

HISTORY OF EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION I
Monday & Wednesday 10:30 – 11:50 AM
Cobb Lecture Hall 107

HIST 13001-01
Fall Quarter 2014

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Office Hours:
MW 2-4 and by appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is the first half of a two-quarter sequence that aims to provide an overview of European civilization from 400 A.D. to the present. We will begin by dipping even earlier, since European Civilization has been so shaped by the inheritance, loss, recovery and transformation of materials from earlier eras, as the legacies of Greeks and Romans, poets and emperors, conquerors and conquered mixed and reshaped each other. We will take an advanced, critical approach to history, not memorizing names and dates but plunging into the real work of historians: using surviving documents and evidence to determine what we can know and, just as important, what we can't know about the past. This course will not present a clean timeline of A leading to B and C, but the raw primary sources, full of gaps and confusion, lies and silences, from which historians work to cobble together the past, and to cut through misconceptions and propaganda. I will also bring materials from my active research into the classroom, so you see can directly how the craft of history is practiced today. Writing will be another focus, and you will be given many opportunities to practice and improve your writing. I am very serious about writing, and want to help you acquire, not just on the kind of academic writing you need for school, but broader skills useful for fiction, journalism, and other professional directions; I want, above all, to teach you how to teach yourself to be a better writer. Becoming a great writer means a long apprenticeship, so I show you how you can keep improving long after this class is over.

This is an ambitious course. The reading load is not only heavy but also difficult, as I wo;; ask you to jump out of your present mindset and wrestle with works from alien times with very alien ideas—it is in many ways less work to read a whole modern novel than to understand a few pages of Aquinas or Dante. In return for the extra work, I am granting you extra flexibility: the syllabus includes pre-planned opportunities to skip work when you need to, amnesties for missed assignments, extra credit opportunities, and other flexibility. If you find yourself struggling, talk to me directly and I will be happy to help plan out a strategy to catch up.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

40% Participation and Reading: The majority of each class will consist of discussion of the readings. Students must arrive in class prepared to engage in analysis. Your performance in each class will be assessed, so excessive absences or failure to speak up will hurt your grade.

AMNESTY: From time to time we all have something come up which disrupts the normal flow of our work: a cold, a family crisis, a friend's wedding, a concert in another city we really want to see. Once per quarter you may come to me before class (or e-mail) and say "I couldn't do the reading this week," and I will not call on you, and there will be no penalty. But if you instead try to pretend you did the reading and bluff your way through discussion or be silent, you will receive a penalty for failing to prepare.

30% Six Response Papers (2 pages each — each is worth 5% of your final grade): These papers are due the first class session of each week, and must treat one or more readings from the previous week. No question will be assigned, rather the paper should be your further response to the previous week's discussion. These papers must use formal style and grammar, but are otherwise freeform, and may take your ideas in any direction, including comparison to literature, media or issues outside class (creative writing is acceptable), but the papers must address class discussion as well—papers which do not reflect in-class discussions will not receive full credit.

FLEXIBILITY AND EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY: You may turn in a response paper in any of weeks 2-10, but not in week 1 or after week 10. This means there are 9 opportunities to turn in a paper, but you only need to write 6, so may choose to skip 3. If you wish you may write extra papers (more than 6) and I will drop the lowest grade(s).

30% Take-Home Final Exam (8-10 pages): The exam will consist of two essays, written on your own with no time limit, submitted to me by e-mail. Questions will be distributed in class.

Optional Extra Credit Writing Exercises: Writing well is invaluable, but also challenging. Up to three times per semester (any time before the last class session), you may complete any of the three extra credit assignments described below and receive a bonus equivalent to up to 5% of the course grade. These are exercises are based on those used in professional creative writing workshops and journalism training programs. They are designed to teach you how to improve your writing skills on your own time, which should in turn improve your grades on future writing assignments (in this class and others), not to mention giving you writing skills which will be valuable lifelong. You may do each assignment once, or repeat them, doing the same one up to three times. If you choose to do more than three extra credit assignments, only the best three will be counted. If you are interested in further opportunities to work on writing, talk to me.

