

HISTORY OF EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION I

Tues/Thurs 10:30 – 11:50 AM
Cobb Lecture Hall 107

HIST 13001-01
Winter Quarter 2017

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Office Hours: Tues 2-4 and Thurs 1:30-2:30
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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 a 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.

This version of European Civilization Part 1 will take two specific aspects of European culture as its themes: Magic, and Hierarchy. With primary source readings ranging from the Old Testament through the seventeenth century, we will explore how magic permeated Europe's pre-modern understanding of the world, universe, and society, overlapping with realms we would now call religion, medicine, and science. Alchemy, necromancy, demonology, angelology, theurgy, astrology, prophecy, conjuration, potions, charms and curses all expressed different aspects of the cosmos pre-modern societies believed they inhabited, and understanding them shows us much about how logic, argument, truth and morality evolved. We will also look at how hierarchy is central to the pre-modern understanding of the world, society, the afterlife, and also magic. From the various kinds of overlapping unfreedom practiced in daily life (patron-client relations, feudalism, aristocracy, chattel slavery) to the hierarchies of elements, plants, animals, souls, spirits and planets which dominated scientific and magical cosmologies, hierarchy permeated all aspects of the world pre-modern Europeans believed they lived in.

Writing will be another focus of the course, and written assignments will be creative writing rather than traditional academic writing. Extra credit writing exercises will be available to those students interested in further improving your writing skills. Becoming a great writer means a long apprenticeship, and I cannot teach you how to become a great writer in one quarter, but I can teach you how to teach yourself how to become a great writer, so you can continue honing your skill long after this class is over.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

45% 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 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.

35% Seven Letters:

Seven short written assignments are due on the Tuesdays of each week from Week 3 through Week 10. These must be 3-4 double-spaced pages in length (~1,000 to 1,300 words).

Rather than academic papers, these are creative writing projects: letters written from the perspective of one of the historical figures we are studying, addressed to another historical figure we are studying. For example, a student might write a letter from the perspective of a resident of the village near the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds to the abbot, from Petrarch to Boethius, or from Machiavelli to Marlowe's Doctor Faustus. These letters imitate real historical letters which figures wrote to their contemporaries, or which scholars like Petrarch wrote to each other or to their long-dead predecessors. Each letter worth 5% of your final grade.

FLEXIBILITY AND EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY: You may turn in a response paper in any of weeks 3-10. This means there are eight opportunities to turn in a paper, but you only need to write seven, so you may choose to skip any one of your choice. I recommend that you look over the requirements for your other courses, and plan to skip on a week you have an exam or paper due for another class. If you wish, instead of skipping one, you may write an extra letter (eight total) and I will drop the lowest grade.

All written work must be double-spaced and submitted in Size 12 Times New Roman font, or another serif font with similar page density, on standard sized paper with standard one inch margins, *without* gaps between the paragraphs or excessively broad spacing of the title and other preliminary information on the first page. If you prefer to have spaces between paragraphs, or to include a large header section on the first page, you must write an extra half page or more to make up for the empty space. No sans serif fonts.

20% Final Project (~10 pages) OR Final Take-Home Essay Exam (your choice):

Students may choose between a final project and a take-home essay exam.

Those who wish to do a project should propose a project to the professor. It could be a research paper, an attempt to (re)create a magical text or artifact as described in our textbook, writing more letters in the style of our weekly letter assignments (perhaps a correspondence with a classmate), or historical fiction.

For those who prefer to take an exam: The exam consists of two essays, written on your own with no time limit, submitted by e-mail. The questions are at the end of this syllabus.

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 one of the 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.
 - **To do more** wait a week and then reduce the SAME paper by half AGAIN to one quarter of its original length. This is the ultimate exercise in mastering concision.

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

If the cost of purchasing these books is a substantial financial burden for you, and you want help finding an alternative (library copies, borrowing books) speak to the instructor anytime—I’m happy to help. For those who are purchasing them, I encourage you to buy them at the Seminar Co-op (instead of Amazon) to support our great local bookstore.

