

Renaissance Italian Society and Culture, 1400-1600

Course Description

Welcome to Renaissance Italian Society and Culture, 1400-1600! The Renaissance movement produced radical changes in almost every aspect of early modern Italian life—art, architecture, culture, economics, politics, and society. Renaissance artists, patrons, thinkers, writers, and rulers such as Filippo Brunelleschi, Leon Battista Alberti, Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo Buonarroti, Isabella d'Este, Lorenzo “il Magnifico” de' Medici, Vittoria Colonna, Caterina Sforza, Niccolò Machiavelli, Catherine de' Medici, and Galileo Galilei continue to excite our imaginations and inspire creative work.

This course will delve into the historical context of the Renaissance movement in Italy, including discussions of Renaissance ideals, Renaissance art, the commercial revolution, urbanization, the Renaissance palazzo, theater, ceremonial, the Columbian Exchange, and the New Science. During the course, we will consider how the Renaissance movement in Italy reshaped European society and whether the Renaissance really invented ‘modernity’.

Finding Me

Office: 706 Zulauf Hall
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Required Books

Evelyn Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance: Consumer Cultures in Italy, 1400-1600* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005). ISBN: 9780300159851
Dale Kent, *Friendship, Love, and Trust in Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). ISBN: 9780674031371
Edward Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring: Vendetta and Factions in Friuli during the Renaissance*, readers edition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1998). ISBN: 9780801858499
Andrew Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). ISBN 978-0-300-17821-0
James Bruce Ross and Mary M. McLaughlin, eds., *The Portable Renaissance Reader* (Penguin, 1977). ISBN: 9780140150612
Guido Ruggiero, *A Companion to the Worlds of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006). ISBN: 9781405157834

Additional Readings and Materials

Richard Marius, *A Short Guide to Writing about History*
online articles, images, and materials on Blackboard

Grading

Participation and Readings Responses (3 assessments)	30%
Historical Film Review	10%
Book Review of Welch <i>or</i> Kent (3-4 pages)	20%
Medici Document Analysis	10%
Renaissance Historiographical Paper (12-15 pages)	30%

Renaissance Italian Society and Culture Website

Be sure to visit the course website! The Renaissance Italian Society and Culture website will provide you with specific information on readings and assignments. The website also has a series of internet resources, a bibliography, and advice on doing historical research and writing. The site will eventually contain selected student projects that are of an exceptionally high caliber. A linked Blackboard website will allow students to easily communicate with everyone in the class using a chat room, threaded discussions, and group activities.

Course Goals

This course is an upper-division course designed to have you explore the historical development of Italian society and culture, the process of historical writing, and some of the main issues and interpretive frameworks in history. In short, this course will both familiarize you with Renaissance history and ask you to engage in historical practice. You may find that history is not what you thought it was....

Practical Goals

History is a vital subject that provides student with a framework for understanding the complexities of human societies and cultures. The historical discipline also provides valuable skills that are essential for managing and evaluating information. I have structured this course to accomplish several goals which will make this course applicable to your future life—before and after graduation. Those practical goals are:

- to develop critical reading, thinking, and analytic skills
- to develop techniques for evaluating historical evidence, arguments, and claims
- to develop techniques of organizing and presenting information
- to improve expository and argumentative writing processes
- to develop an appreciation of Italian society, culture, history, and geography
- to learn aspects of European history vital for touring, studying, or working in the EU
- to become aware of the usages of Italian history in today's society in America

These specific aims should help you recognize the broader educational goals of this course.

Attendance and Absences

Attendance is vital for comprehension of the material and for discussion of the issues in this course. I will take attendance at the beginning of class. No points will be deducted for missing class, but attendance will obviously figure into students' participation grades.