- **Extra-Credit Assignment #1: Source Comparison:** Choose a historical figure or literary work we have discussed. Print out the Wikipedia article about it, then go to the library and find two different printed academic reference books which discuss the same person (i.e. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, any dictionary of historical biography). Compare the Wikipedia page to the academic source. 1,500 words.
- **Extra-Credit Assignment #2” “Half and Half Again”:** Take a paper, of at least four pages in length, which you have written for a different class (either in college or in High School) and rewrite it to make exactly the same arguments in half as many words. You must hand in both the original paper and the shortened version.
- **Extra-Credit Assignment #3: Understanding Bad Prose:** One way to learn to write good prose is to think very seriously about bad prose, make yourself identify everything it does wrong, and think about how you would do it better. For this assignment, talk to the instructor, who will send you a few sentences from *The Eye of Argon* (Jim Theis, 1970), infamous for being possibly the worst prose ever professionally published in English. Going through the selection word-by-word, write 1,500 words explaining precisely what the passage does badly: spelling, grammar, word choice, vagueness, punctuation, overdone description etc. Finally, write your own version of the same sentence(s), communicating the same content in approximately the same word count.

BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE AT THE SEMINARY CO-OP BOOKSTORE:

1. Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* (Penguin Classics: 978-0140447804)
2. *Beowulf* (J. R. R. Tolkien Translation: 978-0544442788)
3. *The Poetic Edda*, translated by Carolyne Larrington (Oxford World's Classics: 978-0199538386)
4. Jocelin of Brakelond, *Chronicle of the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds* (Oxford World's Classics: 978-0199554935)
5. Jean de Joinville, *Life of St. Louis*, trans. Caroline Smith (Penguin: 978-0140449983)
6. *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise* (Penguin: 978-0140448993)
7. Dante, *Inferno*, translated by John Ciardi (any Ciardi edition is fine, but the least expensive is the Signet Classics: 978-0451531391; nicer to own long-term is the NAL triple of the whole *Divine Comedy*: 978-0451208637)
8. Alessandra Macinghi negli Strozzi, *Selected Letters, Bilingual Edition*, trans. Heather Gregory (University of California Press: 978-0520203907)
9. Machiavelli, *The Prince* (David Wootton translation; 978-0872203167)
10. Martin Luther, *On Christian Liberty* (Fortress Press).
11. Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (Penguin: 978-0140445626)
12. *Three Early Modern Utopias: Thomas More: Utopia; Francis Bacon: New Atlantis; Henry Neville: The Isle of Pines* (Oxford World's Classics: 978-0199537990)

Electronic Reserves:

1. Homer, *Iliad* (Robert Fagles translation) Book 1, Book 2 (through page 115), Book 5, Book 9, Book 11(pages 316-324 only), Book 14, (reading Book 15 is optional), Book 16.
2. Homer, *Iliad* (Robert Fagles translation) abridged audiobook read by Derek Jacobi. The audiobook includes all the parts we are reading except Book 5 and the optional Book 15.
3. Plato, *Republic*,
4. Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, Book IV.
5. Snorri Sturluson, *Prose Edda*, Prologue and "Deluding of Gylfi" through p. 47.
6. Anselm, "Ontological Proof of the Existence of God."
7. Aquinas, "Proofs of the Existence of God."
8. Boccaccio, *Decameron*, Book I Prologue (Black Death), Book 1 Story 1 (Cepperello), Book 1 Story 2 (Abraham and the Jew), Book 3 Story 10 (Putting the Devil Back in Hell) Book IV Story 2 (Archangel Gabriel), Book VI Story 10 (Fake Holy Relics), Author's Epilogue.
9. Petrarch, "Italia Mia," Letters to Cicero, Letter to Homer.
10. *Two Renaissance Book-Hunters*, Letters to and from Poggio Bracciolini.
11. Ficino, *Meditations on the Soul*, pp. 3-21 and 39-49.
12. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, pp. 3-21.
13. *Machiavelli and His Friends, Their Personal Correspondence* (Atkinsons & Sices eds.), letters 3, 22, 25, 54, 70, 78, 90, 91, 92, 107, 110, 112, 115, 121, 166-169, 178, 203, 214, 217, 211-213, 215-216, 218-237, 269-274, 278, 305.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Readings should be done FOR the session they are listed under, so the readings listed as 1b will be discussed in the second class of week 1.

