

**A WORLD REBORN AND REFORMED:
EARLY MODERN EUROPE, 1450-1700**

Tuesday/Thursday 12:30 - 1:45

Spring Semester, 2021
Lattimore 210 and online

Instructor

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The period from 1450 to 1700 is often described as the birth of modern Europe. In this course, we will examine these centuries as a precursor to our times and on their own terms. We will look both at well-known developments—Renaissance, Reformation, colonization, and absolutism—and at the ways in which regular people navigated religious, social, economic, and political transformations that upended their everyday lives. In particular, the course is broken into four parts. The first considers the impact of the Renaissance and Reformation, as well as the Columbian ‘discovery’ of the New World, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the second, we will read two microhistories that reveal, in intimate detail, the lives, loves, and travails of sixteenth-century commoners from France, Italy, and Germany. We’ll next turn to the crises of the 1600s and the attempts of rulers, philosophers, and scientists to make sense of their changing world. In the final weeks, we will explore the ideas of the Enlightenment, the challenge they posed to existing power structures, and the nature and impact of the French Revolution. Through these topics, we will determine what is both ‘early’ and ‘modern’ about the period from a variety of perspectives.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course will serve as an introduction to major topics in early modern European history. By the end, you should have a firm grasp of the social, political, economic, and religious aspects of Western Europe from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century. You will also gain an understanding of the central figures, texts, and interpretive schools in European history. You will be able to place these within the contexts of the overall course of European history while drawing connections between past developments and the contemporary state of our world.

Secondly, this course is intended to help develop your writing and critical thinking skills by providing you with opportunities to develop, present, and defend their ideas in class discussion and through a variety of writing assignments. You will be challenged to draw and defend meaningful comparisons between different societies and moments in time and to marshal evidence to support your contentions.

GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

Due to the current circumstances, this is a hybrid course. This means several things. First, those who either prefer or need to take the course entirely online are able to do so – please do let me know if this is your intent. Second, the maximum socially-distanced capacity for the room is 15, and there are currently far more students than this enrolled. It is likely, then, that we will have to divide into groups in which students attend in person on some days and join online on others. How this will work in practice will depend on final enrollment and on the number of students completely online. Further details will be forthcoming. When you are not attending in person, I expect that you will join the class via zoom unless circumstances (such as time zone) preclude this. All class sessions will be recorded on zoom.

PRACTICAL DETAILS

Technical requirements: I have designed this course to not require much in the way of specialized software. You will, however, need a computer, webcam, and stable internet connection in order to be able to participate in Zoom meetings, download and watch recorded lectures (via Panoptico links), and access readings and other course materials. If you can, please try to minimize internet usage in your household during these sessions in order to maximize bandwidth for lecture and camera.

Course Website: Much of our work will be coordinated through the course's Blackboard site. Please check this regularly.

Communication: Please come speak with me if you have any questions or concerns about the class. I can be more understanding of your needs if you bring them to my attention before they become a serious problem. Please contact me to schedule a time for us to discuss via Zoom. You may also communicate with me by e-mail.

Attendance: Attendance at all class meetings, either in person or via zoom, is expected. However, if personal circumstances (such as being in another time zone) make this impossible, please see me regarding opportunities for asynchronous work. If at all possible, please have your video turned on during these sessions. It is fine to use a virtual background. If you must miss one of these sessions for an unavoidable reason, please let me know in advance.

Recording of class meetings: It is University policy that all of our Zoom sessions be recorded, so that students can access them as needed. I will delete all of these recordings at the end of the course.

Credit hours: The College's credit hour policy on undergraduate courses is to award 4 credit hours for courses that meet for the equivalent of 3 periods of 50 minutes each week. Students enrolled in HIST 106/GSWS 126 are expected to devote at least additional one hour each week to closely examining the readings and/or researching in depth their topics for the final paper.

ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT

Accommodations: I encourage you to talk with me about any concern or situation that affects your ability to complete your academic work successfully. Students requiring accommodations should contact the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, 1-154 Dewey Hall, 585-275-9049. You can learn more about the process at: www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/undergraduate/disability.

Academic Honesty: All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester's Academic Honesty Policy. More information is available at: www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/. You are encouraged to discuss course readings and assignments with your fellow students. However, all written work must be done independently and not in collaboration with another.

Writing Help: We will discuss each writing assignment in detail. I am also always willing to talk about writing assignments individually: to help you plan an essay, work through the process, or go over a past paper. Another very useful resource is the U of R Writing and Speaking Center, which is dedicated to helping writers at all skill levels to improve. You can schedule an online appointment with a writing tutor at <https://writing.rochester.edu/tutoring/virtual-tutoring.html>.

