

History 305: Northern Renaissance and Reformation, 1450-1620

University of Massachusetts Amherst
Spring Semester 2002 (Schedule #341366)
Tues. & Thurs., 1–2:15, New Africa House 311

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I will try to answer e-mail within 24 hours during the week and within 48 hours over the weekend. If you need a response more quickly, please telephone.

Brief description of course

This course examines the origins of modern Europe in the religious, political, and cultural crucible of the Protestant and Catholic Reformations. We will explore the intellectual, economic, and political trends of late medieval Europe, then turn to the origins, course, and effects of Luther's theological revolution and responses to it. After considering the transformative effect of the Reformation on theology, religious ritual, and belief, we will turn to political and cultural responses, from religious war and absolutism, to skepticism, the new science, and theories of toleration. At the end of the semester, you will understand the complex ways in which the Protestant and Catholic Reformations shaped modern Europe. Specific topics for readings, discussion, and lecture will be chosen in the first week of class to best balance my judgment as to what is important and your interest in the period and its consequences for modern society, culture, and thought.

The course will balance lecture and discussion. Some topics are best suited to reading and discussion; others to lecture. You should come prepared to each class meeting, having done the reading and reflected on it. To aid your preparation for discussions and exams, you will need to keep a journal for the course.

Summary of requirements: about 125 pages of reading each week (on average), map quizzes, journal entries, midterm, final, ten-page paper. Optional term paper.

Course goals

This course has several different goals. By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- Describe the social, religious, political, and intellectual background to the Reformation.
- Explain the principal theological ideas of the Reformers and how they differed from traditional Catholic doctrine.
- Describe changes in religious belief and practice from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century.
- Explain the effects of the Reformations on social life, culture, politics, and ideas.
- Analyze and criticize the argument of a secondary source.
- Interpret primary sources from the late Renaissance and Reformation and use them as evidence for historical arguments.

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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Books for course

The books are available at Atticus Books (8 Main Street, Amherst, tel. 256-1547). They are also on reserve in the DuBois Library. I have given ISBNs in case you want to order them yourself; I encourage you to support local businesses. Please let me know if prices differ significantly from those I have listed.

Words in **boldface** indicate how the book will be referred to in the reading assignments and other course material.

Castiglione, Baldessare. *The book of the courtier*. Translated by George Bull. London: Penguin Books, 1976. ISBN 0-14-044192-1. \$14.

Hale, J. R. *The civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*. New York: Touchstone Books/Simon & Schuster, 1994. ISBN 0-684-80352-6. \$25.

Erasmus, Desiderius. *The Praise of Folly and other writings*. Edited and translated by Robert M. Adams. New York: W. W. Norton, 1989. ISBN 0-393-95749-7. \$13.

Luther, Martin. *Christian liberty*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1943. ISBN 0-8006-0182-3. \$4.

Montaigne, Michel de. *The complete essays*. Translated by M. A. Screech. London: Penguin Books, 1991. ISBN 0-14-044604-4. \$24.

Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A pocket guide to writing in history*. 3rd ed. Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001. ISBN 0-312-24766-4. \$11.

Ross, James Bruce, and Mary Martin McLaughlin, eds. *The portable Renaissance reader*. Revised ed. New York: Viking Penguin, 1968. ISBN 0-14-015061-7. \$17.

Course requirements and grading

This course is an upper-division history course. History, as a scholarly discipline, requires a lot of reading, careful attention to detail, and grasping difficult concepts. You should be prepared to spend three to six hours per week outside of class reading and reflecting, and a little more time when there are assignments due.

The major requirements are:

1. Midterm examination (20%). Seventy-five minute, in-class essay exam. You may bring your notes and journal but not your books (leave them at home or outside the classroom). The midterm will be held the Thursday before spring break (March 14).

2. Final examination (30%). Two-hour, in-class essay exam. You may bring your notes and journal but not your books (leave them at home or outside the classroom).