1. *The Book of Magic*, edited by Brian Copenhaver (Penguin)
2. Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* (Penguin Classics: 978-0140447804)
3. *Beowulf* (J. R. R. Tolkien Translation: 978-0544442788)
4. *The Poetic Edda*, Carolyne Larrington translation (Oxford: 978-0199538386)
5. Jocelin of Brakelond, *Chronicle of the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds* (Oxford World’s Classics: 978-0199554935)
6. Jean de Joinville, *Life of St. Louis*, trans. Caroline Smith (Penguin: 978-0140449983)
7. *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise* (Penguin: 978-0140448993)
8. Boccaccio, *Decameron* (Norton, 0393350266)
9. Alessandra Macinighi negli Strozzi, *Selected Letters, Bilingual Edition*, trans. Heather Gregory (University of California Press: 978-0520203907)
10. Martin Luther, *On Christian Liberty* (Fortress Press)
11. Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* (any edition; Dover Thrift 0486282082)
12. Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (Penguin: 978-0140445626) <= you may want to share your copy with a friend; we aren’t reading much.

SPECIAL RESERVES:

1. Homer, *Iliad* (Robert Fagles translation) audiobook read by Derek Jacobi, on Chalk, Book 1, Book 2 (partial) and Book 14 (partial). 88 minutes of audio total.
2. Marlowe’s *Faustus*, Globe Theater production, DVD. On reserve in Regenstien.

COURSE PACKET (OR ELECTRONIC RESERVES):

The course packet will be available for sale in the Social Sciences Research Building downstairs services office. There may be a delay in the preparation of the packet, so the earlier readings will also be made available online (through the course's Chalk website). If you have trouble getting the packet, or the cost of the packet is burdensome, speak to the instructor about options to share or borrow one. All the readings in the packet are also on reserve in Regenstein, and/or can be made available as electronic reserves.

Contents of the course packet:

1. Timeline of Important Dates
2. Homer, *Iliad* (Robert Fagles translation) Books 1, 2 & 14.
3. Plato, *Republic*, Book II 376c-end; Book V beginning to 456b.
4. Pliny the Younger, letters concerning The Eruption of Vesuvius, a Haunted House, and the Practices of this New Religion of the Christians.
5. Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, Book IV.
6. Viking Timeline
7. Snorri Sturluson, *Prose Edda*, Prologue and "Deluding of Gylfi" through p. 47.
8. Anselm, "Ontological Proof of the Existence of God,"
9. Aquinas, "Proofs of the Existence of God."
10. Florence Timeline
11. Dante, *Inferno*, Canti I-III, XIV, and XX-XXII, John Ciardi translation with notes.
12. Petrarch, "Italia Mia" (poem).
13. Petrarch, Letter Selections, Letters to Contemporary Friends.
14. Petrarch, Letter selections, Letters to Ancient Friends.
15. Selection of Medici Letters, from Janet Ross, *Lives of the Early Medici as Told in Their Correspondence*.
16. Ficino, *Meditations on the Soul*, pp. 3-21 and 39-49.
17. *Machiavelli and His Friends, Their Personal Correspondence* (Atkinsons & Sices eds.), excerpts in five files (see also the Guide to Machiavelli's Letters):
 - a. Introduction and Notes
 - b. Machiavelli and His Son: letters 328 and 332
 - c. Machiavelli Plays a Prank on an Abbey: Letters 269-274
 - d. Machiavelli on Love and Sex: Letters 226-231, 236 and 238
 - e. Machiavelli's Political Life: Letters 22, 25, 69, 70, 78, 91, 92, 107, 110, 112, 115, 121, 166, 167, 169, 203, 211-213, 215-216, 222-224.
18. Martin Luther, three excerpts concerning witchcraft and magic.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Readings will be discussed on the day they are listed, so the readings listed as 1b (Jan 5th) should be read before that day, and will be discussed on Jan 5th.