READINGS

The course texts (listed below) are available for purchase at the bookstore or online. We will also read many additional texts not on this list. These will be available on the Blackboard site and are marked accordingly in this syllabus. Please be aware that, because of its scope, this course will not provide a detailed 'play by play' of European history. For those of you without a strong background in history, the recommended textbook will be a helpful resource that provides the necessary context for the readings we discuss in class. This will be available for purchase and on library reserve.

Required:

- Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms* (Johns Hopkins, 1992) ISBN 0801843871
- Steven Ozment, *The Burgermeister's Daughter* (Harper, 1997) ISBN 9780060977214
- Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Harvard, 1983) ISBN 0674766911
- Peter Morton, ed., *The Trial of Tempel Anneke: Records of a Witchcraft Trial in Brunswick, Germany, 1663*, 2nd edition (Broadview, 2017) ISBN 9781442634879

Recommended:

- Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Early Modern Europe, 1450-1789* (Cambridge, 2006) ISBN 9780521005210.

ASSIGNMENTS

Papers: In this course, you will write five briefs (1 page), one short paper (4-5 pages), and one research paper (7-9 pages).

Briefs: These are concise and critical responses to the day's readings that explore issues, themes, or ideas that strike you as noteworthy for whatever reason. Each brief should develop an argument centered on a single concept from one of the readings (it is often more useful to consider a section or even a short passage than to try to address the entire text). You might also compare the reading for the day with other texts we've encountered or relate it to larger questions that have come up in class. The purpose of this assignment is twofold. First, it is excellent practice for identifying relevant aspects of the reading, for writing concisely, and for

developing coherent and focused written arguments. Second, your briefs should provide you with observations and questions that you can contribute to class discussion. I will divide the class into three groups during the couple of weeks. Please be sure to check the syllabus for the dates when your group will be writing briefs. **Since these are meant, in part, to stimulate class discussion, I will not accept late briefs.**

To get you started, here are some possible questions to address in your briefs:

- What is the social identity (including gender) of the author?
- What is the object or topic of the passage?
- What is the author's agenda or purpose?
- What argument does the author make; what is his or her logic?
- What evidence does the author use to support that argument?
- What is not mentioned?

Short paper: We will read three 'microhistories', or close studies of individual lives (Ozment, *Burgermeister's Daughter*; Davis, *Return of Martin Guerre*; and Ginzburg, *Cheese and the Worms*). Each of these cases concerns people who came before legal authorities and whose circumstances were therefore recorded (that's why we know about them). Microhistory has been alternatively praised as a means of examining the lives of those who tended not to write things down and condemned as overly speculative. Please comment on historical truth as you understand it in **one** of these examples. For help getting started or thinking about the issues, you may wish to read through Davis's article "On the Lame" and Finlay's article, "Refashioning of Martin Guerre."

Research paper: You will also research and write a paper (7-9 pages) on any topic related to the history of early modern Europe from 1450 to 1700, chosen in consultation with me. We will discuss the specifics of the project in detail, addressing the best ways to approach selecting a topic, finding the appropriate sources, and developing an effective, convincing argument. Partway through the semester, you will develop a research proposal that will consist of one-to-two paragraph descriptions of two potential topics, each of which will also include an annotated bibliography listing one secondary and two primary sources.

Participation: You should come to class, whether in person or via Zoom, having read *and* thought about the assigned readings so that you are prepared to discuss them. Simple attendance is not enough; there is no such thing as passive participation. I expect and I encourage a diversity of perspectives, as well as honest and respectful disagreement. If you are having difficulties speaking up in discussion, please come see me and we will develop some strategies together.

Debates: In this class we will have two debates, each focused on a contentious historical question. We will discuss the format and logistics of these debates prior to the first one, but you will know which side of the debate you are on in advance, and you should approach the readings with this in mind. The point of these debates is constructive disagreement, not victory, so you should aim to present your case effectively and challenge your opponents but also be ready to identify points of convergence or possible compromise.

What does effective class participation look like? In terms of grading, the following rubric roughly outlines my expectations:

- A: regular class attendance, always fully prepared (= having completed *and* thought about the readings), regularly contributes positive, thoughtful comments

- B: regular class attendance, usually prepared, makes a sincere effort to contribute often
 C/D: several absences, inconsistent preparation, occasional contributions to discussion
 F: many absences, usually unprepared, vague or rare contributions

GRADING

Participation, attendance, and debates:	30%
Briefs:	25% (5% each)
Short paper:	15%
Research paper:	30% (proposal 5%, final paper 25%)

SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY MEETINGS AND READINGS

Part 1: Intellectual, Social, and Religious Transformations

Tues – Feb. 2: Introduction to the course, to each other.

