

History 304: Late Middle Ages/Early Renaissance, 1300-1494

University of Massachusetts Amherst

Prof. Brian W. Ogilvie

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MWF 9:05–9:55 AM, School of Management 7

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Office Hours: MTu 1:30–3:00 PM, and by appointment.

This syllabus is also available online at the following URL:

<<http://www-unix.umass.edu/~ogilvie/courses/fall98/304/index.html>>.

Updates to the syllabus, handouts, and assignments will be posted to this web page.

Brief course description

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 the society, economy, politics, and culture of Renaissance Italy. The course will focus on the idea of the “Renaissance” and its social—in particular, its urban—setting.

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 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 fourteenth and fifteenth 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 meets three times a week. Class meetings will consist of a mixture of lecture, discussion, and in-class exercises. Lectures (more often, mini-lectures) will cover *important* facts not found in the readings and interpretations of the reading assignments. They will *not* substitute for the readings; if you have not done the reading, you will find the lectures hard to follow. Discussion will focus on the readings, often involving comparison between primary and secondary sources. In-class exercises will include reading and discussing documents, free-writing, debates, etc.

In the past, I have tried to separate upper-division courses into lectures and discussions, with disappointing results. Since this is a small course, it permits a more spontaneous, less structured format that should help keep it interesting despite the early hour.

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. Regular attendance and class participation

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 September 23. If a religious holiday will prevent you from attending class, please inform the instructor by September 23.

Students who do not attend the first two class meetings will be withdrawn from the course and will need to petition to be readmitted.

2. Reading all assignments

There will be regular discussion questions on the readings, and there may be

occasional quizzes in class. If you have done the readings, the questions will be straightforward.

3. Four papers

Four papers will be required. The first two will be short (2-3 page) essays on specific documents and questions. The last two will be longer (5-7 page) essays requiring synthesis of readings and class discussions. Paper topics will be announced Sept. 18, Oct. 9, Oct. 30, and Nov. 25. They will be due one week later in the case of the short papers, two weeks later in the case of the long papers, i.e. **Sept. 25, Oct. 16, Nov. 13, and Dec. 9**. 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. Comments on the papers will refer to Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Bedford Books, 1995), the style manual used in the College Writing course.

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 requiring a 1-2 page answer.

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

Attendance and participation in discussion:	20%
2 short papers @ 10% each	20%
2 long papers @ 20% each	40%
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.

Why is plagiarism so bad? Learning depends on trust—the student trusts the teacher to know the subject and to teach about it clearly, and the teacher trusts the student to show evidence of learning through exams and other assignments. Plagiarizing a paper breaches that trust. It is also theft of someone else's intellectual property.

Books for course

The following books are available for purchase at Food For Thought Books (106 N. Pleasant, Amherst). They are also on reserve in the DuBois Library, except for Baxandall, *Painting and experience*, which is in the Art Library, on the 9th floor of the DuBois Library (art books do not circulate). You can sometimes find copies of some of these books in local used bookstores.

Leon Battista Alberti, *The family in Renaissance Florence*, trans. Renée Neu Watkins (Waveland Press). \$9.50

Michael Baxandall, *Painting and experience in fifteenth-century Italy: A primer in the social history of pictorial style*, 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press). \$14.

Gene Brucker, ed., *Two memoirs of Renaissance Florence: The diaries of Buonaccorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati*, trans. Julia Martines (Waveland Press; reprint of Harper

Torchbooks edition). \$9.50

Peter Burke, *The Renaissance*, 2nd ed. (St. Martin's Press). \$11.

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. David Wootton (Hackett). \$3.

Lauro Martines, *Power and Imagination* (Johns Hopkins University Press). \$18.

Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance diplomacy* (Dover). \$8.

Alessandra Strozzi, *Selected letters of Alessandra Strozzi* (University of California Press). \$17.

In addition to the books which have been ordered at Food For Thought, the following readings are on reserve at the DuBois library. These readings are from books which are out of print or from which we are not reading enough to justify ordering the book and making you pay for it. You should consider making photocopies of these readings, so that you have them to hand when working on papers or the take-home final. Some of them may also be available through the Five-College library exchange system.

