History 305: Late Renaissance and Protestant Reformation, 1494-1648
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Prof. Brian W. Ogilvie
Spring Semester 1998
MWF 2:30-3:20, Herter 111

Office: Herter 617
Telephone: (413) 545-1599
E-mail: ogilvie@history.umass.edu
Hours: TuTh 10:00-11:30 AM, and by appointment.

This syllabus is also available online at the following URL:
<http://www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~ogilvie/courses/305/index.html>
Updates to the syllabus, handouts, and assignments will be posted to this web page.

Brief course description
The sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in Europe are characterized, above all, by the Protestant Reformation and its ramifications in politics, society, and culture. In this course, we will examine the origins of the Reformation, the reformers’ message, and the struggles surrounding it. War is one of the defining features of this period: the French Wars in Italy were followed by religious struggles in the Holy Roman Empire, the Wars of Religion in France, the Eighty Years’ War between Spain and the rebellious provinces of the Netherlands, and most gruesomely, the Thirty Years’ War. In addition to studying these intellectual and political conflicts, we will look at the cultural developments of the sixteenth century and the increasingly important contacts between Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

Course goals
The course description, along with the course schedule below, gives you an idea of the subject matter addressed by this course. At the end of the course, you should be familiar with some important events and trends which characterized the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in Europe. You should also have an idea of the different approaches which historians have taken in understanding this period.

The course has another goal: to develop your ability to think historically. What does it mean to “think historically”? Historians might disagree on a precise definition, but they would all agree that historical thinking involves these three attitudes or skills:

- Understanding human actions and thoughts in the context which produced them. The historian’s cardinal sin is anachronism, which means a confusion of time. Every human society, past and present, has its own values and ways of thinking, and they are often very different from our own. Avoiding anachronism means understanding the past on its own terms.

- Exercising critical judgment about what you read and hear. “Critical judgment” does not mean always being negative. Rather, it means that you should always weigh and consider the validity of what you have been told, in light of the source’s possible biases and the strength of its argument. Historical sources are like legal testimony and argument: they aren’t always true or convincing. The historian, like a judge, has to weigh and consider his or her sources and decide whether
they are reliable.

- Knowing how to use historical sources—texts and objects—as evidence to make an argument about what happened in the past. History is imagination disciplined by evidence. Historians want to know not only what happened in the past, but why it happened and what its consequences were. Historical sources are the building blocks of historical explanation, but they must be interpreted.

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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Course structure
The course is divided into seven units, each focusing on a different aspect of the history of the Reformation era. Each unit will comprise four or five lectures and one discussion. Both lectures and discussions are crucial parts of the course, and attendance at both is required. Reading necessary to understand the lectures will be assigned in conjunction with that lecture, but all the readings for the unit will be fair game for the discussion. If you fall behind in the readings, you should catch up by the end of the unit in order to be prepared for discussion.

Education specialists sometimes denigrate lectures as a form of “passive learning.” In their view, a lecturer imparts information to students, who merely take it in. But effective attendance at a lecture requires more than passive absorption. You should think about what the lecture is about, distinguish important points from illustrative examples, and take careful notes. You should also ask yourself—and, if it seems important, the lecturer—any questions you might have. You should take the same approach to your reading. If you do this, you will have no problem finding something to say in the discussions; on the contrary, you will find that an hour goes by very quickly!

Course requirements
This is an upper-division history course. It has no formal prerequisites. However, if you have not taken a 100-level history course or another upper-division history course, please see the instructor during office hours in the first or second week of the course. If this is your first upper-division history course, I urge you to read How to Study History, by Norman Cantor and Robert Schneider (on reserve).

In order to pass this course, you will need to consistently do the readings and attend class regularly. To do well, you should plan to spend six to ten hours outside of class every week reading and studying. Some weeks won't require that much, but other weeks may require more (when a paper is due, for example).
There are four basic requirements for the course:

1. Attendance at lectures and discussions.
   If you must miss a class, you should inform the instructor in advance of the reason, or provide documentation (such as a note from the doctor) afterwards. You may send e-mail or leave messages on voice mail (545-1599). Athletes should present a complete schedule of the days they will miss by February 11. If a religious holiday will prevent you from attending class, please inform the instructor by February 11.

