

History 304: The Italian Renaissance, 1300-1527

University of Massachusetts Amherst

Fall Semester 2002

Tues. & Thurs., 2:30–3:45, Herter 210 (schedule #568561)

Course website: <<http://www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~ogilvie/304/>>

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Office hours: Tues. 1:15–2:15, Wed. 2:30–3:30, and by appointment.

I will try to answer e-mail within 24 hours during the week and within 48 hours over the weekend. If you need a response more quickly, please telephone.

Brief description of course

The Renaissance was a time of unprecedented cultural creativity. It has also been called the cradle of modern European politics, society, and culture. In this course we will attempt to define and explain this historical phenomenon; our main focus will be the complex relationships between politics, society, and culture, along with the interrelations between institutions, individuals, and ideas.

The course will focus on themes and problems, not a continuous narrative. After discussing the problem of the Renaissance as historians have approached it, and the origins of the political and social world of the early Renaissance, we will turn to political forms and their transformations. We will then examine the social structures of the Renaissance, including the family, the role of women, and social hierarchies. Our focus will then shift to culture: the dramatic transformations in painting, sculpture, architecture, literature, education, and historical consciousness that gave the Renaissance its name. We will examine how culture served to reflect and legitimate the values of the society that produced and consumed it, but also the potential that it offered for social and intellectual transformation. The course will end by considering the development of a secular outlook in the Renaissance and the dramatic transformations of the early sixteenth century.

Throughout the course we will be concerned not only with the fascinating panorama of Renaissance life but also with the differences and continuities between the Renaissance and the modern world. We will also develop models and concepts for analyzing culture, society, and politics that can be applied to many different situations, both historical and contemporary.

Summary of requirements: about 125-150 pages of reading each week (on average), regular quizzes, three 5-page papers, final exam.

Course goals

This course has several different goals. By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- Define “the Renaissance” adequately and defend your definition.
- Understand how individuals, ideas, and institutions are interrelated.
- Describe the main characteristics and values of Renaissance humanism.
- Describe the main characteristics and techniques of Renaissance art.
- Explain how cultural ideals and social roles differed for men and women.
- Analyze and criticize the argument of a secondary source.

- Interpret primary sources from the Renaissance and use them as evidence for historical arguments.

Your goals for the course

You have just read my goals for the course. You should now take the time to reflect on those goals and think about any others you might have. In the space below, you can write the reasons *you* are in this course and any goals on which you wish to concentrate during it.

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Books for course

The books are available at Atticus Books (8 Main Street, Amherst, tel. 256-1547). They are also on reserve in the DuBois Library. I have given ISBNs in case you want to order them yourself; I encourage you to support local businesses. Please let me know if prices differ significantly from those I have listed.

Words in **boldface** indicate how the book will be referred to in the reading assignments and other course material.

REQUIRED BOOKS

Burke, Peter. *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and society*. 2d revised ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. ISBN 0-691-00678-4. \$21.

Martines, Lauro. *Power and imagination: City-states in Renaissance Italy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988. (Reprint of 1979 edition.) ISBN 0-8018-3643-3. \$18.

Bondanella, Julia Conaway, and Mark Musa, eds. *The Italian Renaissance **reader***. New York: Meridian, 1987. ISBN 0-452-01013-6. \$17.

Brucker, Gene, ed. *The society of Renaissance Florence*. Renaissance Society of America reprint text series, 8. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997. ISBN 0-8020-8079-0. \$20. (Reprint of the Harper Torchbooks edition, 1971.)

Fedele, Cassandra. *Letters and orations*. Edited and translated by Diana Robin. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. ISBN 0-226-23932-2. \$15.

Kohl, Benjamin G., and Ronald G. Witt, eds. *The **earthly republic**: Italian humanists on government and society*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978. ISBN 0-8122-1097-2. \$22.

Machiavelli, Niccolò. *The portable Machiavelli*. Edited and translated by Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa. New York: Penguin, 1979. ISBN 0-14-015092-7. \$16.

RECOMMENDED BOOK

Hale, J. R., ed. *The Thames & Hudson dictionary of the Italian Renaissance*. London: Thames & Hudson; New York: W.W. Norton, 1985. (Reprint of 1981 edition, which was published as the *Concise encyclopaedia of the Italian Renaissance* by Oxford University Press.) ISBN 0-500-20191-9. \$15.

