

HIST 305: The Renaissance
George Mason University, Fall 2011
MW 12:00-1:15 p.m. in Fine Arts Building B110

Instructor: Mack P. Holt
Office: Robinson B 226
Office Hours: MW 10:00-11:45 a.m. and by appointment
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Required reading:

Craig Kallendorf, ed., *Humanist Educational Treatises*
Kenneth Bartlett, ed., *The Civilization of the Italian Renaissance*, 2nd ed.
Benjamin Kohl and Ronald Witt, eds., *The Earthly Republic*
Baldasar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*
Christine de Pisan, *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*
Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange*
Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*
Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses on Livy*

Schedule of assignments (reading to be completed by the beginning of the week):

Week 1 (August 29-31): Kallendorf, vii-131.
Week 2 (Sept. 7, no class Sept. 5): Kallendorf, 133-157; Bartlett, xix-60, 183-210
Week 3 (Sept. 12-14): Kohl & Witt, 3-78; Bartlett, 65-95 & 220-227
Week 4 (Sept. 19-21): Kohl & Witt, 121-75 and 231-322
Week 5 (Sept. 26-28): Bartlett, 97-109, 157-181, & 279-307; **1st essay due September 28**
Week 6 (Oct. 3-5): Castiglione, Books, 1 and 2
Week 7 (Oct. 11-12): Castiglione, Book 4; Bartlett, 273-279
(Note: No class on Monday, Oct.10, as Mon. classes meet on Tues. this week.)
Week 8 (Oct. 17-19): **Mid-term exam Monday, Oct. 17**; Bartlett, 125-155
Week 9 (Oct. 24-26): Kohl & Witt, 179-228; Castiglione, Bk 3
Week 10 (Oct. 31-Nov. 2): Pisan, 35-89 & 118-180
Week 11 (Nov. 7-9): Crosby, 1-121
Week 12 (Nov. 14-16): Crosby, 122-219
Week 13 (Nov. 21): Machiavelli, *Prince* (entire); **2nd essay due Nov. 21**
(Note: No class on Wednesday, Nov. 23, Thanksgiving holiday.)
Week 14 (Nov. 28-30): Machiavelli, *Discourses*, 97-316 (Book 1, ch. 1-60, Book 2, ch. 1-15)
Week 15 (Dec. 5-7): Machiavelli, *Discourses*, 334-351, 385-432, 473-528 (Book 2, ch. 19-23, Book 3, ch. 1-9, 24-35, 40-49)

FINAL EXAM: Monday, December 19, 10:30 a.m.-1:15 p.m.

Goals of the course:

1. To introduce students to the most recent research on the European Renaissance of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and early sixteenth centuries and to help them understand the major issues and debates among contemporary historians.
2. To help students understand that historical reconstructions of the past—which is what we call History—are not necessarily the same thing as everything that happened in the past. History, which has to be constructed and put in a narrative form, is thus an interpretation of the past.
3. To help students also understand that historical truth is neither absolute nor arbitrary. That is, although there is no single fixed historical truth, all historical interpretations are not equally valid.

Writing assignments and exams:

There will be two exams, a mid-term exam on Monday, October 17, and a final exam (which will only cover material since the mid-term) on Monday, December 19. Both exams will be essay type, but more will be said about the exams in class. A study guide for each exam will also be handed out in class. There will also be two short essays (5-8 pp. typed and double-spaced) to be written outside class. Topics are outlined below, and they will be due at the beginning of class on September 28 and November 21. The assignments for these essays will be thoroughly discussed in class, and they should be handed in on time in hard copy (not electronically). Late papers will be accepted, but they will be penalized, usually one full letter grade for each calendar day late unless there is a valid and documented excuse (such as an extended illness). Both outside essays must be completed to get credit for the course. And finally, there may be some unannounced in-class writing assignments if it seems that students are not keeping up with the reading. These will be averaged in with the class participation portion of the final grade.

Attendance:

All students are expected to attend every class meeting, as you are responsible for everything covered in class. If you must miss class, you do not need to inform me. You should, however, find out from someone who was there what was covered in the class you missed. Class participation is important, and you cannot participate if you are absent. This is especially important on days of class discussion, all of which will be announced well in advance. The roll will be called promptly at 12:00 noon, so if you are not present when the roll is called, you will be marked absent.

Grading:

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|---------------------|-----|
| Class participation | 20% |
| Two essays | 40% |
| Mid-term exam | 20% |
| Final exam | 20% |

Please note: I reserve the right to weight the final exam more than 20% (and the mid-term exam correspondingly less than 20%) if you perform significantly better on the final than you do on the mid-term exam.

