THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

Between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, Italy underwent remarkable cultural and intellectual efflorescence against a backdrop of social and political innovation. The meaning of the Italian Renaissance has been variously understood and long debated. Was it the rebirth of the classical past, as humanists of the time claimed? Or was it the seedbed of modernity, as the dominant interpretation, originally propounded by Jacob Burckhardt, would have it? Was it essentially a Florentine movement or was it firmly rooted throughout Italy? Was it simply the cultural expression of economic and political elites, or did other social groups participate in significant ways? In this course, we will explore a variety of sources in order to understand the development and nature of Italian Renaissance culture within its political and social contexts and try to answer some of these questions.

The course consists mainly of discussions. An effort will be made to include every student, so assignments must be completed in advance of the class meetings.

The following paperback book, which must be purchased, are available in the bookstore:

Niccolò Machiavelli, Selected Political Writings, ed. David Wootton.

Most common reading will be found on Blackboard under “Course Reading.” Other assignments, specified under various class days below, will be chosen from lists posted on Blackboard under “Additional Reading.” This additional reading will help inform our discussions, and some will serve as the basis for short summary essays (see requirement 3 below).

Students seeking background knowledge are advised to consult Wallace K. Ferguson, Europe in Transition 1300-1520; John Hyde, Society and Politics in Medieval Italy; and Brian Pullan, A History of Early Renaissance Italy. All are to be found on Honors reserve for History 116, seminar in the Italian Renaissance.

The requirements for the course are as follows:
1) Regular, informed participation in class discussions.
2) A paper of 5-7 pages on signorial rule, due at the beginning of class on 3 February. A separate sheet gives full details (see Blackboard, “Paper Assignments”).
3) A short summary (about 3 pages) of additional reading, due at the beginning of class on the following days (questions to be answered are posted with the readings):
a) 10 February;
b) one of the three following alternatives: either 17 or 19 February; either 24 or 26 February; either 2 or 4 March;
c) either 16 or 18 March;
d) either 22 or 27 April.
Details on separate sheets.

SS indicates days on which short summaries are due.

4) A paper of 5-7 pages on Machiavelli, due at the beginning of class on 15 April. A separate sheet gives full details (see Blackboard, “Paper Assignments”). There will be no hour examination and no final examination.

The history department has implemented the following draconian policy on attendance: Students are required to attend all classes for the successful completion of the course. Unexcused absences will result in a lower grade.

This course, like any other, is premised on mutual respect and honesty. More specifically, I expect that the work you submit is your own. Plagiarism will therefore be severely penalized: any work containing plagiarized material will be granted the grade of no credit and may subject you to prosecution before the CJC. In order to clarify the issue of academic honesty, I will distribute copies of the History Department's guidelines. When in doubt, check with me.

**SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS**

20 Jan. Introduction: Understandings of the Renaissance
Viewing:
Machiavelli, *Political Writings*, map following p. xlvi

**Political Settings**

22 Jan. Political Environments: Communes, Cities, Regions, Empire, Papacy

27 Jan. Florence: Magnates and Guildsmen
Reading:
“Florence Political Documents I” (docs. 37-45, 55-58) (Blackboard)
additional readings selected from works listed on separate sheet

29 Jan. Florence: Oligarchs and Medici
Reading:
“Florence Political Documents II” (docs. 35-36, 116) (Blackboard)
Richard Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*, “The Framework of Ritual” (pp. 1-8), and chap. 1 (Blackboard)
additional readings selected from works listed on separate sheet
3 Feb. Signorial Rule
  Reading:
  D. M. Bueno De Mesquita, “The Place of Despotism in Italian Politics,” in
  John Hale, ed., *Europe in the Late Middle Ages*, pp. 312-331 only
  (Blackboard)
  additional reading to be selected from works listed on Paper 1 Assignment
  sheet

  PAPER DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS (see requirement #2, above)

  Economic, Social, and Religious Worlds

5 Feb. Urban Experiences: Authority and Violence
  Reading:
  “Urban Experience Documents” (docs. 46-54, 59-64) (Blackboard)

10 Feb. Earning a Living in the Renaissance
  Reading:
  “Earning a Living Documents” (docs. 1, 7-14) (Blackboard)
  additional readings selected from works listed on separate sheet
  SS

12 Feb. The Few
  Reading:
  “The Few Documents” (docs. 2, 3, 15, 25, 26) (Blackboard)
  Gene Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, chap. 3 (several copies on Honors
  Reserve for History 116; use either edition)

