student needs and course outcomes. In particular, it is subject to change in order to accommodate our trip to the library for a Research Visit.*
The readings must be completed PRIOR to the day that they are listed.

**Week I: Defining the Renaissance, Then and Now**

Mon 6/25  
**Class Introduction**  
**Preparatory Reading:** Margaret King, *A Short History of the Renaissance in Europe*, Chapter 3  
**Meet and Greet**  
**Discussion** of Syllabus  
**Timeline Game**  
**Lecture:** Background– Between Medieval and Modern Europe

Tues 6/26  
**Scholars in the Renaissance**  
**Readings:**  
Francisco Petrarca’s *Letters to Cicero*  
Lorenzo Valla, *On the False Donation of Constantine*  
Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man*  
**Lecture:** Defining the Renaissance I– Humanist Education  
**Discussion** of Primary Readings

Weds 6/27  
**Scholars of the Renaissance**  
**Readings:**  
Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, Part II, Chapters I–III  
And Part III, Chapters I–III  
Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve*, Preface– Chapter 3, Chapters 8 and 9  
Laura Saetveit Miles, Vox Article on Greenblatt  
**Lecture:** Defining the Renaissance II–Modern Interpretations  
**Discussion** of Miles and the Problems of Periodization

Thurs 6/28  
**Refuting the Renaissance**  
**Reading:** Joan Kelly, *Did Women Have a Renaissance?*  
**Timed Writing I**– Do you think that “Renaissance” is an accurate term as applied to the intellectual movements of the fifteenth century? Why or why not? OR What would you have to know in order to be an ideal Renaissance scholar?  
**Lecture:** Progress, Continuity, or Regression? – Early Modern Culture and the Question of a Women’s Renaissance

**Week II: Economies and Exchange**

Mon 7/2  
**The Commercial Revolution**  
**Reading:** Carlo Cipolla, *Before the Industrial Revolution* – Selections  
De Lamar Jensen, *Renaissance Europe*, Chapter 3  
Selected Commercial Documents from Late Medieval Italy  
**Explanation** of Project Requirements  
**Lecture:** Expanding Mediterranean Trade c. 1050–1350

Tue 7/3  
**The Black Death**  
**Reading:** Philip Zeigler, *The Black Death*, Chapters 1, 2, and 3  
Giovanni Bocaccio, *The Decameron*– Introduction  
**Timed Writing II**– What was the single most important effect that the Plague had on European society?  
**Lecture:** Riding a Pale Horse: The Plague and Social Change
Weds 7/4  NO CLASS– Independence Day (make up this Friday 7/6)

Thurs 7/5  Going to Market– Merchant and Consumer
Reading: Selections from the diary of Gregorio Dati
Evelyn Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance*, Excerpts and Images
Discussion of Dati passages
Lecture: Boom & Bust– Borrowing and Banking in Europe c. 1200–1600

Fri 7/6  European Exploration and the Columbian Exchange
Reading: Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange*, Excerpts
Nunn/Qian, *The Columbian Exchange* (Article)
Test I
Lecture: Consuming the World– Trade and Globalization to c. 1650

**Week III: Arts and Culture**

Mon 7/09  Genius is Born– The Renaissance Artist
Reading: King, Chapter 4 + Giotto
Watch Documentary, Andrew Graham Dixon– *Body and Soul*
Lecture: Constructing Perspective– Italian Art, 1305–1564

Tues 7/10  Genius Evolves– From the Italy to the North
Reading: King, Chapter 10
Lecture: Interior Drama– Northern Renaissance Painting
Documentary: Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Supreme Art*
(Episodes 2 and 3 of *Northern Renaissance* docs also recommended)

Weds 7/11  Patronage and Court Culture
Readings: Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*
King on Castiglione.
Letters of Isabella d’Este, Marchesa of Mantua
Timed Writing III: Does Castiglione’s advice for courtiers sound at all similar to recommendations to aspirational individuals today? How?
Lecture: Performing Sprezzatura– The Renaissance Courtier at Work
Filmed Talk: Gary Radke: *The Art of Being a Renaissance Man*

Thurs 7/12  The Printing Press
Reading: Elizabeth Eisenstein–*The Printing Revolution*, Excerpts
Jensen, *Renaissance Europe*– Printing
Map on the Spread of Printing
Test II
Lecture: Spreading the Word– Early Presses and Editions of Scripture

**Week IV: Religion and Belief**

Mon 7/16  The Church in the Long Fifteenth Century
Readings:
Selections from King, Chapter Six
Euan Cameron, *Early Modern Europe, An Oxford History* Chapter 2
Selected Sermons of Bernardino of Siena
Lecture: Crises, Councils, Charisma: The Institutional Church, 1309–1517
Tues 7/17  Luther, Calvin, and the Primacy of the Word  
Readings:  
Martin Luther, *95 Theses or Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*  
Timed Writing IV: Which is your favorite of the 95 theses and why? OR Explain what Calvin means by Predestination.  
Discussion of Primary Sources  
Lecture: The Reformation– First Generations

Wed 7/18  Early Modern “Science”  
Lecture: A Whole New World– Changing Views of Globe and Cosmos  
Presentations of Research Project Progress

Thurs 7/19  Early Modern “Superstition”  
Reading: Selections from Darren Oldridge, ed. *The Witchcraft Reader*  
Test III  
Lecture: Maleficia?: From Learned Magic to The Witch Craze

Week V: Leadership and Conflict & Conclusion

Mon 7/23  Who was the Renaissance Ruler?  
Readings:  
Atkinson, *Niccolò Machiavelli, A Portrait*  
Machiavelli, *The Prince*.  
Erasmus, *Education of a Christian Prince*  
Timed Writing V: Compare and contrast the ideal Prince of Machiavelli with that of Erasmus. OR Define what Machiavellian means.  
Discussion of Primary Sources  
Lecture: Ragione di Stato: Italian Politics in the Age of Machiavelli  
Documentary: *Who’s Afraid of Machiavelli?*

Tues 7/24  Dynasty Builders  
Reading: Eugene Rice, *The Foundations of Early Modern Europe, 1460–1559*, Chapter 4  
Lecture: Tudors, Habsburgs, and the Construction of the Early Modern State

Wed 7/25  Military Strategy and Technology  
Readings: Jeremy Black *Early Modern Europe, An Oxford History* Chapter 3  
and Steven Gunn, *ibid.*, Chapter 6  
Hans Heberle’s account of the Thirty Years War  
Discussion of Primary Source  
Lecture: From the Hundred to the Thirty Years War– Fighting in Europe 1337–1648.

Thurs 7/26  Class Conclusion  
Test IV  
Lecture: Continuity and Change in Preindustrial Europe  
Discussion: Research Findings

*Final Projects due Monday 7/30 by 11:55 pm (via Sakai)*