The Renaissance

Thurs – Feb 4: Tradition, innovation, and individualism in the Italian Renaissance

- Ugolino Verino, “The Glories of a New Golden Age,” and Leonardo Bruni, “The Republican Legacy,” in *Images of Quattrocento Florence*, ed. S.U. Baldassarri and A. Saiber (Yale, 2000), 12-17 and 92-95 **(on Blackboard)**
- Jacob Burkhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (New York, 2002), 11-26 **(on Blackboard)**
- Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (excerpts) **(on Blackboard)**
- Lorenzo de Medici, “Paternal Advice to a Cardinal” **(on Blackboard)**

Tues – Feb 9: **Debate: Did women have a Renaissance?**

- Laura Cereta, *Collected Letters of a Renaissance Feminist*, ed. D. Robin (Chicago, 1997), pp. 72-86 **(on Blackboard)**
- Veronica Franco, *Poems and Selected Letters*, ed. Jones & Rosenthal (Chicago, 1998): Letter 22, “A Warning to a Mother Considering Turning her Daughter into a Courtesan,” pp.37-40 **(on Blackboard)**
- Dale Kent, “Women in Renaissance Florence,” in *Virtue and Beauty: Leonardo’s Ginevra de’Benci and Renaissance Portraits of Women*, ed. D.A. Brown (Washington, D.C., 2001), 25-47 **(on Blackboard)**

The New World

Thurs – Feb 11: Encounters **(Briefs, Group A)**

- Christopher Columbus, *Letter to the King and Queen of Spain* **(on Blackboard)**
- Bernal Díaz, *The Conquest of New Spain* (London, 1963), 44-56 and 88-107 **(on Blackboard)**
- Ramón Pané, Peter Martyr, and Alessandro Geraldini on the Carib and Taino people **(on Blackboard)**

Tues – Feb 16: Reactions **(Briefs, Group B)**

- Bartolomé de las Casas. *An Account, Much Abbreviated, of the Destruction of the Indies* (Indianapolis, 2003), 1-25 and 78-88 **(on Blackboard)**
- Montaigne, *On Cannibals*, selection **(on Blackboard)**

Christendom Shattered

Thurs – Feb 18: The Protestant Challenge **(Briefs, Group C)**

- Martin Luther, “On Papal Power, Justification by Faith, the Interpretation of the Bible, and the Nature of the Clergy;” and Ulrich von Hutten, “Resentment of Rome” **(on Blackboard)**
- **(on Blackboard)**
- John Calvin, “The Institutes, Ecclesiastical Ordinances, and the Obedience Owed Rulers,” **(on Blackboard)**
- Sebastian Lotzer, “The Twelve Articles of the Peasantry,” in *German Humanism and Reformation*, ed. Reinhard Becker (Continuum, 1992), 294-300 **(on Blackboard)**

Tues – Feb 23: Catholic Renewal and Reform **(Briefs, Group A)**

- Ignatius of Loyola; Francis Xavier; and Teresa of Ávila **(on Blackboard)**
- “Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent;” “Chronicle of Francis I;” and “Examination of Elizabeth Dirks” **(on Blackboard)**
- “The Impact of the Reformations,” in *Discovering the Western Past: A Look at the Evidence*, ed. Weisner, 5th edition (Houghton Mifflin, 2004), pp. 299-313 **(on Blackboard)**

Part 2: Sixteenth-Century Lives

Town life in Germany

Thurs – Feb 25: **(Briefs, Group B)**

- Ozment, *The Burgermeister’s Daughter*

Tues – Mar 2: **(Briefs, Group C)**

- Ozment, *The Burgermeister’s Daughter*

Family, Village and Identity in France

Thurs – Mar 6: **(Briefs, Group A)**

- Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*

Tues – Mar 9: **(Briefs, Group B)**

- Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*
- **Suggested:**
 - Robert Finlay, “The Refashioning of Martin Guerre,” *American Historical Review* 93.3 (1988): 553-571 **(on Blackboard)**
 - Natalie Z. Davis, “On the Lame,” *American Historical Review* 93.3 (1988): 572-603 **(on Blackboard)**