17 Feb. The Many
  Reading:
  “The Many Documents” (docs. 4-6, 27, 102-115) (Blackboard)
  additional readings selected from works listed on separate sheet
  SS

19 Feb. Social Strains
  Reading:
  “Social Strains Documents” (docs. 68-77, 81-82, 86-87) (Blackboard)
  additional readings selected from works listed on separate sheet
  SS

24 Feb. Family Formation and Structure
  Reading:
  “Family Formation and Structure Documents”(docs. 16-24, 2-6) (Blackboard)
  additional readings selected from works listed on separate sheet
  SS
26 Feb.  Family Deformations
   Reading:
   “Family Deformations Documents” (docs. 25-34, 65-67, 80 (Blackboard)
   additional readings selected from works listed on separate sheet
   SS

2 Mar.  Gender Relations
   Reading:
   “Gender Relations Documents” (docs. 69, 83-85 (Blackboard)
   Samuel Cohn, *Women in the Streets*, chap. 1 (Blackboard)
   additional readings selected from works listed on separate sheet
   SS

4 Mar.  Sexual Relations
   Reading:
   “Sexual Relations Documents” (docs. 88-96, 105) (Blackboard)
   additional readings selected from works listed on separate sheet
   SS

SPRING VACATION

16 Mar.  Religion and Spirituality: Orthodoxy and Its Problems
   Reading:
   “Religion: Orthodoxy Documents” (docs. 64, 69, 78-79, 97-101) (Blackboard)
   Richard Trexler, “Ritual Behavior in Renaissance Florence: The Setting,”
   *Medievalia et Humanistica*, n.s. vol. 4 (1973), pp. 125-144 (Blackboard)
   additional readings selected from works listed on separate sheet
   SS

18 Mar.  Religion and Spirituality: Intolerance
   Reading:
   “Religion: Intolerance Documents” (docs. 117-132) (Blackboard)
   additional readings selected from works listed on separate sheet
   SS

Humanists and Others

23 Mar.  Humanism: Rediscovery or Invention?
   Reading:
   Petrarch, *Rerum familiarium (Letters on Familiar Matters)*, I, 3, 9, 12
   (Blackboard)
Petrarch, *Rerum familiarium (Letters on Familiar Matters)*, XXII, 10; XXIV, 6-9 (Blackboard)

Coluccio Salutati, “Two Letters to Giuliano Zonarini,” in *Humanism and Tyranny*, ed. E. Emerton, pp. 290-308 (Blackboard)


25 Mar. Humanism and the Civic Order

Reading:

Coluccio Salutati: *Invective against Antonio Loschi of Vicenza*

http://130.238.50.3/ilmh/Ren/flor-salutati-invectiva.htm

Leonardo Bruni, “Dialogues” in *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni*, pp. 63-84 (Blackboard)

30 Mar. Humanist Learning and Schooling

Reading:


Petrus Paulus Vergerius, “The New Education”

http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/vergerius.html

1 Apr. Humanism and Gender

Reading:


6 Apr. Astrology, Magic, Cabala

Reading:

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, “Oration on the Dignity of Man”

http://cscs.umich.edu/~crshalizi/Mirandola/

“Ficino vs. Pico: Natural vs. Supernatural Magic”

http://ls.poly.edu/~jbain/mms/handouts/mmspico.htm

review sorcery documents (docs. 128-132 for 18 March)

8 Apr. Machiavelli: Apologist for Despots?

Reading:

*The Prince*, in Machiavelli, *Selected Political Writings*, pp. 5-80

13 Apr. Machiavelli: A Republican?
Reading:  
_The Discourses_ (selections) in Machiavelli, _Selected Political Writings_, pp. 81-217

15 Apr.  Machiavelli: An Evaluation
   Reading:  
   Machiavelli, _Selected Political Writings_, pp. xi-xliv, 1-4
   **PAPER DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS (see requirement #4, above)**

**Artists and Art**

20 Apr.  The Structures of Artistic Activity

22 Apr.  Relations between Renaissance Society and Renaissance Art: Patronage
   Reading:  
   Documents on Isabella di Gonzaga’s patronage of Perugino’s “Battle Between Love and Chastity” (Louvre), together with the painting (Blackboard)
   additional reading to be selected from works listed on separate sheet
   **SS**

27 Apr.  Relations between Renaissance Society and Renaissance Art:
   Reading:  
   additional readings selected from works listed on separate sheet
   **SS**

29 Apr.  The End of the Renaissance?