Gene Brucker, ed., *The society of Renaissance Florence: A documentary study* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971). **(Reserve HN488.F56 B77)**

Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, family, and ritual in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985). **(Reserve HQ1149.I8 K57 1985)**

Lorenzo Valla, *The profession of the religious and the principal arguments from the falsely-believed and forged donation of Constantine*, ed. and trans. Olga Zorzi Pugliese (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1985). **(Reserve BX2435 .V29 1985)**

Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Renaissance princes, popes, and prelates*, trans. William George and Emily Waters (New York: Harper and Row, 1963). **(Reserve DG537.8.A1 V6 1963)** This is a reprint edition; the original 1926 edition, under the title *The Vespasiano memoirs*, may also be used.

William Harrison Woodward, *Vittorino da Feltre and other humanist educators*, reprint ed. (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1963). **(Reserve LA106.W8 1964)**

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.

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 **(Reserve D16.2.C32 1967b)**.

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 short 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. 9/9 **Introduction to the “Renaissance”**
(no reading)

Fri. 9/11 **Practicum: Reading a document**
Reading: handout from Wednesday.

Unit I: The commune

Mon. 9/14 **Origins and structures of the Italian commune**
Reading: Martines, *Power and imagination*, ch. 1-3 (pp. ix-44).

Wed. 9/16 **The popular commune**
Reading: Martines, *Power and imagination*, ch. 4-5 (pp. 45-71).

Fri. 9/18 **Renaissance “Despotisms”**
Reading: Martines, *Power and imagination*, ch. 7 (pp. 94-110).

*** Paper assignment no. 1 distributed ***

Mon. 9/21 **Political feeling and communal sentiment**
Reading: Martines, *Power and imagination*, ch. 8 (pp. 111-129).

Wed. 9/23 **Renaissance “Republics”**
Reading: Martines, *Power and imagination*, ch. 9 (pp. 130-161).

Unit II: Renaissance society

Fri. 9/25 **Early Renaissance urban society**
Reading: Martines, *Power and imagination*, ch. 6 (pp. 72-93).

*** Paper no. 1 due (10% of final grade) ***

Mon. 9/28 **The Florentine oligarchy**
Reading: Brucker, ed., *Two memoirs of Renaissance Florence*, pp. 7-22, 61-64, 74-106.

Wed. 9/30 **The merchant’s values**
Reading: Alberti, *The family in Renaissance Florence*, pp. 1-50. (**Note:** pp. 1-3, 8-9, 12-15, 16-20, 25-32, 151-180 in the copy on reserve.)

Fri. 10/2 **Family and kinship I: The oligarchy’s ideal**
Reading: Alberti, *The family in Renaissance Florence*, pp. 50-115. (**Note:** pp. 180-245 in the copy on reserve.)

Mon. 10/5 **Women in society**
Reading: Strozzi, *Selected letters*, pp. 1-25, 29-61 (introduction, letters 1-6).

Wed. 10/7 Family and kinship II: Marriage
Reading: Strozzi, *Selected letters*, pp. 61-65, 109-113, 139-163 (letters 7, 17, 23-26);
Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "The 'cruel mother': Maternity, widowhood, and dowry in Florence in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries," in *Women, family, and ritual in Renaissance Italy*, pp. 117-131. **(Reserve HQ1149.I8 K57 1985)**;
Brucker, ed., *The society of Renaissance Florence*, no. 17, 18, 20, pp. 31-36, 40-42. **(Reserve HN488.F56 B77)**

Fri. 10/9 Family and kinship III: The extended family
Reading: Strozzi, *Selected letters*, pp. 75-79, 99-101, 113-119, 195-201 (letters 10, 15, 18, 32);
Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "Kin, friends, and neighbors': The urban territory of a merchant family in 1400," in *Women, family, and ritual in Renaissance Italy*, pp. 68-93. **(Reserve HQ1149.I8 K57 1985)**;
Brucker, ed., *The society of Renaissance Florence*, no. 30-34, pp. 62-73. **(Reserve HN488.F56 B77)**

*** Paper assignment no. 2 distributed ***

Mon. 10/12 Columbus Day—NO CLASS

Wed. 10/14 A Renaissance merchant: Goro Dati
Reading: Brucker, ed., *Two memoirs*, pp. 107-141.

Fri. 10/16 Ritual and sentiment: civic and religious
Reading: Brucker, ed., *The society of Renaissance Florence*, no. 35, pp. 75-78. **(Reserve HN488.F56 B77)**;
Strozzi, *Selected letters*, pp. 79-91, 103-109, 163-169 (letters 11-12, 16, 27).