The final will be held in the scheduled final exam period for the course, to be announced when the University has prepared the final exam schedule.

3. Ten-page paper (30%). You will select a topic and find sources by the week after spring break, then turn in a narrative outline, a first draft of the complete paper, and a final draft. Due dates are in the calendar below.

4. Map quizzes (10%). Four or five map quizzes will be given over the course of the semester. They will test your knowledge of geography that is relevant to what we are studying at the time. The quizzes will be announced one class in advance. More detailed guidelines will be handed out separately.

5. Journal entries (10%). Every week you will write down responses to the assigned reading and questions for discussion in a loose-leaf journal. I will inspect your journal three times during the semester. The journal is a place for you to develop interpretations of what you read, to relate it to previous course material, and to reflect on its significance for your understanding of past and present. Doing the journal will help you immensely with the exams and paper.

Option: term paper

Students interested in writing a 20-25 page term paper may do so instead of doing the ten-page paper and final exam. The term paper will count for 60% of the final course grade. Instructions, guidelines, and deadlines for the term paper are detailed in a separate handout. If you choose to write a term paper, I encourage you to consider presenting your work at the Eighth Annual Conference on Undergraduate Research, Scholarly, Creative, and Public Service activities, which will be held in Boston on May 3, 2002; abstracts are due at the beginning of March.

A note on readings

Because this course involves frequent discussions, you should bring the assigned books and your journal to class. If you use books on reserve at the library, you should bring good reading notes.

Preliminary course schedule

This schedule provides detailed assignments for the first three weeks, along with dates for exams and assignments. A detailed calendar for the rest of the semester will be distributed after we have figured out topics for the semester.

Detailed schedule for the first three weeks

Tues. 1/29 Introduction to the course

Thurs. 1/31 Investigating the history of early modern Europe

Tues. 2/5 Setting the agenda for the semester

Your first assignment is to skim Hale, *The civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*, and come up with a list of five topics that you want to learn more about in this course. For each topic, you should write a few sentences in your journal justifying its importance. You do not need to read the relevant sections carefully, though you might want to do so. In class today we will discuss topics and work out a tentative plan for the semester. I will then revise the list (after all, I have been studying this period for a long time), work out readings, and put some readings on reserve. I will hand out a calendar for the rest of the semester by Feb. 12.

Thurs. 2/7 The birth of "Europe"
Read: Hale, pp. 3-50 (chapter 1).

Tues. 2/12 The Praise of Folly: rhetoric and irony in the Northern Renaissance
Turn in your journal at the end of class. It will be returned Thursday.
Read: Erasmus, "The Praise of Folly," pp. 3-87, and the chronology, pp. 339-340. "Folly" is a complex, difficult text: plan to spend a lot of time lingering over it. It will repay your effort.

Thurs. 2/14 The Praise of Folly: humanists vs. scholastics
Read: Erasmus, "Letter to Martin Dorp" (1515), pp. 228-251.

Important dates for the rest of the semester

Tues. 2/19 NO CLASS (Monday class schedule in effect)

Thurs. 2/28 Last day to choose the term paper option

Tues. 3/5 Turn in your journal at the end of class

Thurs. 3/14 MIDTERM (in class, closed book, notes allowed)

Tues. 3/26 Topic and list of sources for paper due

Tues. 4/9 Narrative outline of paper due

Tues. 4/16 Turn in your journal at the end of class

Tues. 4/23 Draft of paper due

Tues. 5/7 Final draft of paper due (term paper option: intermediate draft due)

Finals week FINAL EXAM (in class, closed book, notes allowed)
Term paper option: paper due at the beginning of the scheduled exam period.

Course policies

Policy on late assignments

1. The midterm and final exams, and the map quizzes, cannot be made up unless you have a bona fide, university-sanctioned reason for missing the exam or quiz, with appropriate documentation from the Dean of Students, University Health Services, etc.
2. The *maximum* grade on the ten-page paper will be reduced by one-half letter grade for each late part of the assignment (topic and sources, outline, draft, and final draft). Each part must be handed in before I will accept the next part.
3. The final journal grade will be reduced by one-half letter grade if the journal is not handed in on the due date. This is cumulative; if you miss all three due dates, the grade will be reduced by one and a half letter grades.