Participation

History courses depend on active student participation to develop analysis, criticism, and debate of important ideas and issues. Your participation is therefore assessed on the basis of your written and oral communication with the instructor and with fellow students. I will use the following guidelines to assess participation grades based on 4 criteria: *attendance, willingness to participate, reading comprehension, and perceptiveness of comments*:

- A Student is attending class every time, volunteering information frequently, and willingly joining in the discussion. Student shows full comprehension of the readings and makes perceptive comments every class meeting.
- B Student is attending class every time, volunteering regularly, and joining the discussion if called upon. Student shows some comprehension of the readings and makes perceptive comments most class meetings.
- C Student is attending class most of the time and joins the discussion occasionally, but rarely volunteers. Student does not always show comprehension of the readings, but does make some comments.
- D Student is attending class some of the time, but refuses to join the discussion. Student rarely shows comprehension of the readings and makes few comments.
- F Student is attending class rarely and refuses to join the discussion. Student does not show comprehension of the readings and does not actively participate.

Reading Responses

Students will write a short 1-page single-spaced typed Reading Response for the main reading assignments. Label each Reading Response with the given week and class (i.e., Week 3-1 for the third week's first class). Bring a copy of your Reading Response to class to use during discussions. Reading Responses will be collected at the end of class and will not be accepted late. Use the following format for each main reading (all readings from the required monographs, as well as certain chapters from Ruggiero's *A Companion to the Worlds of the Renaissance* or online sources indicated in **bold** type on Lecture/Discussion Topics and Assignments sheet):

Argument: Quote the sentence(s) that best articulates the main argument(s) of the reading.

Issues and Analysis: Identify main themes in the reading and quote 2-3 key sentences.

Criticism: Pose 2-3 critical questions about the author's assertions, methods, conclusions.

Writing Assignments

You will have a number of papers and writing assignments during the course of the semester. Some papers may involve multiple drafts and revisions. Please note the due dates on the Lecture/Discussion Topics and Assignments sheet. **Late papers will incur a penalty.** Further guidelines on the papers and paper topics will be handed out later and posted on the Assignments page of the Blackboard website for the course.

Classroom Guidelines

- Come to class! I will conduct class as a free flowing mixture of lecture and discussion most days. Discussions of readings and peer reviews of writing can only work if you attend class regularly. Your participation grade is based on your in-class discussions and Reading Responses.
- If you miss class, check the Lecture/Discussion Topics and Assignments sheet carefully for reading and writing deadlines, so that you do not get behind on your assignments.
- There may be a short 5-minute writing assignment or project at the beginning of class some days. If you arrive after the project or writing assignment is completed, you will not be allowed to make up that grade. These short assignments may not be announced in advance.
- Read and prepare to discuss the readings that I assign. Take notes on each assignment. Read each assignment *before* the class period listed.
- Bring paper, a printed copy of your Reading Response, your notes, and relevant readings to class in addition to your normal materials. You will turn in a copy of your Reading Response at the end of class so that I can see what you are getting out of the readings.
- Think about the lectures and readings. Ask any questions that you have during discussions, if possible, so that your professor and peers can benefit from your ideas.
- Show consideration for your professor and fellow students in the classroom space. Shut off and put away any cell phones, iPods, MP3s, iPads, laptops, or other electronic devices, unless the professor has approved a specific request to use the device in class. Also, put away newspapers, magazines, and reading materials unrelated to the course. Always demonstrate respect for class members in discussions, even if you strongly disagree with their ideas.

General Information

I will follow Northern Illinois University's policies on plagiarism and cheating as indicated in the "Academic Integrity" section of the Undergraduate Catalog. Cheating amounts to copying or stealing answers or information. Plagiarism involves a person using another author's or student's written work and ideas without proper credit and citation. The penalty for academic dishonesty at Northern Illinois University is an F grade for the course, and the professor may seek an even more severe punishment.

Note that this syllabus may be altered later if necessary.

Also, note that this class is a 400-level class, a designation which means that it is a specialized upper-division undergraduate lecture course. The 400-level history courses cover specific periods or issues in great detail, so you will have to confront unfamiliar material and learn many unfamiliar names, places, and events. Upper-division history courses require students to learn terminology, theory, and methodology related to the subject. Be prepared for these difficulties.

