

## **HIST 233: Renaissance, Reformations, (Revolutions), and Explorations**

Grinnell College, Spring 2 2021 (February 1<sup>st</sup>-March 24<sup>th</sup>)

M-F @ 7:00-8:50 p.m. CST

<https://grinnellcollege.webex.com/grinnellcollege/j.php?MTID=ma666b74c432cdc117c8f269bfc04690a>

### **Syllabus subject to change**

Assistant Professor Catherine Chou ([choucath@grinnell.edu](mailto:choucath@grinnell.edu))

Office Hours: M-F 9:00-10:00 p.m. CST, or by appointment

### **Course Description**

Why is it worth studying the history of early modern Europe in our globalized and multicultural present? It used to be that a course covering this geographic and chronological era would take for granted that several well-defined events had ushered in a rational, secular modernity, first for 'the West' and then for 'the rest' – the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and the beginnings of overseas empire.

As historians began experimenting with new methodologies, however, and calling into question entrenched narratives, the stakes for examining the history of early modern Europe shifted as well. Recasting events of world significance as contingent and contested processes both diminished their distinctiveness and recuperated the agency of a greater variety of participants. These historiographical shifts also had the effect of revealing that Europe's status as the origin point of modernity is less incontrovertible fact than a story developed by both early modern men and women, and contemporary scholars, looking to make sense of a rapidly-expanding and more interconnected world. To study early modern Europe in the twenty-first century is to understand why history built around the idea of inevitable progress, led by the West, was so appealing and durable, and why it has proven difficult and perhaps undesirable to construct a single cohesive narrative in its place.

This course will be split into four major units (Renaissance, Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and the 'Age of Discovery'), each pairing a narrative of progress and definitive breaking from the past with narratives of gradual, contested, and multifaceted change. Along the way, students will learn how historians build on and challenge preexisting scholarship, about the impact of centering one set of sources over another, the ways in which archival discoveries and digital humanities tools can expand the available source base, and how they can enter into an ongoing set of debates by proposing new avenues and questions for research.

### **Required Books and Readings**

Textbook

1. Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Early Modern Europe, 1450-1789* (Cambridge University Press, Second Edition)

Available via Burling:

[https://grinnell.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01GCL\\_INST/1ek0oud/alma991000463989704641](https://grinnell.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01GCL_INST/1ek0oud/alma991000463989704641)

### **A note on the readings**

The Wiesner-Hanks textbook is intended as a supplement to our lectures and discussions, as well as an additional resource as you complete your writing assignments. **All of the other primary and secondary**

**sources are uploaded to P-web in the form of a course reader.** Whenever possible, I have tried to find substantive primary sources for us to read, sometimes in the original language and format. We will practice learning to read – to our eyes! – funny and irregular spelling, densely printed type, unfamiliar formatting, etc.

Week 1: February 1<sup>st</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>

Week 2: February 8<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>

Week 3: February 15<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>

Week 4: February 22<sup>nd</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>

Week 5: March 1<sup>st</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>

Week 6: March 8<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>

Week 7: March 15<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>

Week 7.5 (finals period): March 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>

### **Assignments and Grading Breakdown**

Participation: 20%, including attendance and daily analyses of class readings

Scaffolding assignments for final project: 10% each

**#1 (due 02/24)**

**#2 (due 03/09)**

Final Exam: 30% **(due 03/10)**

Final Project: 30% **(due 03/23)**

Scale for individual assignments:

A: 97%      B: 85%      C: 75%

A-: 91%      B-: 81%      D: 62%

B+: 88%      C+: 78%      F: 50%

Scale for final grades:

A: 95%+      B: 84-86%      C: 70%-76%

A-: 90-94%      B-: 80-83%      D: 60-69%

B+: 87-90%      C+: 77-80%      F: Below 60%

### **Attendance and Participation: 20%**

Your success in this course will depend on your willingness to engage thoughtfully with the material and each other, in your conversation and your note-taking. We will learn a great deal from one another if we come to class prepared, with open minds, ready to contribute and to take intellectual risks. Together, we will practice developing incisive questions, identifying significant passages, tracing common themes, providing evidentiary support for scholarly arguments, and responding productively to disagreements and critiques.

