History 304: Late Middle Ages/Early Renaissance, 1300-1494
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Prof. Brian W. Ogilvie
Fall Semester 1997
MWF 9:05–9:55 AM, Machmer E-10

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Hours: MW 10:30 AM-12:00 noon, and by appointment.

This syllabus is also available online at the following URL:
<http://www-unix.umass.edu/~ogilvie/courses/304/index.html>. Updates to the syllabus, handouts, and assignments will be posted to this web page.

I will have a sign-up sheet for office hours on my office door. If no one has signed up, I reserve the right to arrive somewhat late or leave somewhat early, but I will still be there.

Brief description of course
The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are often portrayed with metaphors of decline and renewal: the end of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance. In this course we will examine fourteenth- and fifteenth-century European society, economy, politics, and culture. The geographical emphasis will be on the urbanized areas of Italy and France and Burgundy.

We will be reading classic and recent essays on the period, supplemented by selected contemporary documents. In addition to texts, we will consider visual and plastic arts, architecture, and music as sources for understanding the period.

Course grading
The course grade will be determined according to the following criteria:
Four papers @ 15% each: 60%
Final examination: 20%
Classroom participation: 20%

Description and schedule of papers and exams
There will be four short (5-7 p.) papers and a final examination for the course. Paper topics will be distributed one week before the papers are due; you will have a choice among several topics.

Paper topics will be announced 9/17, 10/8, 10/29, and 11/19. They will be due one week after they are announced (i.e. 9/24, 10/15, 11/5, and 11/26). They should be based on class lectures, discussions, and readings.

Papers will be graded on content (what you say), organization (how effectively you say it), and style (how clearly you say it). Please proofread your papers before submitting them, and keep a copy for yourself.

Policy on late papers
Late papers will be penalized one-half letter grade for each day they are late. The only exception will be in cases where the late paper has been arranged with the instructor at least two days before the deadline or when the paper is late due to circumstances.
beyond the student’s control. *Inability to find or use a printer will not be accepted as an excuse.*

**Policy on absences**

Because there is no textbook for this course, and classroom participation is a component of the course grade, there will be two penalties for absence: you will miss the material presented in class, and your participation grade will suffer. For each unexcused absence after the fourth, your participation grade will be reduced by one letter grade. In addition, if you are absent from class (whether excused or not), you should plan to see me in office hours and to discuss the material you missed.

**Policy on academic honesty**

Plagiarism is 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 student manual for the University’s full policy on academic honesty.

**Books for course**

The following books are available for purchase at the Textbook Annex. They are also on reserve in the DuBois Library (some of the books on reserve are in different editions; for those books, I have included brief descriptions of the topics so you can be sure you are reading the correct selections). The Montague Book Mill, Raven Books, and many other local used bookstores have copies of some of these books.

Michael Baxandall, *Painting and experience in fifteenth-century Italy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press).


Jean Froissart, *Chronicles* (Penguin Classics). The copy on reserve is an older abridgement; I strongly urge you to buy the Penguin edition.

David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and their families* (Yale University Press).

Johan Huizinga, *The autumn of the Middle Ages* (University of Chicago Press). This book is on order in the forthcoming paperback edition as a recommended text. You can find copies of the earlier English translation at many local used bookstores for significantly less money. Both editions will be on reserve.

Alessandra Strozzi, *Selected letters of Alessandra Strozzi* (University of California Press).


If you do not already have it, you may want to get the *Anchor Atlas of World History*, vol. 1, which is a useful reference work for important political events and dates. Its interpretations are often outdated and unreliable, however.

In addition, a good guide to practical aspects of studying history is: Norman F.
Cantor and Richard I. Schneider, *How to study history* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1967). This book is also on reserve.

A recommended reading list is appended to the syllabus. The books on this list are not on reserve; if you charge them out of the library, please be considerate to your classmates and do not keep them longer than you need them.

**A note on readings**

Because this course does not have any textbook, properly speaking, you will probably encounter some unfamiliar names and concepts during your reading. You should try to familiarize yourself with them. A useful reference is the *Thames & Hudson Dictionary of the Italian Renaissance*. In addition, general encyclopedias like the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* are often good sources of basic background information. Please don’t hesitate to ask in class or office hours if there is something you don’t know or find difficult to understand.

**Course schedule, with assigned readings**

**Wed. 9/3: Introduction to the “Renaissance”**

Defining “medieval” and “Renaissance”; ways of doing history; introduction to the course topics.

**Fri. 9/5: Europe in the fourteenth century—a snapshot**

Lecture on the physical, political, religious, and cultural geography of late medieval Europe.

**Mon. 9/8: Italian Art in the fourteenth century**

Reading


**Wed. 9/10: Italian Art in the fifteenth century; Vasari’s Renaissance**

Reading

Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, pp. 47-58, 84-109, 147-162, 277-283 (Preface to part two; lives of Ghiberti, Masaccio, and Donatello; preface to part three)

**Fri. 9/12: Art and society**

Reading


**Mon. 9/15: The period eye**

Reading

Wed. 9/17: Criticism and culture
    First paper assignment will be distributed.
    Reading

Fri. 9/19—NO CLASS

Mon. 9/22—NO CLASS

Wed. 9/24: Petrarch and the origins of humanism
    ** First paper due **
    Reading
    Burckhardt, *The civilization of the Renaissance*, pp. 120-139.