Ideas and Inquisition in Italy

Thurs – Mar 11: **(Briefs, Group C)**

- Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*

Tues – Mar 16: **Debate: Was Menocchio guilty? (Research paper proposal due)**

- Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*

Part 3: Faith, Knowledge, and Power

Religious Struggles

Thurs – Mar 18: The Wars of Religion

- Jacques-Auguste De Thou, “The Massacre of St. Bartholomew’s Day” **(on Blackboard)**
- “The Sack of Magdeburg,” “Diary of Clara Staiger,” and “A Soldier’s Life in the Thirty Years War,” in *The Thirty Years War: A Documentary History*, ed. Tryntje Helfferich (Hackett, 2009) **(on Blackboard)**

Tues – Mar 23: Civil war in England **(Short Paper due)**

- Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Col. Hutchinson*, pp. 38-53 **(on Blackboard)**
- Gerrard Winstanley, “The True Levellers Standard Advanced” **(on Blackboard)**
- Hugh Trevor-Roper, “The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century” (from *Religion, Reformation, and Social Change* [London, 1972]) **(on Blackboard)**

Gender and society

Thurs – Mar 25: Expectations **(Briefs, Group A)**

- William Gouge, “Of Domestic Duties,” Treatises 2, 3, and 4 **(on Blackboard)**
- Patricia Crawford, “The Construction and Experience of Maternity in Seventeenth-Century England,” in *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren*, ed. Valerie Fildes (Routledge, 1990), 3-37 **(on Blackboard)**

Tues – Mar 30: **Study Break Day (no class)**

Thurs – Apr 1: Deviance’ **(Briefs, Group B)**

- Katherine Park and Lorraine Daston, “The Hermaphrodite and the Orders of Nature: Sexual Ambiguity in Early Modern France,” *GLQ* 1 (1995): 419-38 **(on Blackboard)**
- Mary Elizabeth Perry, “Deviant Insiders: Legalized Prostitutes and a Consciousness of Women in Early Modern Seville,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 27 (1985), 138-158.

Gender and Religion

Tues – Apr 6: Witches **(Briefs, Group C)**

- *The Trial of Tempel Anneke* (Broadview, 2006), first half

Thurs -Apr 8: Witch trials **(Briefs, Group A)**

- *The Trial of Tempel Anneke*, second half

Europe and the World

Tues – Apr 13: The Atlantic System **(Briefs, Group B)**

- John Elliott, *Spain and its World, 1500-1700* (Yale, 1989), pp. 7-26 **(on Blackboard)**
- “The Atlantic Slave Trade” **(on Blackboard)**

- David Eltis, *The Rise of Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 1-28 **(on Blackboard)**

Thurs – Apr 15: Asia, religion and trade **(Briefs, Group C)**

- Felipe Fernandez-Armesto. “The Indian Ocean in World History,” in *Vasco da Gama and the linking of Europe and Asia*, ed. Anthony Disney and Emily Booth (New Delhi, 2000) 11-29.
- Documents on European-Asian encounters **(on Blackboard)**

Absolute Monarchy and Alternatives

Tues – Apr 20: In theory

- Jean Domat, “On Social Order and Absolute Monarchy” **(on Blackboard)**
- Jean Bodin, *On Sovereignty*; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* **(on Blackboard)**
- John Locke, *Two Treatises on Government* **(on Blackboard)**
- Nicholas Henshall, *The Myth of Absolutism: Change and Continuity in Early Modern European Monarchy*, pp. 1-5 and 176-198 **(on Blackboard)**

Thurs – Apr 22: In Practice

- Jean-Baptiste Colbert, *Memoir on Finances*; Peter the Great, *Edicts and Decrees* **(on Blackboard)**
- Frederick II of Prussia, *Political Testament* **(on Blackboard)**
- Accounts of Louis XIV **(on Blackboard)**
- Description of the Empress Maria Theresa **(on Blackboard)**

Tues – Apr 27: The Dutch ‘Miracle’

- “The Example of Holland” **(on Blackboard)**
- Simon Schama, “Housewives and Hussies,” from *The Embarrassment of Riches* (Berkeley, 1988), pp. 398-480 **(on Blackboard)**

Revolutionizing the Sciences

Thurs – Apr 29: Mapping the Heavens

- Copernicus, *The Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies*, selections **(on Blackboard)**
- Galileo, *Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina of Tuscany* **(on Blackboard)**

Tues – May 4: New Epistemologies

- Francis Bacon, *Great Instauration*; René Descartes, *Discourse on Methods*; Blaise Pascal, *Thoughts on Religion*, selections **(on Blackboard)**

Conclusions

Thurs – May 6: The last class

Final paper due Tuesday, May 11, at 8pm via Blackboard.