Finally, come see me in office hours if you have problems or if you just want to talk about the history of the Renaissance. If you cannot see me during my office hours, talk to me after class to set up a time to meet.

Lecture/Discussion Topics and Assignments

Section I: Renaissance Ideals

Week 1

15 January

The Concept of the Renaissance

What is the Renaissance?

We will begin the course with an introduction and examination of the course requirements. Then, we will launch a discussion of the notion of 'Renaissance' and an introduction to Italian political geography and city-state systems.

Documents: (none)

Readings: Medici Murder (in class)

Methodological Goals: Renaissance fascination

17 January

Defining the Renaissance

We will explore historiographical conceptions of the Renaissance. Was the Renaissance a historical period, a cultural movement, an artistic approach, or a social reality? Did contemporaries recognize the existence of a 'Renaissance' at all, or was it a category invented later? If the Renaissance did indeed 'happen', was it a particularly Italian or a European-wide phenomenon?

Documents: Petrarca (120-123), Boccaccio (123-126), Bruni (127-130)

Readings: Ruggiero* (1-10), Brucker* (23-38), Starn* (39-54)

Methodological Goals: Historical interpretation and historiography

Week 2

22 January

Humanism and Renaissance Ideals, 1400s-1430s

'Renaissance Man'

Today, we will examine Burckhardt's influential conception of Renaissance individualism and creativity. Consider how the notion of a 'Renaissance Man' shapes our perceptions of early modern history and Italian culture. Why do you think this concept has been so influential? We will problematize this notion by considering Renaissance women.

Documents: Ficino (387-392), Della Mirandola (476-479), Alberti (480-492)

Readings: Martin* (208-224); **Burckhardt (online)**; Kelly (online)

Methodological Goals: Gender history and Renaissance historiography

24 January

The Humanist Movement and the 'Revival of Antiquity'

What is meant by 'humanism' and what were its goals? We will examine the humanist movement and humanist responses to the social trauma of the Black Death. Critique Burckhardt's notion of a 'revival of antiquity'.

Documents: Valla (131-135), Bracciolini (379-384), Platina (385-387)

Readings: **Rowland* (316-332)**; Lindeman* (427-443); Barkan book review (online)

Methodological Goals: Nostalgia, authority, and book reviews

Section II: Renaissance Commerce and Consumption

Week 3

29 January

Renaissance Italian Cities and Urban Society, 1400s-1440s

Italian City-States and Good Government

Today, we will examine urban society in Renaissance Italy. We will focus on city-state republics, urban oligarchies, and the ideal of good government.

Documents: Boccaccio (421-424)

Readings: Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance*, chapters 1-2; Najemy* (384-392); Map Assignment

Methodological Goals: Historical writing process

Map Assignment: Renaissance Map Assignment due

31 January

Commodities and Money: Mediterranean Commercial Revolution

Students will explore the radical changes in late medieval trade and currencies through discussion and an analysis of artifacts. We will examine the global changes in commerce, naval technology, and economic structures that helped produce the Renaissance movement in the Mediterranean region.

Documents: Alberti (328-331), Dei (165-167), Harff (168-175)

Readings: Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance*, chapter 3; Appuhn* (259-278)

Methodological Goals: Material culture and objects as sources

Week 4

5 February

Renaissance Urban Space and Civic Values, 1400s-1450s

New Perspective(s)

We consider the changing modes of physical and intellectual perception wrought by the humanists, especially when applied by architects and artists. We will explore the uses of *camera obscura* and other visual instruments. We will analyze the construction of Brunelleschi's Cupola at the Duomo in Florence. Students will explore Dürer's drawing machines and discuss the implications of the new techniques of perception.

Documents: Alberti (online); Da Vinci (531-540)

Readings: Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance*, chapters 4-5

Methodological Goals: History of architecture and technology

Writing Assignment: Historical Film Review due

7 February

Urban Planning and Renaissance Engineering

We will examine Renaissance Italian cities and their organization of space. We will trace demographic developments and urban growth throughout Renaissance Italy. We will use Rome and Venice as case study to understand urban developments and social conflicts in the Renaissance.