2. Reading all assignments.
   There will be occasional quizzes on the readings in lectures and discussions. If you have done the readings, the questions will be straightforward.

3. Four papers
   Four short (5-7 page) papers will be required. Paper topics will be announced Feb. 11, Mar. 4, Apr. 1, and Apr. 29. They will be due one week later: i.e., Feb. 18, Mar. 11, Apr. 8, and May 6. Papers will be graded on content (what you say), organization (how effectively you say it), and style (how clearly you say it). If you are dissatisfied with your grade on a paper, you will have the opportunity to rewrite it. At the end of the semester, the lowest paper grade will be disregarded when the course grade is calculated.

4. Final exam
   A take-home final will be distributed on the last day of class. It will be due at the end of exam week. It will cover the entire course and will consist of four parts, each of which requires a 1-2 page answer.

The course grade will be determined according to the following criteria:

- Attendance and participation in discussion: 20%
- Best 3 out of 4 papers @ 20% each: 60%
- Final examination: 20%

**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 Undergraduate Rights and Responsibilities booklet for the University's full policy on academic honesty.

**Books for course**
The following books are available for purchase at Food for Thought Books. They are also on reserve in the DuBois Library. The Montague Book Mill, Raven Books, and many other local used bookstores have copies of some of these books.

- Hale, J. R. *War and society in Renaissance Europe, 1450-1620*. Baltimore: Johns


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**

This course has three kinds of readings. The textbook, Rice and Grafton’s *Foundations of Early Modern Europe,* was chosen to give you a brief overview of important themes and processes in the period which this course covers (particularly the early part). Other secondary sources, like John Bossy’s *Christianity in the West* and John Hale’s *War and Society in Renaissance Europe,* provide powerful interpretations of the events of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century and their effects on society and culture. Finally, the primary sources for discussion will allow us, as a group, to question the interpretations offered by other historians and practice the craft of history.

The readings and the lectures are designed to be complementary. You will not be able to understand the lectures completely if you have not done the readings. The lectures, in turn, will provide context for points discussed by the readings, address difficulties in the readings, and link related themes.

The course schedule gives a detailed breakdown of reading assignments for each lecture and discussion. I suggest that you skim the reading for each unit and identify the main points before focusing closely on each particular assignment: that way you won’t miss the forest for the trees.

**Course schedule, with assigned readings**

| Wed. 1/28 | Introduction to the course |
| Fri. 1/30 | Reading history and doing history |
| Mon. 2/2 | Europe, 1494–1648: an overview |

Reading: Portable Renaissance Reader (PRR), pp. 91-119.

*)Suggested reading for weekend:* skim all of Rice and Grafton. This will provide a context for many of the particular issues we will address in the course.
Unit 1. Traditional Christianity and the Reformation

Wed. 2/4 “Traditional Christianity” and everyday life

Fri. 2/6 The late medieval Church
Reading: Bossy, pp. 57-87; PRR, pp. 615-644.

Mon. 2/9 Origins of the Reformation
Reading: Rice/Grafton, pp. 146-169; PRR, pp. 652-660.

Wed. 2/11 The Reformers’ ideas
Reading: Bossy, pp. 89-114; PRR, pp. 84-86, 721-726, 733-737.

*** First paper topic announced ***

Fri. 2/13 DISCUSSION
Readings: PRR, pp. 677-711.

Mon. 2/16 NO CLASS (Presidents’ Day)

Unit 2. The Political Setting of the Reformation

Wed. 2/18 The Valois Monarchy in France
Reading: Rice/Grafton, pp. 110-124; PRR, pp. 279-284, 305-327.

*** First paper due ***

Fri. 2/20 The Empire of Charles V
Reading: Rice/Grafton, pp. 124-145; PRR, pp. 175-181, 294-305.

Mon. 2/23 The Reformation spreads in Germany

Wed. 2/25 The English Reformation; Calvinism
Reading: PRR, pp. 672-676, 738-741.

