THE RENAISSANCE, 1300-1600

Subject Description. “Renaissance” is the French word for rebirth; in this class, we will ask what was “reborn” in Europe from 1300 to 1600. At the end of the term, we will evaluate the success of this rebirth ca. 1600. Along the way we will consider Renaissance arts and letters, the impact of religious reformation on theology and politics, the place of women in the Renaissance, and sixteenth-century European interaction with the peoples of the Americas.

Subject Requirements. Attendance and class participation is mandatory. Students will take a map quiz, write four three-page papers, and prepare a final project and make an oral presentation on it. I will hand out instructions for these assignments later in the term. There is no midterm or final exam in this subject. 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Map Quiz</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Three-Page Papers</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral Report on Final Project</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>75</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>200</td>
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Required Reading. The five following books are available for purchase at the MIT Bookstore; they should also be on reserve in the Hayden Library. Some readings, indicated by an asterisk (*), will be available on the class website as e-reserves. If you want more background reading on this period in European history, consult Lynn Hunt, et al. *The Making of the West: Peoples and Cultures*, on reserve in the Humanities Library.

Francesco Petrarch, *The Secret* (Bedford/St Martin’s edition, edited by Carol E. Quillen)
Antonio Manetti, *The Fat Woodworker* (Italica Press ed.)
Bartolomé de las Casas, *The Devastation of the Indies* (Johns Hopkins ed.)
**Statement on Cheating and Plagiarism.** The web now hosts many sites which offer college-level papers of varying quality on a variety of topics. I am well acquainted with these sites, and with others that offer detection services to professors. Buying a paper and submitting it as your own work is cheating. Copying sections from someone else’s print or online work into your own without an acknowledgement is plagiarism. MIT has strict policies against both activities that I will enforce. For the appropriate MIT definitions and policies, visit the following websites. If you are uncertain about what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, please contact me before submitting the work in question.

- MIT Online Writing and Communication Center: [http://web.mit.edu/writing](http://web.mit.edu/writing)
- Avoiding Plagiarism: [http://web.mit.edu/writing/Citation/plagiarism.html](http://web.mit.edu/writing/Citation/plagiarism.html) (Be sure to check out the links to sites at the University of Toronto and Texas A & M.)

**Class Meetings and Reading Assignments**

**Week One**

Sept. 3.  Introduction: Was it a Renaissance?

**Week Two**

Sept. 8. Historians Debate the Renaissance


3) OPTIONAL: Read more Burckhardt at http://www.boisestate.edu/courses/hy309/docs/burckhardt/burckhardt.html

Sept. 10. The Discarded Image

1) RG, 18-26

2) *Excerpts from Nicholas Oresme, Nicholas of Cusa, and Nicholas Copernicus, in The Portable Renaissance Reader, 580-93.

3) **Map Quiz**

**Week Three**

Sept. 15. The Beginnings of Humanism in Fourteenth-Century Italy

1) RG, 1-10, 77-89

2) *Francesco Petrarch, “The Ascent of Mount Ventoux”
3) Francesco Petrarch, *The Secret*, 1-70, 149-58

Sept. 17. Petrarch
1) Francesco Petrarch, *The Secret*, 70-148

**Week Four**

Sept. 22. NO CLASS (Institute Holiday)

Sept. 24. NO CLASS
1) First Short Paper Due

**Week Five**

Sept. 29. Manuscript and Print, 1450-1550
2) *Houghton Library. MS Typ 041. Chronique du monde depuis la création, et des rois de France*
3) *Houghton Library. MS typ 555. C'est la Bible hystoriale*
4) *Anonymous, Here begynneth a mery gest and a true howe Iohan splynter made his testament (1520 printed work) [EEBO online version]*
5) [optional] *Anthony Grafton, “The Humanist as Reader,” in *A History of Reading in the West*, eds. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (Massachusetts, 1999), 179-212

Oct. 1. Visit to The Houghton Library, Harvard University

**Week Six**

1) RG, 90-104
2) Antonio Manetti, *The Fat Woodworker*, all
4) In-class video on fifteenth-century Florentine architecture and art
Oct. 8. Renaissance Perspective: Another Illusion?
1) *Martin Kemp, “Linear Perspective from Brunelleschi to Leonardo,” in The Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat (Yale, 1990), 8-52.

Week Seven

Oct. 13. NO CLASS – COLUMBUS DAY
1) **Second Short Paper Due**

Oct. 15. Late Medieval Politics: Italy and Burgundy
1) RG, 110-145
2) *Backgrounds: Early Modern Italian Renaissance (a web site with an introduction to fifteenth and sixteenth century Italian peninsular politics)

Week Eight

Oct. 20. Early Modern Politics: Spain and Its Dominions
1) Connell edition of The Prince, 1-68
2) *”Niccolò Machiavelli,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (online)

Oct. 22. Machiavelli
1) Connell edition of The Prince, 68-123

Week Nine

Oct. 27. Women and Gender in the Renaissance

Oct. 29. Women and Art in Italy

Nov. 1 (Saturday), 1 PM.
1) Visit to the Isabella Stewart Gardener Museum to see “The Triumph of Marriage: Painted Cassoni of the Renaissance” (Guest Speaker and Co-Curator of the exhibit: Professor Cristelle Baskins, Tufts University)
2) Third Short Paper Due

Week Ten

Nov. 3. Catholic Renewal

1) RG, 146-52
2) *Excerpts from various writings of Erasmus of Rotterdam, in The Portable Renaissance Reader, 80-6, 401-8, 717-21

Nov. 5. Protestant Revolution

1) RG, 153-77
2) *The debate over free will between Erasmus and Luther, in The Portable Renaissance Reader, 677-703

Week Eleven

Nov. 10. NO CLASS – VETERANS’ DAY

Nov. 12. The Suppression of Peasants and Radical Reformers
2) *Documents regarding the German Peasants’ War, in The Portable Renaissance Reader, 234-41
4) Final Project Prospectus Due
**Week Twelve**

Nov. 17. New World: Exploration and Conquest

1) RG, 32-44


Nov. 19. New World: Exploitation?


**Week Thirteen**

Nov. 24. Individual Consultations with Instructor

**Fourth Short Paper Due**

Nov. 26. Individual Consultations with Instructor

**Week Fourteen**

Dec. 1. The Late Sixteenth Century: Skepticism, Magic, and Science

1) *Michel de Montaigne, “On Cannibals.***

Dec. 3. Oral Reports

**Week Fifteen**

Dec. 8. Oral reports

Dec. 10. Historians Sum Up


3) **Final Projects Due**