

HIST 6686: Early Modern Europe (graduate seminar)

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Description:

This class examines the history and historiography of early modern Europe; that is, we will discuss some of the major events of European history between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries, and how those events have been interpreted and reinterpreted by modern scholars. These events include the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, the Rise of Absolutism, the Enlightenment, and the French Revolution. The course will be divided into two main units: the first exploring the nature of early modern society, and the second examining some of the pivotal religious, intellectual, and political changes that early modern people confronted. Because this class is particularly designed for students who have not taken early modern history courses in some time, special focus will be given to textbook accounts of early modern history.

Required Texts:

1. Merry Wiesner-Hanks, Early Modern Europe, 1450-1789 (Cambridge University Press, 2006).
978-0521005210
2. Natalie Zemon Davis, The Return of Martin Guerre (Harvard University Press, 1983).
978-0674766914
3. Jonathan Dewald, The European Nobility, 1400-1800 (Cambridge University Press, 1996).
978-0521425285
4. Steven Ozment, The Burgermeister's Daughter: Scandal in a Sixteenth-Century German Town (Harper Perennial, 1997).
978-0060977214
5. Darren Oldridge, Strange Histories: The Trial of the Pig, the Walking Dead, and Other Matters of Fact From the Medieval and Renaissance Worlds (Routledge, 2007).
978-0415404921
6. Kaspar von Greyerz, Religion and Culture in Early Modern Europe (Oxford University Press, 2007).
978-0195327663
7. Mario Biagioli, Galileo, Courtier: The Practice of Science in the Culture of Absolutism (University of Chicago Press, 1994).
978-0226045603
8. David J. Weber, Barbaros: Spaniards and Their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment (Yale University Press, 2006).
978-0300119916
9. David Hancock, Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785 (Cambridge University Press, 1997).
978-521629423
10. Lynn Hunt, Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution, 20th Anniversary Edition (University of California Press, 2004).
978-0520241565

Library EReserve and On-Line Source:

Library EReserve:

1. Jonathan Dewald, Europe 1450 to 1789: Encyclopedia of the Early Modern World, 6 vol. (Charles Scribner's Sons, 2004), vol I. "Preface" and "Introduction," xxv-xxxvii.
2. Euan Cameron, ed., Early Modern Europe: An Oxford History (Oxford University Press, 1999), "Editor's Introduction," xvii-xxxi.
3. Alison Rowlands, "The Conditions of Life for the Masses," in Cameron, ed., Early Modern Europe: An Oxford History, 31-62/
4. R.R. Palmer and Joel Colton, A History of the Modern World, 4th ed. (Knopf, 1971), I: IDEAS: 77-96; 295-308; 325-336.
5. R.R. Palmer and Joel Colton, A History of the Modern World, 4th ed. (Knopf, 1971), II: POLITICS: 181-202; 262-293; 374-419.

On-Line Source:

6. Jean de Coras, A Memorable Decision of the High Court of Toulouse....
(http://faculty.virginia.edu/ajmlevine/544_filmhist/coras.html)

Assignments:

Your final course grade will be based on the following:

Survey Discussion "Cheatsheets"	5%
Applied Primary Source Essay	25%
Applied Historiography Essay	25%
Participation	40%
Discussion Leadership	5%

Detailed information regarding assignments will be provided in class; however, it is important to introduce each task here.

In order to lay out the historic and historiographic background of the nine assigned monographs, three classes will be devoted to what I term "survey discussions." On those days, we will read selections from general works on the early modern period. For each survey discussion, you need to prepare a short 3 page "cheatsheet" containing the following: 1) a list of the main topics surveyed and how those topics have been interpreted in the survey literature, and, 2) a list of major dates, events, and figures, along with brief explanations of each.

There are two ten-page essays assigned this term. The first requires you to find and analyze a primary source from the Early English Books Online database, available through George Mason's library. The second asks you to choose a particular topic and trace how it is treated in the monographs. The week before each essay is due, you must meet with me to discuss your chosen source and topic.