Fri. 2/27 DISCUSSION

Unit 3. Catholic Reformation and Confessionalization

Mon. 3/2 The Council of Trent
Reading: Rice/Grafton, pp. 169-177; PRR, pp. 665-672.

Wed. 3/4 The Jesuits and the “reconquest” of Protestant lands
Reading: Bossy, pp. 115-152; PRR, pp. 742-754.

*** Second paper topic announced ***

Fri. 3/6 The confessional state
Reading: Bossy, pp. 153-171.
Mon. 3/9  Confessionalism and culture  
Reading: Ginzburg, pp. viii-61.

Wed. 3/11  The moral police  
Reading: Ginzburg, pp. 62-128; PRR, pp. 258-262.  
*** Second paper due ***

Fri. 3/13  DISCUSSION

Unit 4. Society and culture in the Reformation era

Mon. 3/23  Two Europes? Village and city  
Reading: Rice/Grafton, pp. 45-76; PRR, pp. 165-175, 208-226, 347-354.

Wed. 3/25  “Popular culture” and its transformation  
(No reading for today; read ahead for next week.)

Fri. 3/27  Men and women  
(No reading for today; read ahead for next week.)

Mon. 3/30  Burghers and courtiers: The European elite  
Reading: Rice/Grafton, pp. 77-109; PRR, pp. 181-202, 227-233, 241-244.

Wed. 4/1  Learning and the new science  
*** Third paper topic announced ***

Fri. 4/3  DISCUSSION

Unit 5. Europe and the world

Mon. 4/6  European expansion overseas  
Reading: Rice/Grafton, pp. 26-44; PRR, pp. 146-152.

Wed. 4/8  The intellectual impact of the discoveries  
Reading: Elliott, pp. 1-53; PRR, pp. 157-162.  
*** Third paper due ***

Fri. 4/10  The economic and political impact of the discoveries  
Reading: Elliott, pp. 54-104; PRR, pp. 152-157, 202-207.

Mon. 4/13  Europe and its Asian neighbors  
Reading: PRR, pp. 70-74, 244-257, 372-375.

Wed. 4/15  DISCUSSION
Fri. 4/17  NO CLASS (Instructor in North Carolina)
Reading: Hale, pp. 7-74 (to get started).

Mon. 4/20  NO CLASS (Patriots Day)

Unit 6. Eighty years of war

Wed. 4/22  The military revolution
Reading: Hale, pp. 75-99.

Thurs. 4/23  The Wars of Religion in France (Monday schedule in effect)
Reading: Hale, pp. 100-126.

Fri. 4/24  The Dutch Revolt and the Eighty Years War
Reading: Hale, pp. 127-152.

Mon. 4/27  The Thirty Years War
Reading: Hale, pp. 153-178.

Wed. 4/29  War and society
Reading: Hale, pp. 179-252; PRR, pp. 365-371.

*** Fourth paper topic announced ***

Fri. 5/1  DISCUSSION

Unit 7. Conclusion: The “longue durée”

Mon. 5/4  Demography and history
Readings to be announced.

Wed. 5/6  The pre-industrial economy of Europe
Readings to be announced.

*** Fourth paper due ***

Fri. 5/8  The history of manners
Reading: PRR, pp. 340-347.

Mon. 5/11  Continuity and change in history
Readings to be announced.

Wed. 5/13  DISCUSSION

*** Take-home final distributed ***

Wed. 5/20  FINAL EXAMS DUE AT NOON IN HERTER 617!
Suggested reading
This list is only a starting point for further reading in the history of the Reformation era. If you would like additional suggestions, please see me in office hours.

General works


Protestant and Catholic Reformations
(See also Cochrane, *Italy, 1530–1630*, and Elton, *The new Cambridge modern history*, in the “General” section.)


Economic history
Braudel, Fernand. *Civilization and capitalism, 15th-18th centuries*. Translated by Sian Reynolds. 3 vols. New York: Harper & Row, 1981-84. An excellent introduction to material life, economy, and society in this period, written by a master historian near the end of his career. Full of detail but often seems to lack a sharp analytical focus.


**Social history**


**Intellectual history**


**Exploration and expansion**


Politics and political thought


