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21H.311 The Renaissance, 1300-1600
Fall 2004

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21H.311: THE RENAISSANCE, 1300-1600

Class Information. The class meets Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:30 to 4 PM. The instructor is Jeff Ravel.

Subject Description. The "Renaissance" as a phenomenon in European history is best understood as a series of social, political, and cultural responses to an intellectual trend which began in Italy in the fourteenth century. This intellectual tendency, known as humanism, or the *studia humanitatis*, was at the heart of developments in literature, the arts, the sciences, religion and government for almost three hundred years. In this class, we will highlight the history of humanism, but we will also study religious reformations, high politics, the agrarian world, and European conquest and expansion abroad in the period.

Subject Requirements. Attendance and class participation is mandatory. There will be a cumulative final exam at the end of the semester. In addition, students will take a map quiz, write six two-page papers, and one eight to ten-page paper due on 12/6. I will hand out instructions for these assignments later in the term. Each assignment will be weighted as follows in the calculation of the final grade, although these calculations will also take into account improved performance during the course of the semester:

- Class Participation: 30 points
- Two-Page Papers: 10 points each (six papers total)
- Map Quiz: 10 points
- Long Paper: 40 points
- Final Exam: 60 points
- **TOTAL: 200 points**

Required Reading. The following books are available for purchase at the MIT Bookstore; they should also be on reserve in the Hayden Library. There is also a Course Reader (CR), available for purchase at CopyTech. If you want more background reading on this period in European history, consult Lynn Hunt, *et al. The Challenge of the West*, on reserve in the Humanities Library.

- Rice & Grafton, *The Foundations of Early Modern Europe, 1460-1559*, 2nd Edition. (RG)
- Ross & McLaughlin, *The Portable Renaissance Reader* (RR)
- Emmanuel Leroy-Ladurie, *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error*
- David Herlihy, *The Black Death and the Transformation of the West*
- Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*
- Machiavelli, *The Prince*
- N. Z. Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*
- Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Class Meetings and Reading Assignments

Week One

9/6. Introduction: The History of Renaissance History

Week Two

9/11. Geography, Demography, Global Trade, 1300-1600

- Leroy-Ladurie, *Montaillou*, 3-135.

9/13. The World of the Peasantry ca. 1300

- Leroy-Ladurie, *Montaillou*, 139-230.

Week Three

9/18. The Black Death

- Herlihy, *The Black Death and the Transformation of the West*, 1-81
- CR, Boccaccio, Introduction to *The Decameron*
- **Map Quiz**

9/20. The Discarded Image

- RR, 580-3
- **First Paper Due**

Week Four

9/25. **Student Holiday – No Class**

9/27. The Beginnings of Humanism in Fourteenth-Century Italy

- RG, 1-10, 77-90
- RR, 120-30
- CR, Petrarch, *The Ascent of Mount Ventoux*
- **Second Paper Due**

Week Five

10/2. Civic Humanism in Early Fifteenth-Century Italy and beyond

- CR, *Introduction* and Bruni's *Panegyric to the City of Florence*
- RR, 476-9

10/4. Art and Culture in Fifteenth-Century Italy

- RG, 90-114
- RR, 140-5, 527-40
- Baxandall, 1-27

Week Six

10/9. Columbus Day – No Class

10/11. A Visit to the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University

- Baxandall, 29-153
- **Third Paper due**

Week Seven

10/16. Burgundy and Late Medieval Politics in the North

- RR, 185-202

10/18. The New Monarchies & The Invasion of Italy

- RG, 110-45
- RR, 279-94

Week Eight

10/23. Politics Reinvented

- Machiavelli, *The Prince*, all

10/25. Christian Humanism in the North

- RR, 80-6, 401-8, 717-21
- CR, Erasmus, *Julius Excluded From Heaven*, all.

Week Nine

10/30. Martin Luther and the Protestant Challenge

- RG, 146-77
- RR, 677-703.

11/1. The Age of Reformations

- RG, 178-202
- RR, 234-41
- CR, Lyndal Roper, "Sexual Utopianism in the German Reformation"
- **Fourth Paper Due**

Week Ten

11/6. Sixteenth-Century Peasants I

- Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*, 1-61

11/8. Sixteenth-Century Peasants II

- Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre*, 62-125
- **Fifth Paper Due**

Week Eleven

11/13. 1543: The Copernican Revolution

- RG, 18-26
- RR, 584-611

11/15. 1543: The Vesalian Revolution

- RR, 552-73
- **Visit to the Dibner Library**
- **Sixth Paper Due**

Week Twelve

11/20. Individual consultations with instructor

11/22. Review

Week Thirteen

11/27. Portuguese Expansion

- RG, 32-38

11/29. Spanish Exploration

- RG, 38-44
- RR 146-57

Week Fourteen

12/4. Spanish Conquest

- CR, Burkholder and Johnson, *Colonial Latin America*, 3rd ed., 41-50
- CR, Stuart B. Schwartz, ed. *Victors and Vanquished*, 182-213

12/6. Long Paper Due

Week Fifteen

12/11. Scientists, Magicians, and Humanists

- CR, John Henry, "Magic and Science in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries"

12/13. Literary Magic

- Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, all

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF FINAL EXAM TBA.