History 565: European Social and Cultural History

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

To many of their first practitioners, the genres of historical writing that we now call “social” and “cultural” history seemed to hold much the same promise: that is, the ability to reconstruct the lives of “ordinary” people in the past. By drawing on unusual sources—like parish registers and legal trials—and applying innovative modes of analysis—whether quantitative or linguistic—social and cultural historians sought to expand our field of vision beyond what they saw as conventional military, diplomatic, and intellectual history. Yet since the heady days of the 1960s and ‘70s, when these two genres aspired to displace all rival forms of history writing, their paths and fortunes have diverged. While social history has receded in prominence, it is now often said that cultural history has become so broad as to have become indistinguishable from every other genre of historical writing. As you prepare to become professional historians, then, it is worth pausing to ask where social and cultural history have been, why they look the way they do, what connotations they have, and where they are headed.

In this course, we will focus on the contributions of these two genres to the historiography of Early Modern Europe, approximately 1400–1750. Along the way we will attempt to incorporate several generations of perspectives, investigating some classic debates and questions while also exploring cutting edge methodologies and concerns. Alongside major topics like humanism and religious reform that help to organize the period as a whole, our pursuit of recent trends in social and cultural history will lead us into topics such as urban and rural sociability, popular culture, and economies both real and imagined.

ACCESS TO READINGS

All readings for the course are available in at least one of two places. Items which must be read in hardcopy (i.e. no electronic version exists) will be appearing on reserve in the History Graduate Study Room, on C-level of Firestone. Items which can be read electronically (i.e. almost all journal articles, and some books) are available online through JStor, EBSCO, etc.; some may also be duplicated in hardcopy in the Study Room.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND READINGS

4 Feb. Some Basic Terms


Thomas A. Brady, Heiko A. Oberman, and James D. Tracy, "Introduction: Renaissance and
Reformation, Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Era," in Handbook of European History,
1400–1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B.


Unit 1. Some Origins

11 Feb.  "There's no Crying in History;" or, Johan Huizinga

Johan Huizinga, The Autumn of the Middle Ages, trans. Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch

William Bouwsma, "The Waning of the Middle Ages Revisited," in A Usable Past: Essays in

18 Feb.  Burckhardt's Renaissance

Jacob Burckhardt, The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy (any edition).

Lionel Gossman, Basel in the Age of Burckhardt: A Study in Unseasonable Ideas (Chicago, IL:


Unit 2. From “Church History” to “Religion” and “Belief”

25 Feb.  Many Reformations

Bernd Moeller, "Imperial Cities and the Reformation," in idem, Imperial Cities and the

John Bossy, "The Counter-Reformation and the people of Catholic Europe," Past & Present 47

Steven E. Ozment, The Reformation in the Cities: The Appeal of Protestantism to Sixteenth-Century
Germany and Switzerland (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975).

Gerald Strauss, "Success and Failure in the German Reformation," in Past & Present 67 (1975):
30–63.

Jean Delumeau, Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire: a new view of the Counter-Reformation,

Robert W. Scribner, "Incombustible Luther: The Image of the Reformer in Early Modern

Peter Burke, "How to become a Counter-Reformation Saint," in idem, The Historical Anthropology
of Early Modern Italy: Essays on Perception and Communication (Cambridge: Cambridge

Carlos M.N. Eire, From Madrid to Purgatory: The Art and Craft of Dying in Sixteenth-Century Spain

4 Mar.  “Popular Belief”


Unit 3. Town and Country

11 Mar.  Urban Sociability


18 Mar.  Spring Recess

25 Mar.  The Rural Landscape


Unit 4. Self and Society
1 Apr. Family and Kinship (no fooling!)


8 Apr. Who are You?


**Unit 5. Exchanges**

15 Apr. Gifts, Transactions, Economies


22 Apr. Coming Together, Moving Apart


29 Apr. Course Conclusion

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 EXPECTATIONS

 Each week, students should complete (1) the shared secondary readings we have negotiated at the end of the previous class period and (2) at least one additional item of personal interest. The additional item may be chosen either from the additional bibliography on the syllabus, or in consultation with the professor. Informed and enthusiastic class participation will comprise 30% of the final seminar grade.

 Each week, one or two student volunteers will be responsible for presenting the discussion. These students each will (1) write a 5-6 pp. review of their additional chosen readings, putting them in the context of the week's shared readings; (2) circulate their reviews to their peers via email or the course website no later than 5pm on the evening before class; and (3) prepare to lead ca. 20 minutes of discussion on the key issues which they see in the weekly reading. Each student should be prepared to present twice during the semester, with each presentation comprising 20% of the final grade.

 On or before Dean’s Date, 14 May 2013, each student should submit a 15 pp. review essay exploring in depth a historiographical field of his/her choosing. Students may opt to pursue one of the weekly themes further, or construct a field of their own choosing. There is no set number of works which ought to be reviewed; students are encouraged to discuss a bibliography with the professor. This final essay will comprise the remaining 30% of the course grade.