

# GONZAGA-IN-FLORENCE SYLLABUS

Course: HIST 315 Renaissance Europe  
Credits: 3 Credits  
Instructor: Roberto Sabbadini



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**SCHEDULE:** MONDAY- TUESDAY - THURSDAY 9:35-10:35

**OFFICE HOURS:** TUESDAY, 10:40-11:40. Contact at: [roberto.sabba@libero.it](mailto:roberto.sabba@libero.it)

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Renaissance was a time of unprecedented cultural creativity. It has been described as the historical phenomenon that contributed decisively to shape the Western identity by combining the Judeo-Christian and the Classical traditions.

In this course we will examine the main characteristics of this intellectual movement, exploring the “new worlds” created by scholars, artists, philosophers, political theorists, all contributors to this ‘golden age’ of cultural renewal; at the same time we will also consider the Renaissance as a broader cultural movement by analyzing the unique social context that produced the extraordinary achievements of the great scholars and artists and we will try to understand to what extent these achievements changed the society as a whole.

The course is thematically divided in different sections. First of all we will investigate the *social and cultural roots* of the Renaissance through the analysis of the most dynamic sectors of the late medieval society. We will then examine the *new visions*, the intellectual and educational phenomenon now known as ‘humanism’ and the dramatic transformations in painting, sculpture, architecture, that gave the Renaissance its name.

The Renaissance first occurred in a specific place, Florence, and then spread to the rest of the Italian peninsula and beyond the Alps. Following this diffusion we will travel in time and space focusing first of all over *Florence*, the birthplace of the Renaissance, and its ‘godfathers’, the Medici; then we will take in account the *Italian peninsula*, the dramatic political changes of the early sixteenth century and how they influenced the world of thought and art. Finally we will follow the influence of the movement in a wider *European context* focusing above all on the intersections between the Renaissance and the Reformations, one of the major historical phenomena in the Early Modern period.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to provide the students with a basic knowledge of the Renaissance; through an extensive analysis of historical data and literary, artistic and scientific achievements, the students will be able to recognize and appreciate in detail one single period in the development of history, arts and culture.

The Renaissance will be investigated as an intellectual and as a cultural movement. Through this approach students will come to understand the roots of the Western identity and will be able to relate the social and cultural background to the main intellectual achievements.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, students are expected to be able to:

- demonstrate a confident knowledge of significant historical events and personalities which shaped the history of the Renaissance.

- apply their analytical skills to complex historical questions.
- develop models and concepts for analyzing culture, society and politics that can be applied to many different situations, both historical and contemporary.
- present coherent persuasive arguments in oral and written form.

## GRADING AND OTHER POLICIES

Students will be evaluated on the basis of two in-class examinations (mid-term and final), a paper and class participation proportionally broken down as follows:

30% Mid-term Exam  
 30% Final Exam  
 30% Paper  
 10% Class Participation

Students will have a mid-term exam and a final exam organized in the same way and each composed of three parts: a long essay, short answers and short definitions/identifications. The final exam is not cumulative.

Students are required to write one term paper. The dead-line for the paper is March 25<sup>th</sup>. Length requirement for paper: 7-8 pages (i.e. 2000-2300 words), typed (font Arial, size12, double spaced).

Following **grading system** will be observed:

0 - 59 = **F**,      60 - 69 = **D**,      70 - 72 = **C-**,      73 - 76 = **C**,      77 - 79 = **C+**,  
 80 - 82 = **B-**,      83 - 86 = **B**,      87 - 89 = **B+**,      90 - 92 = **A-**,      93 - 100 = **A**

**Course Organization:** The course will be structured in lectures, in-class discussions, home assignments and oral presentation of the papers. Individual study of the notes, the readings, and the handouts at home is required on a weekly basis.

**Reading Assignments:** On your lecture schedule you will find the required readings for each lecture; they should be completed before each class meeting as a homework assignment. The reading assignments will be checked by oral and written questions.