Policy on attendance

In accordance with university policy, I *expect* you to attend class. There are no formal penalties for skipping class, but material covered in class may be on the midterm and final. This includes handouts from class and lectures for which there is no additional reading. If you must miss class for an approved reason—for instance, for a religious holiday, an athletic competition, or some other university-sanctioned event—or due to illness, I will happily stay after class the next day or meet with you in office hours to go over the material you missed, as long as you have appropriate documentation. If you skip class for any other reason, I can suggest additional reading but I will not go over the material with you. I will take attendance at class, to learn names and to have a record for administrative purposes, but your attendance will not be factored into your final grade.

Policy on classroom conduct

Our classroom demeanor should facilitate the goals of this course. Please arrive on time, because it distracts everyone in a discussion if someone arrives late. Turn off your cell phone or beeper. *If your phone rings, I get to answer it*; if the call is really important I will let you take it in the hall. University rules prohibit eating and drinking in classrooms; if it becomes a problem, I will have to enforce the rule. If someone in the class does something that distracts or offends you, please talk to them or me and try to resolve it.

Policy on academic honesty

Plagiarism and cheating on the exams are both 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.

Cheating on the exams includes, but is not limited to, copying from another student during the exam. It is **not** cheating to discuss material with classmates before the exams—indeed, I encourage it. However, that kind of collaboration should stop when the exam begins.

Tips for success

History 305 is not an easy course, but if you keep a few simple points in mind, it will be a lot easier. Here are some tips for doing well in the course. They all are really aspects of one overarching principle: TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR OWN EDUCATION!

- Read the syllabus carefully, and write down in your organizer the dates on which assignments are due. This will help you budget your time for the weeks when there is more work than normal.
- Plan to spend 3-6 hours every week, outside of class, working on the course.
- Complete all the assigned readings every week in a timely fashion, preferably in one or two study sessions, and jot down important points in your journal or notes after finishing the readings. This should take about four hours every week, or possibly more. As you read each assignment, think about how it relates to earlier readings and lectures, and jot down some of those thoughts in your journal. Don't use a highlighter for note-taking; it substitutes motion for thought.
- Look up unfamiliar words in a good dictionary. Look up unfamiliar names or concepts in an encyclopedia. The *Columbia Encyclopedia* is a good one-volume encyclopedia; the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, available online at britannica.com, is a good multi-volume encyclopedia.
- If your apartment or dorm room aren't quiet places to study, go to the library or somewhere else quiet. The main level of DuBois Library is a good place because it has lots of dictionaries and encyclopedias. If you need coffee while studying, try the Newman Center. Study a lot during the day, then you can relax in the evening without feeling stressed out or guilty.
- Ask questions about what you don't understand, but only after you have tried to answer them yourself. Part of your college education is learning to be self-reliant. Who should you ask? Me, of course; if your question is factual, you can also ask a reference librarian.
- Take advantage of my office hours if there are questions you did not have time to raise in class.
- Arrive for class on time, and pay attention to what everyone says. Take good notes. If you need guidance on note-taking, Learning Support Services (DuBois Library, 10th floor) offers a Note Taking Workshop several times each semester. They also offer workshops in time management and test-taking should you feel in need of help in those areas.
- Review your journal weekly. The more you are aware of the interconnections among the course material, the better you will remember and understand everything.
- Start work on each part of the paper assignment as soon as your schedule allows. Complete a rough draft of each part the week before it is due, and revise it at least once before you hand it in. Be sure to copyedit and proofread your papers carefully.
- Consider forming an informal study group. Research shows that students who participate in study groups learn more and enjoy their courses more than those who don't.
- Talk to me if you feel overwhelmed or if you are falling behind in the course. My main goal is to help you learn.