

HISTORY 4485W

17TH CENTURY EUROPE: THE AGE of ABSOLUTISM

FALL 2007

PROF. R. LOVE

Lectures: Tues.-Thurs., 11:00 am – 12:15 pm, Pafford 208
Office Hours: TELC 3-217, Tues.-Thurs., 9:30 – 10:30 am, 3:00 – 4:30 pm, and by appointment
Telephone: (678) 839-6039

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Grimmelshausen, *Simplicius Simplicissimus*
Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Related Writings*
Filmer, *Patriarcha and Other Writings*
Mme. de Sévigné, *Selected Letters*

The early modern period of European History was one of considerable transformation. In politics, the era opens in 1600 with the Continent dominated by Habsburg power, based in Spain and the Holy Roman Empire; with political structures little changed from the feudal organization of Medieval Europe; and with the Dutch Netherlands and Switzerland struggling for independence from Habsburg rule. By the century's end, the dominant power was France, though other states had learned to check hegemonic ambition with coalitions; the Dutch Netherlands and Switzerland were independent; and Russia had emerged on the European scene as a new power of consequence. Similar decisive change was experienced in cultural affairs, science, religion, entertainment and the arts. So there is much to be studied. To avoid false assumptions, let it be noted that this is not a course just on "Absolutism," nor will the 17th century be treated as the rise and decline of the Old Regime leading to its "inevitable" collapse in the next century. The ferment of the age includes consideration of these two things and much more. Both interesting and unique for its own sake, the history of 17th-century Europe still offers perspectives and insights useful for a better understanding of the ferment of our own times.

Fortunately, the subject lends itself readily to chronological treatment. On both the international and domestic scenes, the end of the 16th century and the period of the mid-17th century (i.e., the 1650s) make good breaking points. So the course divides into three more or less equal parts:

- Part 1. Europe at the beginning of the 17th century. The international tensions. The Thirty Years' War. The rise of French power, and the decline of the Empire and Sweden. The great peace treaties.
- Part 2. The English civil wars and the rebellion of the Fronde in France. The later French Renaissance. The early reign of Louis XIV. Political chaos in eastern Europe. The Scientific Revolution.
- Part 3. The Age of Louis XIV. The decline of the Habsburgs. The birth of the Balance of Power. The threat from Ottoman Turkey. The Great Northern War and the War of the Spanish Succession. The emergence of Russia.

In short, this course is designed to provide a glimpse into European life, ideas, politics, military practice and social structure during the Early Modern period of History. Because of its preponderance in the contemporary political and intellectual movements of the European continent, France will receive some emphasis. But the focus by no means will concentrate exclusively on that kingdom. In addition, Hist. 4485 has been designated as one of the department's **Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)** courses. This means that students will do a considerable amount of writing for the class. The written work will consist of a variety of informal and formal assignments that are intended to stimulate "writing to learn" (**WTL**), as well as "writing to communicate" (**WTC**).

LEARNING OUTCOMES: In most instances, students in the first few years of college are intellectually and mentally challenged for the first time in their lives. They cut their permanent mental teeth during this time. Thus, it is neither wise nor necessary to give them educational pap prepared for easy digestion. The advantage to students in this kind of course is fourfold:

First, they will learn a great deal about the 17th century, an age that contributed much to the formation of the modern world and the development of Western culture in a wide range of categories: politics, society, economics, religion, warfare and thought.

Second, they are challenged to be as good as they can be at something that is not easy, but which is rewarding and satisfying;

Third, they will develop critical skills of analysis, reasoning and expression (both verbal and written) which—apart from helping them to master the substantive aspects of this course—have **useful** skills at the end of the day that can be applied in practical ways. This will give them a legitimate come-back when people (parents or peers) ask contemptuously what they are going to “do” with “history”;

Fourth, they get their—or someone’s—money’s worth out of this course.

These objectives will be met by various means: engendering critical thinking through the analysis of contemporary sources and documents; presenting history as an account of the human past by scrutinizing the significant role of individuals who imposed their personality on the larger context; and exploding the myth of inevitability by demonstrating the importance of contingencies within history as men and women in positions of power made choices according to personal perspectives.