1. Introduction: A World of Enchantment and Hierarchy
 - a. **January 3rd:** Letter of Alexander di Conio to Alessandra de Medici (in class)
 - b. **Jan 5:**
 - i. *The Book of Magic* “Introduction,” Section 1: “Study No Abomination: the Hebrew Bible and Apocrypha” (pp. 9-42) and Section 3: “Fire Priests, *Magoi* and *Mageia*” (pp. 77-97).
 - ii. Also on Chalk: Homer, *Iliad* (Robert Fagles translation) audiobook read by Derek Jacobi, Book 1, Book 2 (partial – Agamemnon’s Dream and the Prophecy of Ten Years) and Book 14 (partial – Hera deceives Zeus). *This is 88 minutes of audio total* available on our Chalk website. I strongly urge you to listen to the audio, but if you can’t, reading Fagles in print is ok.
 - iii. Also from the course pack: Plato, *Republic*, Book II 376c-end, and Book V beginning to 456b (14 pages total. Read AFTER you listen to the *Iliad*.)
2. The Cross-Pollination of Christian and Pagan
 - a. **Jan 10:**
 - i. *The Book of Magic* Section 2: “Power in the Name of Jesus: the Greek New Testament” (pp. 43-76), Section 4: “Drugs, Charms and Fair Words: Greco-Roman Antiquity” (pp. 99-162).
 - ii. Also from the course pack Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, Book IV.
 - iii. **No written assignment this week.**
 - b. **Jan 12:**
 - i. Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, Books I-IV
 - ii. *The Book of Magic* Section 5: “The Primal Mage and Sorcerer: Late Antiquity” (pp. 163-218).
 - iii. Also from the course pack Pliny the Younger, letters on the Eruption of Vesuvius, the Haunted House, and the Persecution of Christians. (6 pages)
3. A World of Ice and Fire (Vikings)
 - a. **Jan 17:**
 - i. *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.”
 - ii. Also from the course pack: Snorri Sturluson, *Prose Edda*, Prologue and beginning of “Deluding of Gylfi” (i.e. pp. 23- 47).
 - iii. You may want to start reading *Beowulf* this weekend, to get ahead.
 - iv. **First letter due:** Write either (A) a letter as from Pliny to a friend or to Trajan discussing some rumor of magic or experience of a magical ceremony, or (B) a letter from Boethius to either Marcus Aurelius, Plato, or Homer. Alternately you may write a dialog between philosophers instead of a letter—if so it should be five pages; dialogs have fewer words

6. A City Famed in Hell

a. **Feb 7:**

- i. *The Book of Magic* Section 7 “The Arts of Magic That Astonish Us: The Middle Ages” (pp. 271-340).
- ii. Also from the course pack: Dante, *Inferno*, Canti I-III, XIV and XX-XXII (John Ciardi translation, with notes. If you want to read a paper copy instead of the course pack one, use the Ciardi edition. You need its notes!)
- iii. **Fourth letter due:** Write as a nun in the nunnery where Heloise is abbess. You have just read her letters to and from Abelard. Write your own letter to Abelard in response. (If you wish, a pair of you could collaborate, and one could write to Abelard while the other writes a response as Abelard.)

b. **February 2:**

- i. *The Letters of Alessandra Strozzi*, complete.
- ii. From the course pack: Machiavelli letters “Machiavelli on Love and Sex” (Letters 226-231, 236, 238) AND “Machiavelli and His Son” (328 and 332).
- iii. From the course pack: Twelve Medicean Letters, a selection from Janet Ross, *Lives of the Early Medici as Told in Their Correspondence*.

7. Desperate Measures

a. **Feb 14:** Boccaccio, *Decameron* (Selections). *Warning: the *Decameron* depicts sexual exploitation. If you would be uncomfortable reading about this, skip Book III story 10. Speak with the instructor if you have questions or concerns.

- i. Book I Prologue (Black Death)
- ii. Book I Story 1 (Saint Cepperello)
- iii. Book I Story 2 (Abraham and the Jew)
- iv. Book III Story 10 (Putting the Devil Back in Hell)
- v. Book IV Story 2 (Archangel Gabriel)
- vi. Book VI Story 10 (The Angel’s Feather)
- vii. Book VIII Story 6 (Calandrino and the Pig)
- viii. Book VIII Story 7 (The Jilted Scholar)
- ix. Book VIII Story 8 (Adultery Among Friends)
- x. Book VIII Story 9 (Master Simone “Goes the Course”).
- xi. Book IX Story II (Nuns Having Fun)
- xii. Book IX Story III (Calandrino’s Pregnancy)
- xiii. Book IX Story V (The Enchanted Scroll)
- xiv. Author’s Epilogue.

i. **Fifth letter due:** Write as a member or associate of the Strozzi or Medici families as they vie for power. You may write to request a favor, offer a service, advise someone, or report an event. You may wish to join with a partner to write a pair of letters, the second responding to the first.

b. **Feb 16:**

- i. *The Book of Magic* Section 8 “Ancient Wisdom and Folly: The Earlier Renaissance” (pp. 337-398).
- ii. Also from the course pack: Petrarch’s “Italia Mia” (single poem)
- iii. Also from the course pack: Petrarch Letter Selections (24 pages)
- iv. Also course pack: Ficino, *Meditations on the Soul*, pp. 3-21, 39-49.