Documents: Alberti (527-531)

Readings: Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance*, chapter 6

Methodological Goals: Urban history

Week 5

12 February

Renaissance Noble Culture, 1420s-1480s

Renaissance Palazzo: Domestic Space and Display

We will focus on the nobles' domestic space and organization of power. The architecture of the Renaissance palazzo is key to understanding noble culture and social activities. We will discuss family structures and marriage patterns in conjunction with domestic space. Consider women in patriarchal family systems.

Documents: Aretino (241-244)

Readings: Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance*, chapters 7-8; Vester* (227-242); Ferraro* (173-187)

Methodological Goals: Cultural history

14 February

Artistic Patronage and Conspicuous Consumption

Students will view Renaissance noble patronage of artistic works and examine how they were produced. Afterwards, we will confront the dimensions and meaning of conspicuous consumption in the Renaissance World. We will also discuss how to 'read' and interpret Renaissance artistic works as historical sources. Why was allegory so important to Renaissance patrons? Consider also women as patrons.

Documents: Cellini* (540-548)

Readings: Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance*, chapters 9-10

Methodological Goals: Cultural research and artistic sources

Writing Assignment: Book Review Option 1 (Welch) due

Week 6

19 February

Renaissance Friendship, 1430s-1500s

Renaissance Friendship

We will examine the Renaissance notions of friendship, focusing on civic culture in Florence. What were Renaissance Florentines' conceptions of friendship, love, and fraternal bonds?

Documents: Erasmus (717-721)

Readings: Kent, *Friendship, Love, and Trust*, Introduction and chapter 1

Methodological Goals: History of emotions

21 February

Distrust and Conspiracy

Today, we will explore friendship practices in the Renaissance. How did Renaissance Florentines associate with their friends? Consider how trust worked in Renaissance Florence and how tensions emerged in personal relationships? How did dissimulation and conspiracy disrupt civil society?

Documents: Guicciardini, 267-278

Readings: Kent, *Friendship, Love, and Trust*, chapters 2-3

Methodological Goals: History of dissimulation

Writing Assignment: Book Review Option 2 (Kent) due

Section III: Conflict in Renaissance Italian Societies

Week 7

26 February

Italian City-State Politics and Rivalries, 1470s-1500s

Renaissance City-State Politics

Today, we will discuss the dynamics of Italian politics in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. We will examine the political relationships between the Italian city-states and the conception of balance of power politics. We will also consider the influences of Ottoman expansion, Habsburg-Valois rivalry, and Mediterranean commerce on Italian politics.

Documents: Bessarion (70-74), Pius II (74-78), Venetian *Relazione* (218-224)

Readings: Najemy* (392-402); Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring*, Introduction, Prologue, and chapter 1

Methodological Goals: Political history

28 February

Invasion of Italy and the Italian Wars

We will consider how warfare triggered a major crisis in Italian society at the end of the fifteenth century. Students will explore mercenary activity, city-state militaries, military intervention, military engineering, and the development of bastioned fortifications during the Italian Wars of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

Documents: Guicciardini (279-284), fortification designs (images)

Readings: Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring*, chapter 2; Arnold* (online)

Methodological Goals: History of engineering and architecture

Week 8

5 March

The Italian Wars and Religious Strife, 1490s-1520s

Spiritual Crisis and Popular Violence

We will discuss the growing sense of spiritual crisis in the late fifteenth century. We will compare the religious crisis in Florence under Savonarola with the crisis in Friuli.

Documents: Savonarola (644-647), Guicciardini (647-652); Valdés (652-660)

Readings: Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring*, chapters 3-4

Methodological Goals: religious history and crowd actions

7 March

Vendetta and Dueling in the Italian Wars

Today, we will explore the explosion of vendetta in Friuli, in conjunction with an examination of dueling, inter-familial violence, and civil conflict in Italy during the Italian Wars of 1494-1559. We will also consider how wound care and healing in this period affected the history of medicine.