Course requirements and grading

This course is an upper-division history course. History, as a scholarly discipline, requires a lot of reading, careful attention to detail, and grasping difficult concepts. You should be prepared to spend four to six hours per week outside of class reading and reflecting, and a little more time when there are assignments due.

The requirements are:

1. Quizzes (25% of final grade). Each class will begin with a brief quiz on the day's assigned reading or the material already covered in class. Quizzes cannot be made up, but you may miss up to five quizzes without penalty. If you miss fewer, the "extra" quizzes will be counted as extra credit (worth up to one-half letter grade on the final course grade).

2. Three five-page papers (50% of final grade). Over the course of the semester, you will write three papers on the course readings. I must receive the first paper by October 10, the second by November 14, and the third by December 5. You may rewrite the papers if you are dissatisfied with the grade.

3. Final examination (25% of final grade). Two-hour, in-class essay exam. You may bring your notes but not your books (leave them at home or outside the classroom). The final will be held in the scheduled final exam period for the course, to be announced when the University has prepared the final exam schedule.

Option: term paper

Students interested in writing a 20-page term paper may do so instead of doing the three five-page papers. The term paper will count for 50% of the final course grade. Instructions, guidelines, and deadlines for the term paper are detailed in a separate handout.

Index cards

Please bring several 3x5 index cards to *each* class meeting. You will use them to write your answers to quizzes and for informal, ungraded assessment activities. A pack of 100 index cards will be enough for the semester.

Journal

I encourage you to keep a journal for the course. A journal is a place for you to develop interpretations of what you read, to relate it to previous course material, and to reflect on its significance for your understanding of past and present. It differs from notes, which are summaries of readings, lectures, and class discussion, in that a journal records your responses, interpretations, questions, and frustrations. It will allow you to identify your strengths and weaknesses in the course, and it will also reveal your intellectual progress during the semester.

A note on readings

It may look like there's a lot of reading for this course. Well, there is; reading is inevitable in history. But I have carefully chosen the readings so they address the course themes. For each unit I will hand out detailed instructions on what to look for as you do the course reading. If you follow the instructions, the readings will be manageable.

Course schedule with topics, readings, and assignments

Thurs. 9/5: Introduction to the course

Tues. 9/10: Introducing the Renaissance: approaches to Renaissance history

Read: **Reader**, vii-xviii; Burke, 1-39 (introduction and ch. 1-2); **Martines**, ix-xi (prefaces).

Thurs. 9/12: Introducing the Renaissance: Petrarch

Read: **Reader**, 1-59 (Petrarch: "Letter to posterity," "The ascent of Mount Ventoux," and selections from the *Canzoniere*).

UNIT 1: POLITICAL FORMS AND IDEAS

Tues. 9/17: The political background to the Renaissance

Read: **Martines**, 7-129 (ch. 1-8). Read ch. 1-4 quickly, to get the big picture; read ch. 5-8 more carefully.

Thurs. 9/19: Petrarch on good government

Read: **Earthly Republic**, 25-78 (Petrarch: "How a ruler ought to govern his state").

Tues. 9/24: Republican oligarchies

Read: **Martines**, 130-161 (ch. 9); **Brucker**, 74-94 (§§35-45).

Thurs. 9/26: Florence: the ideal and the reality

Read: **Earthly Republic**, 119-175, 291-322 (Bruni: "Panegyric to the city of Florence"; Poliziano: "The Pazzi conspiracy"); **Machiavelli**, 559-574 (from *The history of Florence*); **Brucker**, 236-239 (§116).

UNIT 2: FAMILIES AND MARRIAGE

Tues. 10/1: The Renaissance family

Read: **Brucker**, 28-73, 106-120 (§§16-34, 51-54).

Thurs. 10/3: Renaissance family values

Read: **Earthly Republic**, 115-118, 179-228 (Coluccio Salutati: letter to Caterina di messer Vieri; Barbaro: "On wifely duties"); **Reader**, 164-177 (Alberti: selections from *The book of the family*).

Tues. 10/8: The Renaissance view of women (and men)

Read: **Reader**, 60-79, 110-124, 137-139, 152-161 (Boccaccio: selected stories from the *Decameron*)—also review **Reader**, 22-54 (Petrarch: selections from the *Canzoniere*); **Machiavelli**, 419-429 (“A fable: Belfagor”).

Thurs. 10/10: In defense of women

REMINDER: Your first 5-page paper is due no later than today!

Read: **Reader**, 233-237 (Castiglione: selection from *The book of the courtier*); **Fedele**, vii-42 (introductions, ch. 1-2).