8. Crisis into Crisis

a. **Feb 21:**

- i. *The Book of Magic* Section 9 “Ancient Wisdom Modernized: the Later Renaissance” (pp. 391-440).
- ii. Before reading the letters (listed below), go to the blog www.exurbe.com and read the Machiavelli series (linked at the right)
- iii. Also from the course pack Machiavelli letters “Machiavelli’s Political Life” letters 22, 25, 69, 70, 78, 91, 92, 107, 110, 112, 115, 121, 166, 167, 169, 203, 211-213, 215-216, 222-224 (see the introduction in the course pack for helpful notes on who people are!).
- iv. **Sixth letter due:** Three choices. Either (A) write a letter as Petrarch to one of our other authors (Heloise, Boethius, Snorri Sturlson), or (B) write as Ficino or Pico, either offering philosophical “medicine” (or magic?) to a contemporary (a Medici perhaps?), or writing to a predecessor in the style of Petrarch’s letters to ancients (possibly to Petrarch himself?). Alternately (C) Rather than a letter, write a short story in the style of the Decameron tales, using some element of magic we have studied in class.

b. **Feb 23:**

- i. Luther, *On Christian Liberty* (complete)
- ii. Also from the course pack Luther, Selections Concerning Witchcraft

9. The Depths of Human Evil

- a. **Feb 28: Special:** watch Marlowe’s *Faustus*, Globe Theater production on DVD. It is on reserve, and we will schedule group showings.
- b. **Seventh letter due:** Write as Machiavelli to a friend (or an earlier author, like Petrarch’s letters to ancients). You may want to comment on other letters, or a text we have read, imagining that Machiavelli has just been reading Homer, or Boethius, or *Beowulf*, or even Luther. You may want to voice what you think Machiavelli’s feelings would be about a particular magical practice.
- c. **March 2:** Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, pp. 5-56.

10. Setting Aside All Authority

- a. **March 7:** *The Book of Magic* Section 10 “Magic Seen, Heard and Mocked” (pp. 453-512) and Section 11 “Magic in an Age of Science” (pp. 513-572).
- b. **Eighth letter due:** Write to Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus. You may write as anyone we have studied (Machiavelli, Ficino, Lorenzo de Medici, Heloise, Boethius, Snorri Sturlson, the monks at St. Edmunds...) Imagine that you are writing to Faustus either (A) at the beginning of the play, when he is trying to decide whether or not to sign the contract with Mephistopheles, or (B) at the end on his last night before the contract expires.

The Final Project or Final Essay Exam (your choice) due by e-mail March 14th. (After midnight on the 14th is acceptable, but they must be in my inbox when I get up on March 15th.)

If you choose to take an exam, instead of doing a final project, you must write both essays. Each should be about 1,500 words long. No footnotes, citations or bibliography are expected (just as if you were writing this as an in-class closed book exam on paper) but you may include short quotations if you wish. The language should be formal, with correct grammar etc., but (as with the letters) the voice and structure should be appropriate to the genre.

Essay 1:

Thinking of the letters Petrarch wrote to Cicero and Homer, write a letter addressed to one of the authors or major figures we studied in this class (i.e. Homer, Achilles, Beowulf, Abbot Samson, Heloise, Petrarch, Alessandra Strozzi, Ficino, Doctor Faustus, etc.). Your letter may and should be personal, and emotion and strong opinions are welcome. You may discuss anything you like, but you should focus on the following issues:

- How you personally feel about the addressee, her or his life, ideas, accomplishments,
- How the addressee is remembered now, why we consider the addressee important, why we study the addressee now,
- What has happened to the addressee's works, legacy, family, homeland, whatever she or he cared about and worked toward,
- How you personally judge the addressee, your praise, criticisms, advice,
- Information about the future which you think the addressee would really want to know or be strongly affected by, things you think would be a consolation, or a shock,
- Your general opinions on the effect the addressee had on the world, considering *both* later *and* earlier developments, and placing the addressee in long-term context.
- The addressee's place in the long, evolving continuity of history. Remember, odd as it is to say it, that you know more about history than many of these figures, or at least you know different things. Most of the people you might write to did not have the opportunity to read *Beowulf*, *the Poetic Edda*, *the Chronicle of Bury St. Edmunds*, or even the *Iliad*. They knew little about the realities of the ancient world, or distant regions in their own time, and they certainly did not have the benefit of a synthetic long-term history course in the age of statistics and critical reasoning. You have as many new and surprising things to say to your addressee about her or his past as you do about her or his future, so make certain to devote a good portion of your letter to the parts of history that came before your figure lived, especially if you choose to write to someone from the later centuries of our syllabus (i.e. Pico, Luther or Bacon). If you choose to write to someone very early (Homer, Agamemnon, Beowulf, Snorri Sturlson) then, of course, you may spend more of your time discussing that figure's future. If you write to someone from the middle of our syllabus (Heloise, Dante) then you should spend approximately equal amounts of time discussing earlier and later periods.

Remember to keep in mind the huge gulf of perspective between the addressee and yourself, and to describe future *and past* events in ways you think the addressee could understand and relate to. The best letters will draw broadly on your knowledge of these thinkers from lecture and readings, and will reflect on how the addressee's world was a different world from our own.

Essay 2:

Right now, the new things you met in this course, the alien minds and foreign time periods you encountered and the perspectives they opened up for you, are fresh, vivid, and at their most powerful. Five years from now, you will be moving on in your life path, working to launch your career, to complete grad school or training, to shape and strengthen your family and friendships, choosing between different opportunities, and finding the causes which will become important focuses of your life's work. At that time you will be surrounded by distractions, deadlines, fatigue, people counting on you, tasks to face; the things you learned in this course will still be with you but quiet, half invisible, like a picture hanging on the wall that's been there so long you don't really notice it anymore. Write a letter addressed to yourself five years from now, in which you remind yourself of the things you learned in this course which were most powerful, important, which changed the way you think about history, and which you want your future self, five years from now, to remember as you carry forward. Your essay may contain advice to yourself if you wish, but above all it should be a synthesis of what you learned and how it changed your ways of thinking. This letter should not be a repetitive summary going text by text and regurgitating the central points, but should focus on your overall ideas and feelings about what was valuable and important, and may treat any given text only in passing or as a quick example as you concentrate on the big issues.

(You may want to program your calendar to e-mail you five years from now to remind you to reread this letter, to reflect on this moment of contact between your present and future self.)

GUIDELINES FOR BOTH ESSAYS:

While in letter form, these essays are intended to test your comprehensive knowledge of the first half of the European Civilization sequence. The best essays will refer to many or nearly all of the texts we read in this class (I will count, and will subtract points if you omit too many, but I do not expect you to use every single author; it is OK if you use an author in just one essay and not the other, you don't have to use them all in both). The best essays will also discuss all the periods we covered, key differences between them, and the broad themes discussed in class. A good essay will not read like a rambling checklist in which you have gone text-by-text to check off all the authors without any real flow. Instead you should let your ideas guide you, and use sources naturally as they come up to illustrate and inform your points, drawing upon them as evidence or examples.

You may briefly bring in sources and issues from outside of class if one comes up as you are writing and feels central to your thoughts, but, if you choose do this, I urge you to make it brief; you need as much space as possible to treat the texts and themes from this course, and you could easily drown them out if you let yourself plunge too deeply into outside material. Better to err on the side of caution, so you don't take valuable word count away from the part you are being evaluated on.

Remember above all that concision is a virtue. You have only 1,500-2,000 words for each essay to synthesize and convey a huge amount of material, and the more ideas you pack in the stronger your essay will be, and the better your grade. Review your prose carefully to make sure you have stripped away all the padding and extraneous verbiage and that every paragraph is densely filled with ideas. Often the strongest essay will result if you write the essay to be 2,500 to 3,000 words at first, then sleep on it and go back a few days later to strip the essay down, removing extraneous material and focusing in on the most important parts.