Fri. 9/26: Humanism in the fifteenth century
    Reading

Mon. 9/29: Renaissance rhetoric
    Reading

Wed. 10/1: Humanist philological scholarship
    Reading
    Valla, *Treatise of Lorenzo Valla*, pp. 61-123.

Fri. 10/3: Humanism and politics
    Reading

Mon. 10/6: The Italian principalities
    Reading

Wed. 10/8: The republics of Florence and Venice
    Second paper assignment will be distributed.
    Reading
    Burckhardt, *Civilization of the Renaissance*, pp. 57-97; Brucker, ed., *Two memoirs*, pp. 64-81 (from the diary of Buonaccorso Pitti).
Fri. 10/10: The city-state and its contado
     Reading

Mon. 10/13—NO CLASS (Columbus Day)

Wed. 10/15: Population movements
     ** Second paper due **
     Reading
     Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and their families*, pp. 60-92;
     Boccaccio, description of the plague in Florence (handout).

Fri. 10/17: The family and the household
     Reading

Mon. 10/20: Men and women
     Reading
     Burckhardt, *Civilization of the Renaissance*, pp. 250-255;
     Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and their families*, pp. 131-158, 202-231;

Wed. 10/22: The extended family
     Reading
     Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and their families*, pp. 337-360;

Fri. 10/24: Social bonds outside the family
     Reading
     Alessandra Strozzi, *Selected letters*, pp. 175-203 (letters 29-32, intro. to letter 33);
     Brucker, ed., *Two memoirs*, pp. 88-104 (from the diary of Buonaccorso Pitti).

Mon. 10/27 (Mid-semester date): A Renaissance mentality?
     Reading

Wed. 10/29: The “Renaissance Man”
     Third paper assignment will be distributed.
     Reading
     Burckhardt, *Civilization of the Renaissance*, pp. 98-119;
Fri. 10/31: Individual and society
Reading

Mon. 11/3: Festivals, ritual, and government
No reading assignment today.

Wed. 11/5: The Church in the 14th and 15th centuries
**Third paper due**
Reading
Burckhardt, *Civilization of the Renaissance*, pp. 271-312;
Vasari, *Lives of the artists*, pp. 169-177, 191-200 (lives of Fra Angelico and Fra Filippo Lippi);

Fri. 11/7: Popular piety and heresy
Reading
Burckhardt, *Civilization of the Renaissance*, pp. 312-351;
Alessandra Strozzi, *Selected letters*, pp. 79-91 (letters 11 and 12).

Mon. 11/10: The papal monarchy in Italy
Reading

Wed. 11/12: The Italian economy
Reading
Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and their families*, pp. 93-130;
Alessandra Strozzi, *Selected letters*, pp. 61-75 (letters 7-9);
review diary of Gregorio Dati.

Fri. 11/14: Italy and the Barbarians
Reading
Reread diary of Buonaccorso Pitti.

Mon. 11/17: Northern European courtly society
Reading
Huizinga, *Waning*, pp. 9-67;
Wed. 11/19: The theory of chivalry

Fourth paper assignment will be distributed.

Reading
Huizinga, *Waning*, pp. 67-93;
Froissart, *Chronicles*, pp. 120-145, 373-381 (Reserve copy: pp. 54-68, 465-469:
Poitiers; tournament at St.-Inglevert).

Fri. 11/21: The practice of chivalry

Reading
Huizinga, *Waning*, pp. 93-107;
Froissart, *Chronicles*, pp. 68-110, 280-294 (Reserve copy: pp. 40-51, 311-313:
campaign of Crécy, siege of Calais, reminiscences of the Bascot of Mauléon).

Mon. 11/24: Free Companies and popular uprisings

Reading
Froissart, *Chronicles*, pp. 146-166, 211-251 (Reserve copy: pp. 74-77, 207-223, 225-
226, 238-254: the Jacquerie; the English peasants' revolt; the affairs of Flanders).

Wed. 11/26: Love and death in late medieval Burgundy

**Fourth paper due**

Reading

Fri. 11/28—NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Recess)

Mon. 12/1: Religion in northern Europe

Reading

Wed. 12/3: Art and life in northern Europe

Reading

Fri. 12/5: Europe on the eve of the Reformation

Mon. 12/8: The Renaissance in historical consciousness

Reading
Burckhardt, *Civilization of the Renaissance*, pp. 185-229;
Wed. 12/10: The Renaissance today
   Reading
   TBA (handout)

Fri. 12/12: Wrapup and review
   ** Take-home final exam distributed **

Fri. 12/19: Final exam due at noon in Herter 617!

Suggested reading
This list is only a starting point for further reading in the history of the Renaissance.

General works and overviews

Renaissance art

Humanism and letters


**Political history**


**Social history**


**Economic history**


**Religious history**