*** Paper no. 2 due (10% of final grade) ***

Unit III: Economy and society

Mon. 10/19 Economy and society
Reading: Martines, *Power and imagination*, ch. 10 (pp. 162-190);
Brucker, ed., *The society of Renaissance Florence*, no. 1-6, pp. 4-13. **(Reserve HN488.F56 B77)**

Wed. 10/21 Business and banking
Reading: Brucker, ed., *Two memoirs*, pp. 22-28, 107-141 (review);
Strozzi, *Selected letters*, pp. 61-75 (letters 7-9);
Brucker, ed., *The society of Renaissance Florence*, no. 7, 9-15, pp. 14-15, 17-27. **(Reserve HN488.F56 B77)**

Fri. 10/23 The revolt of the Ciompi: economics and politics
Reading: Brucker, ed., *The society of Renaissance Florence*, no. 113-116, pp. 233-239 **(Reserve HN488.F56 B77)**;
Brucker, ed., *Two memoirs*, pp. 28-36.

Unit IV: Renaissance culture**Mon. 10/26 Renaissance humanism: origins and forms**

Reading: Martines, *Power and imagination*, ch. 11 (pp. 191-217);
Vespasiano, *Renaissance princes, popes, and prelates*, pp. 351-357, 395-403. **(Reserve DG537.8.A1 V6 1963)**

Wed. 10/28 Humanism and education

Reading: William Harrison Woodward, *Vittorino da Feltre and other humanist educators*, reprint ed. (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1963), pp. vii-xvii, 96-118, 123-133, 161-178. **(Reserve LA106.W8 1964)**;
Vespasiano, *Renaissance princes, popes, and prelates*, pp. 410-415. **(Reserve DG537.8.A1 V6 1963)**

Fri. 10/30 Humanist scholarship

Reading: Lorenzo Valla, *The profession of the religious and the principal arguments from the falsely-believed and forged donation of Constantine*, ed. and trans. Olga Zorzi Pugliese (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1985), pp. 63-74 **(Reserve BX2435 .V29 1985)**;
Vespasiano, *Renaissance princes, popes, and prelates*, pp. 406-407, 415-416. **(Reserve DG537.8.A1 V6 1963)**

*** Paper assignment no. 3 distributed ***

Mon. 11/2 Art and society

Reading: Martines, *Power and imagination*, ch. 13 (pp. 241-276).

Wed. 11/4 The social status of the artist

Reading: Baxandall, *Painting and experience*, ch. 1 (pp. 1-27).

Fri. 11/6 The “period eye”: history and art

Reading: Baxandall, *Painting and experience*, ch. 2 (pp. 29-108).

Unit V: The Italian state system and the “barbarian invasion”**Mon. 11/9 Princely courts**

Reading: Martines, *Power and imagination*, ch. 12 (pp. 218-240).

Wed. 11/11 Veterans’ Day—NO CLASS**Fri. 11/13 Florence under the Medici**

Reading: Strozzi, *Selected letters*, pp. 97-99, 119-139, 169-203, 215-221 (letters 14, 19-22, 28-32, intro. to 33, 35);
Vespasiano, *Renaissance princes, popes, and prelates*, pp. 213-246. **(Reserve DG537.8.A1 V6 1963)**

*** Paper no. 3 due (20% of final grade) ***

Mon. 11/16 The state system of late fifteenth-century Italy

Reading: Mattingly, pp. 15-54.

Wed. 11/18 Diplomacy and the balance of power

Reading: Mattingly, pp. 55-102

Fri. 11/20 The northern monarchies
Reading: Mattingly, pp. 105-114; Brucker, ed., *Two memoirs*, pp. 34-61, 65-74.

Mon. 11/23 The Calamity of Italy
Reading: Martines, *Power and imagination*, ch. 14 (pp. 277-296).

Wed. 11/25 Italy and the north on the eve of the Reformation
Reading: Mattingly, pp. 115-147.

*** Paper assignment no. 4 distributed ***

Fri. 11/27 Thanksgiving Recess—NO CLASS

Unit VI: The end of the Renaissance

Mon. 11/30 The High Renaissance
Reading: Martines, *Power and imagination*, ch. 15 (pp. 297-331).

Wed. 12/2 Machiavelli I
Reading: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, pp. xi-xxxvii, 1-34.

Fri. 12/4 Machiavelli II
Reading: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, pp. 34-80.

Mon. 12/7 The Renaissance as a historical concept
Reading: Burke, *The Renaissance*, pp. 1-26.

