



Course Syllabus: Renaissance and Reformation
Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences
History 4253
Spring 2025 Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-10:50 PY 100

Contact Information

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Instructor Response Policy

The best way to contact me is via e-mail. I will respond to e-mails on business days within 24 hours. E-mails sent after hours will be responded to on the next business day (this means Friday e-mails sent after 5:00 pm will receive a response on Monday).

Course Description

This is a course on the history of Europe from roughly the fourteenth to the mid-eighteenth century. We will focus first on Italy where major social and political transformations were followed by a flowering of literary and artistic revolutions. It is the period that we call the Renaissance; it is the period of the great minds of Petrarch, Machiavelli, Michelangelo, Alberti, Medici and others. But the period is more than major movements and great works. We will look at what made these people great—we will look at the historical contexts and roots of their achievements. The class will also explore the development of cities and towns ("communes") and the rise of merchant oligarchies, all of which led to the so-called great Italian city-states (Florence, Rome, Venice, Milan, etc.) where these men (and women!) spent their lives.

Following the Renaissance, and in some way coinciding with it, is the Reformation—a period of intense religious reform across the European continent. We will look at the Reformation as more, though, than just religion and religious change. We will examine the social, political, economic, and cultural aspects of it. Most importantly, this class will show how the Reformation is really just an outgrowth of the Renaissance and changes that were already taking place in Europe: The Reformation began as part of humanist trends and from the Northern Renaissance.

Students will demonstrate the knowledge gained in this course by completing class readings, by attending and being attentive at lectures, by completing papers, and by taking exams. More importantly, in all these tasks students will exhibit critical thinking and analysis in regards to the study of Renaissance and Reformation Europe.

Textbooks & Instructional Materials

Required

Alberti, Leon Battista. *On Painting*. New York: Penguin Books, 1991. ISBN: 9780140433319

Brucker, Gene A.. *Giovanni and Lusanna: Love and Marriage in Renaissance Florence*. University of California Press, 2004. (ISBN: 9780520244955)

Luther, Martin. *Three Treatises*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970. ISBN: 9780800616397

Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince*. