

# GONZAGA-IN-FLORENCE SYLLABUS

Course: HIST 312 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 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 society as a whole.

The course is thematically divided into 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 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, and 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 on republican *Florence*, the birthplace of the Renaissance, and its ‘godfathers’, the Medici; then we will take into account the *Italian peninsula*, the princes and the princely courts, 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 main intellectual achievements to the social and cultural background.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, students should 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 cultural, societal and religious issues 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 paper is due on March 28.

Length requirement for paper: 8 pages (i.e. 2300 words), typed (font Arial, size12, double spaced). The 2300 words do not include bibliography, that is to be considered additional and compulsory. The final paper shall have at least 5 bibliographical references. The use of Wikipedia is not allowed.

The topic of the paper is chosen by the students and discussed with the teacher. Each student will have to submit an abstract of the final paper, including a preliminary bibliography. The abstract is a short summary, illustrating the idea of the paper and the thesis. Deadline to choose the topic of the final paper: February 24.

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.

**Participation:** Participation will be assessed by asking the students to:

- prepare the **reading assignments** for class; 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 questions and short written assignments;
- be active in discussions;
- presenting oral reports of the paper.

Participation also refers to regular behaviour in class.

Students are asked to take careful notes during every lecture and in-class activity: they are to be considered a fundamental didactic base for the whole course. The readings will not provide you with all the necessary material to complete the course successfully.

**Exams:** The evaluation of the exams is assessed according to the following criteria:

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

**Paper:** The paper will be graded according to the following criteria:

- How clearly and specifically the thesis statement sets forth the subject and purpose of the essay.
- How well the essay deals with the topic in terms of completeness of thought, understanding

and complexity of ideas.

- How coherent, logical and organized are the ideas, thoughts, and examples.
- How well the examples support or illustrate the points made and how extensive and thorough the use of such support material is.
- How competent the written form of the essay is: grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, and spelling.

### **Attendance**

University policy allows a maximum of six absences for a three credit course. If more than six classes are missed, the final grade will be a "V".

## **REQUIRED READING**

The required book is to be purchased before the students arrive in Florence.

Margaret. L. King, *The Renaissance in Europe*. London 2003,  
Copyright: Laurence King Publishing  
ISBN: 1-85669-374-0

### **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**

Jan 10.11.13 Intellectual Movement? Cultural Movement? Historical Period?  
Reading: Introduction, pp. VIII-XV

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

Jan 17.18.20 The late medieval city and the citizen  
The bourgeoisie. The patriciate  
Reading: ch. 1, pp. 1-30; ch. 2, pp. 33-46

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

Jan 24.25.27 The Papacy and the Church  
Reading: ch. 6, pp. 167-179

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

Jan 31 From the theocentric to the anthropocentric vision of the world: Dante and  
Feb 01.03 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**

Feb 07.08.10 The artistic revolution: the Early Renaissance  
The patron and the artist  
Reading: ch. 4, pp. 101-130

- Week 6: ***The Renaissance: Florence***  
 Feb 14.15.17 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***  
 Feb 21.22.24
- Week 8: ***The Renaissance in Italy***  
 Feb 28 The Italian states: Republics and Principalities  
 Mar 01.03 The prince and the artistic patronage  
 Reading: ch. 7, pp. 195-206; ch. 4, pp. 107-120
- Week 9: ***The Renaissance in Italy***  
 Mar 07.08.10 The Italian political crisis: the Italian wars (1494-1530)  
 Thinking the crisis: Machiavelli; Guicciardini; Castiglione  
 Reading: ch. 7, pp. 216-222; ch. 8, pp. 225-242
- Week 10: ***The Renaissance Beyond the Alps***  
 Mar 21.22.24 Charles V and European Politics  
 The centres of the Renaissance in Europe  
 Reading: ch. 10, pp. 287-318
- Week 11: ***The Renaissance and the Reformations***  
 Mar 28.29.31 Erasmus and Christian humanism  
 Luther and the Protestant Reformation  
 Reading: ch. 9, pp. 267-281
- Week 12: ***The Renaissance and the Reformations***  
 Apr 04.05.07 The Catholic Reformation  
 The new science: Copernicus; Galilei  
 Reading: ch. 9, pp. 281-284; ch. 11, pp. 330-337
- Week 13: ***Oral Presentations*** (15 minutes to each student to present the final paper)  
 Apr 11.12
- Week 14: ***Final Exam*** (date to be announced)  
 Apr 14-20