**Participation:** Participation means bringing the reading material to class, being active in discussions, presenting oral reports of the paper. Participation also refers to regular behaviour in class.

**Exams:** Students will have a mid-term and a final exam. The evaluation of the exams is done according to the following criteria:

- analytical skills
- comprehension of the reading material and notes
- study of the reading material and notes
- clarity of expression

**Paper Assignment:** Students are required to write a final paper. The evaluation of the paper is done according to the following criteria:

- well formulated argument
- inquisitive and analytical approach
- good use of bibliography (citing sources for paraphrases, quotations and summaries)
- clarity of expression including quality of style (grammar, spelling)

### Attendance

University policy allows a maximum of six absences for a three credit course.

At the seventh absence the student's grade is lowered of a half point grade: from A to A-, A- to B+, B+ to B, and so on.

## REQUIRED READING

M. L. King, *The Renaissance in Europe*. London 2003.

### Suggested readings:

G. Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*. Berkeley 1983.

P. Burke, *The Italian Renaissance. Culture and Society in Italy*. Princeton 1986.

E. Garin (ed.), *Renaissance Characters*. Chicago and London 1991.

J. Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*. New York 1993.

L. Jardine, *Worldly Goods. A New History of the Renaissance*. New York-London 1996.

Ch. Nauert, *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe*. London 1995.

## COURSE OUTLINE & SCHEDULE

### Week 1: **Introduction: The Renaissance**

Intellectual Movement? Cultural Movement? Historical Period?

### Week 2: **The Late Medieval Society: the Roots of the Renaissance**

The late medieval city and the citizen

The bourgeoisie. The patriciate

Reading: Introduction, pp. VIII-XV; ch. 1, pp. 1-30; ch. 2, pp. 33-46

### Week 3: **The Late Medieval Society: the Roots of the Renaissance**

The Papacy and the Church

Reading: ch. 6, pp. 167-179

### Week 4: **The Renaissance: New Visions**

From the theocentric to the anthropocentric vision of the world: Dante and Petrarch. The recovery of the classical culture. Humanism

Reading: ch. 2, pp. 51-56; ch. 3, pp. 65-98

### Week 5: **The Renaissance: New Visions**

The artistic revolution: the Early Renaissance

The artist and the patron

Reading: ch. 4, pp. 101-130

### Week 6: **The Renaissance: Florence**

The 'godfathers' of the Renaissance: the Medici

Girolamo Savonarola and the 'medieval' revival

Reading: ch. 7, pp. 212-213; ch. 6, pp. 190-192

### Week 7: **Review and mid-term exam**

### Week 8: **The Renaissance in Italy**

The Italian states and Italian politics: *Comuni*, *Signorie*, Principalities.

The prince and the artistic patronage

Reading: ch. 7, pp. 195-206; ch. 4, pp. 107-120

### Week 9: **The Renaissance in Italy**

The Italian political crisis: the Italian wars  
Thinking the crisis: Machiavelli; Guicciardini; Castiglione  
Reading: ch. 7, pp. 216-222; ch. 8, pp. 225-242

Week 10: ***The Renaissance Beyond the Alps***  
Kings and kingdoms: the rise of the territorial state  
Habsburg and Valois: the conflict for the European supremacy  
Reading: ch. 10, pp. 287-297

Week 11: ***The Renaissance Beyond the Alps***  
The High Renaissance  
The centres of the Renaissance in Europe  
Reading: ch. 4, pp. 130-134; ch. 3, pp. 298-318

Week 12: ***The Renaissance and the Reformations***  
Erasmus and Christian humanism  
Luther and the Protestant Reformation  
Reading: ch. 9, pp. 267-281

Week 13: ***The Renaissance and the Reformations***  
The Catholic Reformation  
The new science: Copernicus; Galilei  
Reading: ch. 9, pp. 281-284; ch. 3, pp. 330-337

Week 14: ***Final Exam*** (date to be announced:)