UNIT 3: THE SOCIAL ORDER**Tues. 10/15: The social and economic order**

Read: **Burke**, 209-234 (ch. 9); **Martines**, 162-190 (ch. 10).

Thurs. 10/17: Social structure in Renaissance Florence

Read: **Brucker**, 1-27, 213-236 (§§1-15, 102-115).

Tues. 10/22: Religion, public morals, and outsiders

Read: **Brucker**, 75-78, 179-212, 240-273 (§35, 83-101, 117-132).

REMINDER: The mid-semester date is Monday, October 28. I will leave Amherst after class on Thursday, October 24, and I will not be back until Tuesday, October 29. If you need to withdraw from the course, please see me this week.

UNIT 4: THE PRODUCTION OF CULTURE**Thurs. 10/24: Artists and writers**

Read: **Burke**, 43-88 (ch. 3); **Reader**, 185-195, 382-393 (Leonardo da Vinci: selections from the *Notebooks*; Vasari: selections from *Lives of famous artists*).

Tues. 10/29: Patrons, clients, and courts

Read: **Burke**, 89-124 (ch. 4); **Martines**, 218-240 (ch. 12); **Reader**, 197-207 (Castiglione: selection from *The book of the courtier*).

Thurs. 10/31: The meanings of art

Read: **Burke**, 125-144 (ch. 5); **Martines**, 241-276 (ch. 13).

Tues. 11/5: Taste and iconography

Read: **Burke**, 145-177 (ch. 6-7).

Thurs. 11/7: NO CLASS (Prof. Ogilvie at conference)

UNIT 5: RENAISSANCE HUMANISM

Tues. 11/12: Renaissance “worldviews”

Read: **Burke**, 181-208 (ch. 8).

Thurs. 11/14: Humanism, ideology, and society

REMINDER: Your second 5-page paper is due no later than today!

Read: **Martines**, 191-217 (ch. 11); **Fedele**, 43-62, 154-166 (ch. 3, 7).

Tues. 11/19: The Renaissance and the classical past

Read: **Reader**, 382-393 (Vasari: selections from *Lives of famous artists*); **Machiavelli**, 66-71, 77-79, 431-479 (letter 5; dedication to the *Prince*; *The mandrake root*).

Thurs. 11/21: Humanist ethics and sociability

Read: **Earthly Republic**, 231-289 (Poggio: “On avarice”); **Fedele**, 63-103 (ch. 4); review **Reader**, 173-176 (Alberti: selection from *The book of the family*).

Tues. 11/26: The question of fortune

Read: **Reader**, 164-169, 178-184 (Alberti: selection from *The book of the family*; Pico: selections from *Oration on the dignity of man*); **Machiavelli**, 159-162 (*Prince*, ch. 25).

Thurs. 11/28: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving recess)

UNIT 6: TRANSFORMATIONS

Tues. 12/3: Religion, irreligion, and secularization

Read: **Reader**: 79-99 (Boccaccio: selections from the *Decameron*); also review 14-20, 23, 33-34, 52-54 (Petrarch: “Ascent of Mount Ventoux,” *Canzoniere* no. 16, 81, 346, 353, 365); **Earthly Republic**, 81-114 (Salutati: Letter to Peregrino Zambecari); also review 115-118, 139-40, 143, 175 (Salutati: Letter to Caterina di messer Vieri; Bruni: “Panegyric to the city of Florence,” selections); **Machiavelli**, 207-218 (*Discourses*, selection); review 453-461 (*The mandrake root*, 3.4-12); **Brucker**: review 75-78 (§35).

Thurs. 12/5: Religious and secular virtues

REMINDER: Your third 5-page paper is due no later than today!

Read: **Machiavelli**, 126-154, 207-218 (*Prince*, ch. 15-21; *Discourses*, 1.11-15); **Reader**, 298-305 (Guicciardini, selections from the *Ricordi*).

Tues. 12/10: The end of the Renaissance

Read: **Martines**, 277-337 (ch. 14-16).

Thurs. 12/12: Conclusions, review, make-up day

Read: **Burke**, 235-256 (ch. 10-11).

FINALS WEEK: FINAL EXAMINATION (PLACE AND TIME TO BE ANNOUNCED)

The examination will be closed-book but open-note.

Course policies

Policy on late assignments

1. Quizzes cannot be made up (but you may miss up to five with no penalty). If you miss the final examination for a reason that is not approved by the university, you may take a makeup for half credit.