Generally, the course will proceed in a chronological pattern, although some thematic considerations necessarily will cross such simple lines. Class time will be devoted primarily to lectures, filling background and acquainting students with the major facets of the period that they have undertaken to study. However, student participation is encouraged at all times, particularly in discussion based upon assigned readings, questions arising from lectures and even essays that the students are developing. Naturally, success in this aspect of the course will depend largely upon student effort and willingness. Hence, they are encouraged to participate openly in class by offering their views and ideas on the subjects under discussion, as this kind of exchange and refinement is vital to learning. An attempt also will be made to pursue student interests suggested in class so far as it is feasible.

The reading list is not especially heavy, but the material is vast and the pace will be rapid, so it is important to stay abreast of the assigned work from the outset. Students are expected to **READ, READ, READ** consistently, therefore, in order to follow the class material and complete written assignments on time. The texts and essays are designed to provide students with a basic understanding of the period under study through primary sources. Students are also expected to **ATTEND ALL LECTURES**. Failure to do so will adversely affect your grade. Besides, the texts only compliment the lectures and do not replace them, and any examinations will be based on material covered in the classroom. Also, because the course will cover material in the lectures that is not available in the texts, attendance in class is all the more essential.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Three short encyclopedic papers due in class at any time prior to the fall break on **11-12 October**. Each is worth **10%** each of the final grade (for a total of 30%).

Two analytical essays of 6 to 8 pages in length to be worth **30%** of the final grade. These papers will be due in class on **Tuesday, 25 September**, and **Tuesday, 6 November**, respectively. Each is to be based on a theme taken from one of the primary texts for the course, either Grimmelshausen, Descartes, Filmer or Mme. de Sévigné. One of these papers may be comparative, developing a common theme from two of these sources.

Participation, which will be worth up to **10%** of the final grade and will be awarded at the professor’s discretion. It will reward student engagement in the course and participation in class

discussions. To earn the percentage or a portion of it requires making a contribution, beyond merely sitting, listening and otherwise warming a seat!

N.B.: No mid-term exam will be administered for this course. And although a final examination is scheduled officially for **Tuesday, 11 December**, from 11:00am – 1:00pm, it too will not be administered, provided that the students **engage fully in the class, the discussions, the readings and the essays**, which will take their primary focus. If there is no such engagement on the part of the students, a final examination will be administered, it will be comprehensive, and it will constitute **40%** of the final grade. In that event, the weight for the essays will be reduced to **20%** each, while the participation grade will represent an additional **10%** to be awarded at the instructor's discretion to those individuals who have engaged fully in the course.

About the Analytical Essay: For each essay, students are required to develop a theme from one of the primary texts according to what the author wrote about it, how he defined it, and what its significance was to the age. (Possible themes from Mme. de Sévigné's *Letters* include, for example, her view of Louis XIV and/or the French court; her perspectives on religion; her treatment of political affairs; her attitude toward aristocratic society and its values; her notions of good health, etc.) Ultimately, the question to be answered is how this theme helps us to understand the mentality of people who lived 300 years ago. The purpose of these essays, in other words, is to view the world **through the eyes of the authors**, not through 21st-century eyes. Consequently, the objective is to understand the age in which these people lived and to explain an aspect of it from their point of view. The object is not to judge or to criticize their ideas simply because they were people of their times, molded, educated and informed by its standards, not ours. These essays are not book reviews, therefore; nor are they simple summaries. Also, they are **NOT** research papers. Students may consult the introduction to each source as a guide, but the essays are to be based **exclusively** on the primary text itself. All examples, all references, all quotations must come from that source.

The Encyclopedic Essays, chosen from the lists below, may be submitted any time from the beginning of the course until 11 October. These are each worth 10% of the final grade and are to be no longer than three pages in length, double-spaced. One paper is to be biographical, a second topical, and a third either biographical or topical, depending upon the student's preference. As encyclopedia-style essays, they are to introduce the person, event or thing, provide the necessary dates or chronology, and fill in the background facts. However, the emphasis is to be placed on how the role of these persons, events or things is interpreted by modern historians within the context of the period under study. Consequently, students are required to consult at least three books in writing these papers. Encyclopedias and the Internet may serve as useful points of departure, but they are **NOT** viable sources and, therefore, cannot be quoted as part of the student's research.