Class rules:

- * Come to class on time and come prepared.
- * Eating and drinking are not allowed in the classroom.
- * Use of the Internet and cell phones are not allowed during class (no email, texting, etc.).
- * Any form of plagiarism or cheating must be reported to the university Honor Committee.

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FIRST ESSAY ASSIGNMENT: Due in class on Wednesday, September 28, 2011

Humanist Educational Treatises

Based on a careful reading of Pier Paolo Vergerio's *The Character and Studies of a Free-Born Youth*, Leonardo Bruni's *The Study of Literature*, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini's *The Education of Boys*, and Battista Guarino's *A Program of Teaching and Learning*, you are to write an essay of 5-8 pp. (double-spaced with normal margins and fonts) answering all the following questions.

1. What subjects made up the humanist curriculum, and how was it different from the medieval curriculum?
2. What impact did the humanist curriculum have on Renaissance education?
3. Who made up the students of humanist learning?
4. And what did this curriculum prepare students to do?

All four questions should be integrated into one essay. Do **not** divide your essay up into four separate essay questions. You should document your essays with numerous references to the texts in order to support your conclusions. Although you can use formal footnotes or endnotes if you wish, you can simply put page numbers in parentheses if you are using the class edition. Hard copies of all essays will be due at the beginning of class on Wednesday, September 28. They should be written in correct and elegant English. Remember that there is no difference between style and content: how you say something is part of the message you are sending. Late papers without a documented excuse approved by me in advance will be penalized one full letter grade for each calendar day late. No essays will be accepted after the end of class on December 7, 2011.

PLEASE NOTE: You must turn in this essay in order to get credit for the course.

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SECOND ESSAY ASSIGNMENT: Due Monday, November 21, 2011

Digital Research on the Internet: Florence *Catasto* of 1427-29

Thoroughly explore the following web site, which is a digital version of the *Catasto*, or census, taken in the Renaissance city of Florence in 1427-29. It lists every head of household by name, trade, neighborhood, real property holdings, amount of tax assessment, age, number of children, animals owned, etc. In other words, this document provides a very detailed overview of the socio-economic make-up of Renaissance Florence, from the rich and famous such as the Medici family, right down to the poorest beggar. First, thoroughly explore the web site making sure you examine all the links:

<http://www.stg.brown.edu/projects/catasto/overview.html>

After exploring the site, you will want to print out the Codebook of the *Catasto*, as you will need this to decipher your data (it's located on the "**Search the Catasto**" link). Now you are ready to get started:

1. Go to the link listing all the family names (last names) in the city. Select one family with at least 15 different households listed on the *Catasto* (there are several dozen such family names to choose from on the list).
2. Then go to the link "**Search the Catasto with a form-based interface to the SQL server.**" Now type in the family name you have chosen in the top right-hand field. Leave all the other fields blank.
3. Now select (highlight) *all* the variables listed under "Return the following fields." Make sure that "name" appears in the "Sort by" box, and that "patronymic" appears in the "Sub-sort by" box. Limit the result set to 60 records (very few families have more than 60 households anyway). Then click on "**Submit.**" You should get a huge table, listing each head of household on a separate line. You'll need the Codebook to decode many of the variables.
4. You should also go to the "**On-line Tratte of Officeholders**" link (found among "Related Resources"). Find out as much as you can about your family members from this large database (types and numbers of offices they held, when they held them, etc.). If your family held any civic offices in Florence, you might be able to put together a basic family tree by combining the information in the two databases.

Analyze carefully the data you have retrieved from the *Catasto* and the *Tratte*. You are to write a 5-8 pp. essay (typed and double-spaced with normal margins and type font) that

gives as detailed a picture of your chosen family as possible. Make sure you answer all the following questions in your essay, integrating them into one coherent essay:

1. Where did your family live in the city?
2. How many owned rather than rented their property? Did they own any animals?
3. What trades or occupations did they practice?
4. How large were the households in this family?
5. Were they wealthy or poor? How can you tell? How did their wealth compare to the rest of the city? To the rest of their neighborhood (Location)?
6. Were they young or old?
7. How many households were headed by women? How were their households different from those headed by men in the family?
8. How many were officeholders and how long had they held these offices?
9. How important was this family, do you think, to the city in terms of wealth and status?
10. What did you learn from this web site that you could not get from just reading a book or article about Renaissance Florence, or just by Googling "Renaissance Florence"?

Hard copies of all essays will be due at the beginning of class on Monday, November 21. They should be written in correct and elegant English. Remember that there is no difference between style and content: how you say something is part of the message you are sending. Late papers without a documented excuse approved by me in advance will be penalized one full letter grade for each calendar day late. No essays will be accepted after the end of class on December 7, 2011.

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