2. The *maximum* grade on the five-page papers will be reduced by one-half letter grade for each working day they are late after the deadline. For example, a paper that is three working days late can get at best a BC. Note that this is not a deduction from the grade but a reduction of the maximum: a C paper turned in four days late will still get a C, as will an A paper that is turned in four days late.

Policy on attendance

In accordance with university policy, I *expect* you to attend class. There is no separate attendance grade, but if I give a quiz on a day you miss, you cannot make it up unless you were absent for a legitimate, University-approved reason. If you do miss class for an approved reason, I will happily stay after class or meet with you in office hours to go over the material you missed. If you skip class for any other reason, I can suggest additional reading but I will not go over the material with you. I will take attendance at class, to learn names and to have a record for administrative purposes, but your attendance will not be factored into your final grade.

Policy on classroom conduct

Our classroom demeanor should facilitate the goals of this course. Please arrive on time, because it distracts everyone in a discussion if someone arrives late. Turn off your cell phone or beeper. If your phone rings, I get to answer it; if the call is really important I will let you take it in the hall. University rules prohibit eating and drinking in classrooms; if it becomes a problem, I will have to enforce the rule. If someone in the class does something that distracts or offends you, please talk to them or me and try to resolve it.

Policy on academic honesty

Plagiarism and cheating on the exams are both grounds for failure in the course.

Plagiarism consists of either (a) copying the exact words of another work without both enclosing them in quotation marks and providing a reference, or (b) using information or ideas from another work without providing credit, in notes, to the source of the information or ideas. Submission of a paper copied from another work, or which contains fictitious or falsified notes, will result in automatic failure of the course. Please refer to the *Undergraduate Rights and Responsibilities* booklet for the University's full policy on academic honesty.

Cheating on the exam and quizzes includes, but is not limited to, copying from another student during the exam or quiz. It is **not** cheating to discuss material with classmates beforehand—indeed, I encourage it. However, that kind of collaboration should stop when the exam or quiz begins.

Tips for success

History 304 is not an easy course, but if you keep a few simple points in mind, it will be a lot easier. Here are some tips for doing well in the course. They all are really aspects of one overarching principle: TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR OWN EDUCATION!

- Read the syllabus carefully, and write down in your organizer the dates on which assignments are due. This will help you budget your time for the weeks when there is more work than normal.
- Plan to spend 4-6 hours every week, outside of class, working on the course. If you don't have that much time, you should not take this course.
- Complete all the assigned readings every week in a timely fashion, preferably in one or two study sessions, and jot down important points in your notes after finishing the readings. This should take about four hours every week, or possibly more. As you read each assignment, think about how it relates to earlier readings and lectures, and jot down some of those thoughts in your notes. Don't use a highlighter for note-taking; it substitutes motion for thought.
- Look up unfamiliar words in a good dictionary, such as the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (online at bartleby.com). Look up unfamiliar names or concepts in an encyclopedia. The *Columbia Encyclopedia* (online at bartleby.com) is a good one-volume encyclopedia; the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is a good multi-volume encyclopedia.
- If your apartment or dorm room aren't quiet places to study, go to the library or somewhere else quiet. The main level of DuBois Library is a good place because it has lots of dictionaries and encyclopedias. If you need coffee while studying, try the Newman Center. Study a lot during the day; then you can relax in the evening without feeling stressed out or guilty.
- Ask questions about what you don't understand, but only after you have tried to answer them yourself. Part of your college education is learning to be self-reliant. Who should you ask? Me, of course; if your question is factual, you can also ask a reference librarian.
- Take advantage of my office hours if there are questions you did not have time to raise in class.
- Arrive for class on time, and pay attention to what everyone says. Take good notes. If you need guidance on note-taking, Learning Support Services (DuBois Library, 10th floor) offers a Note Taking Workshop several times each semester. They also offer workshops in time management and test-taking should you feel in need of help in those areas.
- Review your notes weekly. The more you are aware of the interconnections among the course material, the better you will remember and understand everything. Keeping a journal is also useful.
- Start work on each paper assignment as soon as your schedule allows. Complete a rough draft of each paper several days before it is due, and revise it at least once before you hand it in. Be sure to copyedit and proofread your papers carefully.
- Consider forming an informal study group. Research shows that students who participate in study groups learn more and enjoy their courses more than those who don't.
- Talk to me if you feel overwhelmed or if you are falling behind in the course. My main goal is to help you learn.