Additional ground rules and guidance for class:

1. For each synchronous class session, please answer the questions posted on the class Google Doc in your own individual Google Doc (please grant me access to it as well):

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CUXG\\_nBrI\\_CHTBv5BY7\\_75iU7pMFhzLvD\\_oPKFSPMhk/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CUXG_nBrI_CHTBv5BY7_75iU7pMFhzLvD_oPKFSPMhk/edit?usp=sharing)

2. My strong preference is that you keep your cameras on during the class discussions (but if you are having a low-bandwidth day, either literally or figuratively, please just let me know!)

3. You are allowed one excused absence for any synchronous class session without penalty, as long as you notify me ahead of time. To save time for the final project, we will only have readings and discussions for Weeks 1-5. **Therefore, it is very important that you attend each session.**

### **Final exam (30%), due 03/10**

There will be one exam for the class, after we have finished all the readings for the term. The exam is open book, so take notes in class and as you read! You may not, however, consult with one another or use online resources aside from what is posted on P-web or the class Google Docs.

### **Final Project – Design a ‘short course’ on early modern European history (30%), due 03/23**

In a survey course such as this, many worthwhile and understudied topics have been left out. For your final project, you will have the chance to design your own four-week ‘short course’ on an aspect of early modern European history that we did not cover in detail together. The mini-syllabus will consist of a precis of the course, your driving questions and conclusions, plus daily lesson plans that explore key historiographical debates and useful methodologies for approaching pre-modern sources.

### **Late Assignment Policy**

Every student is entitled to two 24-hour grace periods to use on the scaffolding assignments or final exam or project. You must notify me if you plan to take an extension. Once you have used your grace periods, late assignments will be docked by 1/3 of a grade each day.

### **Honor Code**

Please familiarize yourself with the Grinnell Student Handbook honesty policies and abide by them.

### **Accommodations**

If you have any documented needs that require accommodation, please do not hesitate to let me know. More details: <https://www.grinnell.edu/about/offices-services/accessibility-disability/disability-services>

### **Readings and Topics**

#### **Week One**

#### **Monday, February 1<sup>st</sup> – Introduction**

#### **Tuesday, February 2<sup>nd</sup> – Renaissance Men**

1. Jacob Burckhardt, ‘The Development of the Individual’ (‘Personality’ and ‘Glory’) and ‘The Revival of Antiquity’ (‘The Humanists’), in *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (London: Phaidon Press)

#### **Wednesday, February 3<sup>rd</sup> – Renaissance Men**

1. Petrarch, ‘The Ascent of Mont Ventoux’, April 26, 1366, in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, eds. Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 36-46

#### **Thursday, February 4<sup>th</sup> – Humanism and the New Learning**

1. Dante Alighieri, *Inferno* (selections from the *Divine Comedy*), c. 1320, eds. Jean and Robert Hollander (Anchor Books, 2002)

### **Friday, February 5<sup>th</sup> – Humanism and the New Learning**

1. Giovanni Boccaccio, selections, *The Decameron*, 1353, trans. Wayne A Rebhorn (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2013)

### **Week Two**

#### **Monday, February 8<sup>th</sup> – Renaissance Women?**

1. Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, 1405, Part 1, Chapters 1-11 (New York: Penguin, 1999)

#### **Tuesday, February 9<sup>th</sup> – Renaissance Women?**

1. Merry Wiesner-Hanks, 'Do Women Need the Renaissance?' in *Gender and History*, vol. 20, no. 3 (November 2008), p. 539-557

#### **Wednesday, February 10<sup>th</sup> – The Cataclysmic Reformation – Lutheranism**

1. Andrew Pettegree, "The Changing Face of Reformation History" and Carl Truman, "Luther and the Reformation in Germany", in *Reformation World* (Routledge, 2000)

#### **Thursday, February 11<sup>th</sup> – The Cataclysmic Reformation – Lutheranism**

1. Johan Tetzl, 'Rebuttal against Luther's Sermon on Indulgences and Grace', 1518, p. 1-19 and 31-32
2. Pro- and anti-Luther woodcut selections, 1520s and 30s

#### **Friday, February 12<sup>th</sup> – The Cataclysmic Reformation – England**

1. Helen Parish, "England", in *Reformation World* (Routledge, 2000)
2. John Bale, 'The Woman Clothed with the Sun and the Whore of Babylon', in *The Images of Both Churches*, 1545
3. John Foxe, frontispiece, 'Acts and Monuments', 1563