Wed. 12/9 The end of the Renaissance
Reading: Burke, *The Renaissance*, pp. 27-61;
Martines, *Power and imagination*, ch. 16 (pp. 332-337).

*** Paper no. 4 due (20% of final grade) ***

Fri. 12/11 The Renaissance today
Reading: To Be Announced.

Mon. 12/14 Review/Extra Day
(Reserved for catching up; otherwise review.)

*** Take-home final exam distributed ***

Mon. 12/21 FINAL EXAM DUE AT NOON IN HERTER 617! (20% OF FINAL GRADE)

Suggested reading

This list is only a starting point for further reading in the history of the Renaissance. Please see the instructor if you would like further reading suggestions on particular topics.

General works and overviews

- Burckhardt, Jacob. *The civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. Originally published in 1860, this book set the terms of the modern debate on the nature of the Renaissance. Available in many editions.
- Huizinga, Johan. *The autumn of the Middle Ages*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. A powerful response to Burckhardt by a great Dutch historian, focusing on the late Middle Ages in France and Burgundy.
- Ferguson, Wallace K. *The Renaissance in historical thought*. Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1948.
- Hale, John. *The civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.
- Hay, Denys. *Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries*. 2nd ed. ed. London and New York: Longman, 1989.
- Hay, Denys, and John Law. *Italy in the age of the Renaissance, 1380-1530*. London: Longman, 1989.
- Rice, Eugene F., Jr., and Anthony Grafton. *The foundations of early modern Europe, 1460-1559*. 2nd ed. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994.

Renaissance art

- Baxandall, Michael. *Giotto and the orators: Humanist observers of painting in Italy and the discovery of pictorial composition, 1350-1450*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- Hartt, Frederick. *History of Italian Renaissance art*. 3rd ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall; New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1987.
- Meiss, Millard. *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951.
- Panofsky, Erwin. *Renaissance and renaissances in Western art*. New York: Icon Editions, 1972.

Humanism and letters

- Bentley, Jerry H. *Politics and culture in Renaissance Naples*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- Bolgar, R. R. *The classical heritage and its beneficiaries*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963.
- Bracciolini, Poggio. *Two Renaissance book hunters: The letters of Poggius Bracciolini to Nicolaus De Niccolis*. Translated by Phyllis Walter Goodheart Gordon. New York: Columbia University Press, 1974.
- Cochrane, Eric. *Historians and historiography in the Italian Renaissance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- D'Amico, John F. *Renaissance humanism in papal Rome: Humanists and churchmen on the eve of the Reformation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983.
- Garin, Eugenio. *Italian humanism: Philosophy and civic life in the Renaissance*. New York: Harper and Row, 1965.
- Grafton, Anthony, ed. *Rome reborn: The Vatican Library and Renaissance culture*. Washington, DC, New Haven, and the Vatican City: Library of Congress, Yale University Press, and the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1993.
- King, Margaret L. *Venetian humanism in an age of patrician dominance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.

Kristeller, Paul Oskar. *Medieval aspects of Renaissance learning*. Edited by Edward P. Mahoney. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.

———. *Renaissance thought and its sources*. Edited by Michael Mooney. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.

Weiss, Roberto. *The Renaissance rediscovery of classical antiquity*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969.

Political history

Baron, Hans. *The crisis of the early Italian Renaissance*. Revised ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966.

Brucker, Gene. *Renaissance Florence*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969. Reprinted in 1983 with a bibliographical supplement.

Lane, Frederic C. *Venice: A maritime republic*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973.

Martines, Lauro. *Power and imagination: City-states in Renaissance Italy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979.

Queller, Donald. *The Venetian patriciate*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1986.

Social history

Hale, John. *War and society in Renaissance Europe, 1450-1620*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

King, Margaret L. *Women of the Renaissance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Klapisch-Zuber, Christiane. *Women, family, and ritual in Renaissance Italy*. Translated by Lydia G. Cochrane. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

Muir, Edward. *Civic ritual in Renaissance Venice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

Economic history

Cipolla, Carlo M. *Before the Industrial Revolution: European society and economy, 1000-1700*. 3rd ed. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1993.

Goldthwaite, Richard A. *The building of Renaissance Florence: An economic and social history*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.

Religious history

Bossy, John. *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Ozment, Steven. *The age of reform, 1250-1550: An intellectual and religious history of late medieval and Reformation Europe*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980.