Being as this is a seminar and not a lecture course, your active participation is central to the class and its success. Participation, therefore, comprises forty percent of your final grade. Every class, I expect you to have read the assigned works and to be ready to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their broad arguments and approaches, as well as their place in the larger historiography.

Beginning with Dewald's book on the early modern nobility, discussions will be student-led. Before class, you and your partner, if any, must meet with me to go over what questions you plan to ask and the direction you intend to take.

Course Outline:

Week:	Topic:
01. (08/16)	Class Introduction
02. (08/23)	Survey Discussion I: a) What was “early modern Europe”? Weisner-Hanks , Intro Dewald , <i>Encyclopedia</i> , Preface and Intro Cameron , <i>Early Modern Europe</i> , Intro b) Was society “early” or “modern”? Weisner-Hanks , Chaps 2 and 8 Cameron , Chap1 <u>“Cheatsheet” Due (hardcopy required)</u>
03. (08/30)	<u>Unit I: Peoples</u> <i>A. Peasants</i> Davis , <i>Martin Guerre</i> Coras , <i>Memorable Decision</i>
04. (09/06)	NO CLASS – LABOR DAY
05. (09/13)	<i>B. Nobles</i> Dewald , <i>Nobility</i>
06. (09/20)	<i>C. Townspeople</i> Ozment , <i>Burgermeister’s</i>
07. (09/27)	<u>Unit II: Ideas and Politics</u> <i>Early Modern Rationality</i> Oldridge , <i>Strange Histories</i> <u>Applied Primary Source Essay Due Friday, Oct 1 (hardcopy required)</u>
08. (10/04)	<u>Survey Discussion 2:</u> Intellectual Revolutions? Palmer/Colton I: Ideas

	<p>Weisner-Hanks, Chaps 5, 10, 13</p> <p><u>“Cheatsheet” Due (hardcopy required)</u></p>
09. (10/11)	<p><i>The Reformation</i></p> <p>von Greyerz, <i>Religion and Culture</i></p>
10. (10/18)	<p><i>Scientific Revolution</i></p> <p>Biagioli, <i>Galileo</i></p>
11. (10/25)	<p><i>Colonization and Enlightenment</i></p> <p>Weber, <i>Barbaros</i> Review: Ward, pp. 3-18 Skim: Weisner-Hanks, Chap 13</p>
12. (11/01)	<p><u>Survey Discussion 3:</u></p> <p>A New Politics? Palmer/Colton II: Politics Weisner-Hanks, Chap 9 <u>“Cheatsheet” Due (hardcopy required)</u></p>
13. (11/08)	<p><i>Fiscal States</i></p> <p>Hancock, <i>Citizens of the World</i></p>
14. (11/15)	<p><i>The French Revolution</i></p> <p>Hunt, <i>Society, Culture, and Class</i></p>
15. (11/22)	<p>Writing Week</p>
16. (11/29)	<p>Recap: A Europe More Early or More Modern?</p> <p>Review: Weisner-Hanks, Intro Dewald, <i>Encyclopedia</i>, Intro Cameron, <i>Early Modern Europe</i>, Intro</p> <p><u>Applied Historiography Essay Due Friday, Dec 3 (hardcopy required)</u></p>

Finally, I reserve the right to modify this syllabus based on circumstances.

Description of written assignments follows on next page.

Written Assignments:

I. Survey Discussion “Cheatsheets”

Summary of the Assignment:

The purpose of this assignment is to help give you a general command of the historical and historiographical issues lying behind the nine monographs assigned this semester. Having this foundation will enable you to avoid getting trapped in minor details and to instead focus on the larger arguments and implications of each work. When reading the survey literature, pay attention to the major facts, persons, and events mentioned. Also pay attention to the major issues focused upon and how each textbook portrays those issues.

These “cheatsheets” will help form the basis of our three Survey Discussions, in which we will discuss not only pivotal aspects of the early modern era, but also some of the on-going debates historians have concerning the period.

