

Course Description

Why is it worth studying the history of early modern Europe, a globalized world that has set 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 European 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

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.

Assignments and Grading Breakdown

Participation (**including occasional class assignments**): 15%

2 x 1000-word response papers (**including drafting**): 30%

Outline one due 02/07; paper one due 02/16

Outline two due 02/21; paper two due 03/01

Week Four

Tuesday, February 11th – European Christendom before the Reformation

1. Eamon Duffy, selections, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992)
2. Lucien Febvre, selections (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985)

Thursday, February 13th – The Cataclysmic Reformation – Lutheranism

1. G.R. Elton, Chapters 1 and 2, on Luther and Charles V, in (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 15-52

First 1000-word response paper due by Sunday, February 16th at 11:59 p.m.

Week Five

Tuesday, February 18th – The Cataclysmic Reformation – Lutheranism

1. Johan Tetzel, 'Rebuttal against Luther's Sermon on Indulgences and Grace', 1518, p. 1-19 and 31-32
2. Lucas Cranach, 'Luther Preaching as the Pope Goes to Hell', 1540s

Thursday, February 20th – The Cataclysmic Reformation – Lutheranism

1. Martin Luther, 'Preface to the New Testament', 1522 and 'The Freedom of a Christian', 1520 (p. 42-59) in

2. Brad Gregory,
(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), Introduction 'The World We Have Lost' and Chapter
1 'Excluding God'

Thursday, March 5th – The Reformation as Social Crisis + Midterm Review

1. Nicholas Terpstra, Introduction and Chapter 2, 'Purifying the Body', in
(Cambridge, Cambridge University Press,
2015)

Midterm exam distributed, due Thursday, March 13th by 11:59 p.m. to P-web

Week Eight

Monday, March 10th – 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 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995)

Wednesday, March 12th – No new reading, discussion of final project instructions

Submit collected daily analyses by Friday, March 15th at 11:59 p.m. – (via P-web or hard copy)

Spring Break!

Week Nine

Tuesday, March 31st – Towards an Experimental Paradigm?

1. Andreas Vesalius, selections, (1543), trans. D.H. Garrison and M.H.
Hast (Basel, Switzerland: Karger, 2016)
2. William Harvey, selections, (1628)

Wednesday, April 2nd – Special Collections visit, submit daily analysis for a check-in

1. Robert Boyle, selections, (1660)

Week Ten

Tuesday, April 7th – Towards an Experimental Paradigm?

1. Margaret Cavendish, selections, 1.

Week Eleven

Tuesday, April 14th – The impact of the 'New World' in Europe

1. Michael Ryan, 'Assimilating New Worlds in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in