Documents: De Vitoria (365-372), Paré (558-563)

Readings: Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring*, chapters 5-6 and Conclusion; Hanlon* (139-155)

Methodological Goals: History of violence

Week 9

12 March

Spring Break

Hit the Beach!

Readings: How to Surf a Pipeline and Live

Methodological Goals: Surfing form

14 March

Grilled Shrimp and Blackened Redfish

Readings: Texas Mesquite Grilling

Methodological Goals: Beachcombing and relaxation skills

Section IV: Renaissance Printing and Knowledge

Week 10

19 March

Renaissance Intellectual Culture, 1450s-1490s

Collecting Nature and Displaying Magnificence

We will delve into the Renaissance passion for collecting and displaying objects from the natural world. Who assembled Renaissance collections and what motivated collectors? We will also explore depictions of nature through Botticelli, cartography, and drawings. How did conceptions of the monstrous and wondrous overlap in the Renaissance?

Documents: Orseme (580-583), Cusa (584-589)

*Readings: Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance*, Prelude and chapter 1; Woodbridge* (444-459)*

Methodological Goals: History of museums

21 March

Renaissance Printing

Today, we will delve into the revolutionary development of Renaissance printing and the printing press. We will discuss the importance of book production, distribution, and availability. We will also develop techniques of understanding texts drawn from Renaissance education.

Documents: Manutius (396-401), Vesalius (563-572)

*Readings: Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance*, chapter 2*

Methodological Goals: History of the book and dissecting text

Week 11

26 March

Renaissance Information Management, 1480s-1520s

Libraries, Knowledge, and “Civilization”

We will explore Renaissance libraries, universities, and Renaissance humanist education. We will consider how libraries function as centers of knowledge/power. We will trace the changes in educational theory and practice implemented by proponents of the humanist movement.

Documents: Pomponazzi (392-395)

*Readings: Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance*, chapter 3; Turner* (366-383)*

Methodological Goals: Libraries as centers of knowledge/power

Week 11, cont.

28 March

Renaissance Information Management, 1480s-1520s

Information and the Renaissance Market

Today, we will consider how Italian merchants Renaissance their object and products in city-states. We will explore Renaissance marketing and business techniques, focusing on Venice and Prato. Consider consumers' positions in society.

Documents: Guicciardini (185-202)

Readings: Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance*, chapter 4; Marino* (279-295)

Methodological Goals: History of consumerism

Writing Assignment: Medici Document Analysis due

Week 12

2 April

Religious Turmoil and Chaos in Italy, 1510s-1530s

Northern Renaissance and Religious Reform

Today, we will examine the impact of the Renaissance on Northern Europe. How did Humanism and spiritual crisis produce a religious crisis within Latin Christianity? How did religious reform movements emanating from Northern Europe affect Renaissance Italy?

Documents: Erasmus (80-84, 717-721), Luther (694-703, 721-726), Valdés (652-660)

Readings: Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance*, chapter 5-6; Hsia* (333-348)

Methodological Goals: Religious history and confessionalization

4 April

Warfare and the Transformation of Italian Politics

We will consider Machiavelli's and Guicciardini's conceptions of politics during the Italian Wars. How did Habsburg and Valois intervention in Italy and the new warfare transform Italian politics? We will focus on civil violence in Florence and on the sack of Rome.

Documents: Machiavelli (263-267), Guicciardini (267-278, 279-284)

Readings: Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance*, chapter 7; Arnold* (460-474)

Methodological Goals: Political culture and modernity

Writing Assignment: Historiographical Paper First Draft due

Section V: Renaissance Ambitions and Displays of Power

Week 13

9 April

Renaissance Art and Pleasure, 1530s-1550s

Domestic Art and Conversation

We will discuss understandings of conversation and dialogue in noble culture in conjunction with an exploration of domestic art. We will examine noble leisure, ceremonial, and 'play' through the linked spaces of the garden and the villa, using Palazzo Medici, the Gozzoli chapel, Villa Poggio a Caiano, Villa di Pratolino, and the Boboli Gardens.