1. Introduction
 - a. **Sept 29:** No Reading
 - b. **Oct 1:** Homer, *Iliad* (Robert Fagles translation), Book 1, Book 2 (through page 115); instead of reading you are encouraged to listen to the (available on the course Chalk website under “Course Material”) for all sections except Book 5. I highly recommend trying the audiobook for at least Books 1-2.
2. The End of Empire
 - a. **Oct 6:** Homer, *Iliad*, Book 5 (not included in audiobook), Book 9, Book 11 (pages 316-324 only), Book 14, (reading Book 15 is optional), Book 16. Also on electronic reserve: Plato, *Republic*, Book II 376c-end; Book V beginning to 456b.
 - b. **Oct 8:** Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, Books I-IV. Also on course electronic reserve: Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, Book IV.
3. Vikings
 - a. **Oct 13:** *Beowulf*, complete.
 - b. **Oct 15:** *The Poetic Edda*, read “The Seeress’s Prophecy,” “The Sayings of the High One,” “Vafthrudnir’s Sayings,” “Grimnir’s Sayings,” “Loki’s Quarrel,” “Baldr’s Dream” and “The List of Rig.” Also on e-reserve: Snorri Sturluson, *Prose Edda*, Prologue and beginning of “Deluding of Gylfi” (i.e. pp. 23- 47).
4. Medieval Life and Thought
 - a. **Oct 20** Jocelin of Brakelond, *Chronicle of the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds*.
 - b. **Oct 22:** PDF Readings in the “Course Material” part of the Chalk website: St. Anselm, “Ontological Proof of the Existence of God”; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, “Proofs of the Existence of God.” NOTE: this is a very short reading, but is some of the hardest stuff ever written in the history of European civilization, so take your time and read slowly and carefully
5. Medieval Tensions
 - a. **Oct 27:** In *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, letters 1-5 (*Historia calamitatum* and “Personal Letters”; most editions have that as pp. 3-92).
 - b. **Oct 29:** Jean de Joinville, *Life of St. Louis*.
6. Dante
 - a. **Nov 3:** Dante, *Inferno* (John Ciardi translation), Cantos I-XI
 - b. **Nov 5:** Dante, *Inferno* (John Ciardi translation), Cantos XII-XXXIII
7. Florence
 - a. **Nov 10:** *The Letters of Alessandra Strozzi*; e-reserve Boccaccio, *Decameron* (e-reserve): Book I Prologue (Black Death), Book 1 Story 1 (Cepperello), Book 1 Story 2 (Abraham and the Jew), Book III Story 10 (Putting the Devil Back in Hell) Book IV Story 2 (Archangel Gabriel), Book VI Story 10 (Fake Holy Relics), Author’s Epilogue. Warning: *Decameron* has upsetting sexual content.
 - b. **Nov 12:** Humanism: PDFs from the “Course Resources” part of the Chalk page: Petrarch’s “Italia Mia” and Letter to Homer (letters to Cicero optional; scroll past them to reach the letter to Homer). E-reserve: Marsilio Ficino, *Meditations on the*

Soul, pp. 3-21 and 39-49; Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, pp. 3-21.

8. Consequences and Critics of Humanism
 - a. **Nov 17:** Humanism and Machiavelli. From course documents, read *Machiavelli and His Friends, Their Personal Correspondence* (Atkinsons & Sices ed.) letters 3, 22, 25, 54, 70, 78, 90, 91, 92, 107, 110, 112, 115, 121, 166-169, 178, 203, 214, 217, 211-213, 215-216, 218-237, 269-274, 278, 305 (see handout for index).
 - b. **Nov 19:** Review *The Prince* (David Wootton translation recommended).
9. Reformation and New Worlds
 - a. **Nov 24:** Luther, *On Christian Liberty* (complete); Thomas More, *Utopia*, (short selection TBD).
 - b. **Nov 26 PROBABLY TO BE RESCHEDULED:** Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*.
10. New Worlds of the Mind
 - a. **Dec 1 PROBABLY TO BE RESCHEDULED:** Bacon, *New Atlantis*.
 - b. **Dec 3 PROBABLY TO BE RESCHEDULED:** Conclusion. No reading.

TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM DUE (by e-mail) by midnight on DECEMBER 9th