### **Initial Survey for Final Project, due Saturday February 13<sup>th</sup>**

### **Week Three**

#### **Monday, February 15<sup>th</sup> – The Cataclysmic Reformation – England**

1. John Field and Thomas Wilcox, 'An Admonition to the Parliament', 1572

#### **Tuesday, February 16<sup>th</sup> – Rethinking the Reformation**

1. Lee Palmer Wandel, *The Reformation: Towards a New History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

#### **Wednesday, February 17<sup>th</sup> – Rethinking the Reformation**

1. Kenneth Austin, *The Jews and the Reformation* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2020)

#### **Thursday, February 18<sup>th</sup> – Rethinking the Reformation**

1. Merry Weisner-Hanks, 'Comparisons and Consequences in Global Perspective, 1500-1750', in *The Oxford Handbook of The Protestant Reformations*, ed. Ulinka Rublack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)

#### **Friday, February 19<sup>th</sup> – Aristotelianism and the Early Modern Scientific Worldview**

1. Peter Dear, 'Introduction: The Measure of All Things' and Chapter 1, 'Induction in Early-Modern Europe', in *Discipline and Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995)

#### **Scaffolding assignment #1 for Final Project, due Wednesday February 24<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Week Four**

#### **Monday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> – Meetings and Office Hours**

#### **Tuesday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> – Towards an Experimental Paradigm?**

1. Andreas Vesalius, selections, *On The Fabric of the Human Body* (1543), trans. D.H. Garrison and M.H. Hast (Basel, Switzerland: Karger, 2016)
2. Robert Boyle, selections, *New Experiments Physico-Mechanical* (1660)

#### **Wednesday, February 24<sup>th</sup> – Towards an Experimental Paradigm?**

1. Margaret Cavendish, selections, *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy*, ed. Eileen O'Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

#### **Thursday, February 25<sup>th</sup> – A Social History of Early Modern Science**

1. Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), Chapter 1 'The Great Civility: Trust, Truth, and Moral Order', p. 3-41

#### **Friday, February 26<sup>th</sup> – A Social History of Early Modern Science**

1. Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1989), Chapter 1 'Institutional Landscapes', p. 10-32

#### **Week Five**

#### **Monday, March 1<sup>st</sup> – Final Exam Review**

#### **Tuesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> – The 'Age of Discovery'**

1. Michel de Montaigne, 'On Cannibals', 1580

#### **Wednesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> – The 'Age of Discovery'**

1. Jose de Acosta, *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*, ed. Jane E. Magan (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 1590

**Thursday, March 4<sup>th</sup> – The Impact of the ‘New World’ in Europe**

1. Michael Ryan, ‘Assimilating New Worlds in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries’, in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 23, no. 4 (Oct. 1981), p. 519-38

**Friday, March 5<sup>th</sup> – The impact of the ‘New World’ in Europe, revisited**

1. Vanita Seth, Chapter 1, “Self and Similitude: Renaissance Representations of the New World”, in *Europe’s Indians: Producing Racial Difference, 1500-1900* (Chapel Hill, NC: Duke University Press, 2020)

**Scaffolding assignment #2 for Final Project, due Tuesday March 9<sup>th</sup>**

**Final Exam Posted, due Wednesday March 10<sup>th</sup>**

**Week Six**

**Monday, March 8<sup>th</sup> – Individual Meetings for Final Project**

**Tuesday, March 9<sup>th</sup> – Individual Meetings for Final Project**

**Wednesday, March 10<sup>th</sup> – Communal work time (whole class)**

**Thursday, March 11<sup>th</sup> – Communal work time (whole class)**

**Friday, March 12<sup>th</sup> – No class**

**Week Seven**

**Monday, March 15<sup>th</sup> – Individual Meetings for Final Project**

**Tuesday, March 16<sup>th</sup> – Individual Meetings for Final Project**

**Wednesday, March 17<sup>th</sup> – Class Presentations**

**Thursday, March 18<sup>th</sup> – Class Presentations**

**Friday, March 19<sup>th</sup> – No class**

**Exam Period**

**Final Projects due Tuesday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> by 11:59 p.m.**