Detailed Directions:

1. After reading the textbook selections, prepare a 2 page “cheatsheet” containing the following:
 - a. A list of major topics surveys and how those topics are presented. For example, “causes of the Reformation...”
 - b. A list of major dates, events, and figures, along with short definitions. For example, “October 31, 1517 – when Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses to the cathedral door in Wittenberg, an event traditional seen as the beginning of the Reformation.”

II. Applied Primary Source Essay

Summary of the Assignment:

Analyzing primary sources is one of the most critical of all the historian’s activities. For this 10-page essay, you must select a primary source that interests you from the Early English Books Online database, and analyze it in the context of our course readings and in terms of what your selection reveals about early modern Europe. Why does your selection matter and what does it tell us about the period? What larger historical issues does your source deal with (society, war, politics, gender, eg.)?

Your paper should have an introduction that identifies your source and its larger significance. The essay’s body must address how the primary source sheds lights on the early modern period and what broad issues your source could address. Think about how you could use the source to advance a historical argument. Although your essay should

be a critical thought piece in which you engage with the reading and its broad significance, make sure to also briefly summarize the source as I may not be familiar with it.

Detailed Directions:

1. Access Early English Books Online (EEBO) using GMU Libraries' list of databases. EEBO is a collection of printed works in English from the 1470s to 1700. You can find material on just about anything you can imagine.
2. Search for a topic that interests you. Though fairly easy to search, the site has its quirks. You will notice the search screen allows you to look for sources in several ways. The most basic is a "keyword search" ("war," for instance), however that method can be imprecise, tedious, and lead you to an overwhelming number of sources. I suggest also trying a "subject keyword search" if you are unsure of what you are interested in and want to browse the Library of Congress' list of subject headings: click on the link to the right entitled "Select from a list." Any search will take some time and you will find many different documents. Part of this exercise is for you to identify sources and how they might be used. Thus, I strongly suggest you find a topic that overlaps with themes we are investigating in class.
3. Select a document. You do not need to read an entire book, but you should find a source rich enough to allow for a close analysis. This may be a book chapter, introduction, pamphlet, or how-to manual.
4. Arrange an appointment with me for the week before the paper is due. Bring a printed citation of the source (EEBO allows you to do this very easily), a sample page (all the sources are in PDF format and are easy to print), and a short paragraph describing what you would like to do with the document.
5. Turn in the final copy on Friday, June 20th. Make sure to cite the document and include a copy of the source along with your essay.

III. Applied Historiography Essay

Summary of the Assignment:

Historiography is a term used extensively in this course—just see the course description on the first page of this syllabus. At the most basic of levels, historiography refers to the history of scholarly investigation of the past—what questions have historians raised and what answers have they given? In short, what debates have scholars had regarding how and why things occurred as they did and how have those debates changed over time? Being able to understand these debates is another critical skill and is a skill that helps distinguish those who do history as a profession from those who like history as a hobby.

In this 10-page essay, you are to pick a particular historiographical theme or question that interests you and then analyze how four of the assigned nine monographs deal with that theme or question. Make sure to give consideration as to how “early” or “modern” each scholar portrays the period. Finally, your essay must perform a rigorous analysis of historiographical issues and not be a collection of plot summaries or book reports. For example, rather than stating, “Kyle Ward’s book discusses changes in American history textbooks over two centuries. He raises many issues, including those of contact, slavery, and Watergate....;” say something like “Through detailing the great differences in how history textbooks have told the American story over two hundred years, Kyle Ward reveals how Americans’ understanding of the past have continually evolved in relationship to contemporary circumstances.”

Detailed Directions:

1. Pick an issue that interests you and select four books that deal with this issue. Make sure to focus on a question with broad significance. Examples include social relations, gender, political formation, religion, and intellectual development.
2. Make an appointment with me the week before the paper is due. Bring a paragraph detailing your selected theme or question, books, and how you intend to approach the matter.
3. Turn in the final copy on Wednesday, July 16th.