Biographical: Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden; Albrecht Wallenstein; Cardinal Richelieu; Prince Rupert of the Rhine; Oliver Cromwell; Queen Henrietta Maria; Galileo; Frederick II Count Palatine; Emperor Ferdinand II; Queen Christina of Sweden; Marie de Medici; Johannes Althusius; Jacob Arminius; Christian IV of Denmark; Francis Bacon; Boris Godunov; Tycho Brahe; Johannes Kepler; Thomas Hobbes; Count-Duke Olivares; Hugo Grotius; the Levellers; Maurice of Nassau; Michael I (Muscovy); Jan van Oldenbarnavelt; Peter Paul Rubens, John Locke.

Topical: Peace of the Pyrenees; Peace of Westphalia; Battle of White Mountain; Estates General of 1615; Act of Union; Bill of Rights (1629); Declaration of Breda; siege of La Rochelle (1627-28); the Restoration (1660); Mercantilism; Twelve Years' Truce (1609); Synod of Dort (1618); the Paulette; Gunpowder Plot (605); Letter of Majesty (1609); Battle of Lützen; Battle of Nördlingen; Petition of Right (1628); Peace of Prague (1635); Edict of Restitution (1629); Time of Troubles (Muscovy); Peace of Alais (1629).

All of the papers are to be **type-written** in standard, grammatical English on 8 ½” by 11” paper, and to use acceptable forms of academic apparatus (i.e., citation of sources, etc.). So be careful to **revise** and **proofread** your work before final submission to correct needless typographical or spelling errors and other silly mistakes. **Failure to do so will materially affect the grade awarded. To avoid that result, and because this is a WAC class that seeks to enhance writing skills, all students will be required to work with an instructor in the Writing Center, either individually or in small groups for more general instruction.** At least ONE draft of each major writing assignment for the class must be signed by the Writing Center instructor and submitted in class, attached to the final draft of the essay. Students who fail to meet this requirement will lose 10% of their paper grade. **Students are also welcome to consult with the professor in developing their essays during office hours. Writing is lonely work, but it need not be isolated work, and this class is designed to ensure that students receive the additional instruction that they need.** PLAGIARISM—defined as presenting another author’s thoughts, writings and discoveries as one’s own, without appropriate citation—will result in failure for the paper and possibly the course, as well as further disciplinary action.

A Word About Deadlines: Much of the value of the preparation of an essay is lost if there is not time for careful criticism and consideration of the criticism before the next written assignment is due. Hence, students should strive to submit their essays on time. Such papers will receive a thorough **written** critique with marginal comments. **Late papers**, on the other hand, will have an automatic extension of one week without penalty to the grade, but they will be returned with a mark only, minus marginal comments and a critique. Finally, any papers submitted after the extended deadline will lose a **full grade. NO PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER THE LAST DAY OF CLASS AT THE END OF THE TERM.**

COURSE GRADES:

First Analytical Essay,	30%
Second Analytical Essay,	30%
Encyclopedic Essays	30%
Participation	20%
	100%

The foregoing is a rough profile of the composition of student grades for the course—it is not to be regarded as a rigid framework. If a student starts off poorly and improves, that will be taken into account. If a student goes straight downhill after a brilliant beginning, well..., that also will have to be considered.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: **Because of the rapid pace of the course, regular attendance is essential for keeping abreast of the material and the lectures. Students will be allowed five cuts without penalty for unexcused absences. After that, students will lose up to 5% for each subsequent absence, depending upon the discretion of the instructor. Absences accompanied by a doctor’s note or due to family emergencies, etc., will not be penalized.**

BETWEEN ME AND THEE: My office door is open to students. If you want to stop by to chat about the course, please do. If you want to drop in just to chat, do that also. Above all, should you have any difficulties in understanding the course material, whether from the readings or lectures, by all means see me. If you are having problems, it is best to get a drop on them early instead of when it becomes too late.

GENERAL LECTURE TOPICS:

17th Century Europe:

Age of Religious Warfare

Struggles in Eastern Europe
Social and Economic Structures

Europe at a Crossroads, 1600 – 1621
The Thirty Years' War, 1618 – 1648
England and the Stuarts, 1603 – 1660

Eastern Europe, 1600 - 1688
Society, Economy and Hierarchy
The Military Revolution

France and the Age of Louis XIV, 1643 – 1715
Emergence of Russia
Conflict and the European Balance of Power

GOOD LUCK, AND ENJOY THE COURSE!