Documents: Alberti (332-339)

Readings: Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance*, chapter 8

Methodological Goals: Oral culture and domestic spaces

11 April

Art in Public Spaces

We will examine Renaissance art, sculpture, and architecture intended for broad, public display in squares, government buildings, and open spaces. We will focus particularly on works by Machiavelli, Giambologna, and Vasari. How did Renaissance public art projects enhance the position of the artist in society? Consider urban society and reception to art.

Documents: Condivi (501-512), Vasari (140-145)

Readings: Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance*, chapter 9; Partridge* (349-365)

Methodological Goals: Urban history and urban planning

Week 14

16 April

Renaissance States and Power, 1530s-1580s

The Renaissance Prince

We will focus on the siege of Florence and the political transformation of the city following the end of the Republic. We will consider the consolidation of Medicean power under Cosimo I de' Medici and the Granducato. The siege of Florence and Siena War will provide important examples.

Documents: Machiavelli (online), Cavalli (294-305)

Readings: Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance*, chapter 10; Muir* (107-123), Farr* (124-138)

Methodological Goals: Political history and state development theory

Writing Assignment: Peer Review due

18 April

Perfect Gentlemen: Courtiers and Court Culture

Today, we will explore the ideal of the perfect gentleman or courtier. Consider why Castiglione's and Della Casa's models of behavior were so popular amongst Italian and European nobles. How did courts affect the development of noble culture throughout Europe?

Documents: Della Casa (340-347); Castiglione (424-429)

Readings: Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance*, chapter 11-12; Muchembled* (156-172); Weaver* (188-207)

Methodological Goals: Norbert Elias and the history of elites

Week 15

23 April

The Global Renaissance, 1550s-1610s

Astronomical Observation and the New Science

We will examine Renaissance understandings of the natural world and of the universe. We will discuss Copernicus's heliocentric theory, Galileo's astronomical observations, and alchemical experimentation. Consider the "new science" and how scientific patronage affected its development.

Documents: Paracelsus (552-557), Copernicus (589-593), Brahe (593-597), Galileo and Kepler (597-608), Galileo (608-611)

Readings: Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance*, chapter 13-14; Eamon* (403-424)

Methodological Goals: History of science

25 April

New Worlds: A Revolution in Cuisines and Daily Life

Students will examine the exportations from the Americas and their revolutionary impact on Europe, Africa, and Asia. We will also consider the cultural significance of food in societies in Renaissance Italy. We will conclude with a discussion of 'marvels' and consider how they unsettled Renaissance culture.

Documents: D'Anghiera (146-152), Monardes (152-154), Bodin (202-207), León (156-157), Montaigne (157-161)

Readings: Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance*, 15-16; Eamon* (412-418)

Methodological Goals: Cultural history of food and medicine

Week 16

30 April

Popular Culture in the Renaissance, 1550s-1620s

Renaissance Festivities: Carnival and World Turned Upside Down

We will explore civic display and play in Renaissance society through jousts, games, processions, and Carnival. How did commoners participate in public 'play' and when did they transgress rules?

Documents: de' Medici (432-434); Poliziano (453-460)

Readings: Amelang* (243-258); Moulton (491-505)

Methodological Goals: History of popular culture

Writing Assignment: Historiographical Paper Final Draft due

2 May

Legacies of the Renaissance

To conclude, we will consider how and why the Renaissance ended. What did the end of the Renaissance movement signify for Italian society and culture? We will also discuss how our Renaissance perspective can help us understand the complex world in which we live.

Documents: Cardano (512-524), Cervantes (116-119)

Readings: Applied Renaissance Readings (online)

Methodological Goals: Current events and historical perspectives

Finals Week

4 – 10 May

No Classes

Note: * indicates a reading in Guido Ruggiero, *A Companion to the Worlds of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).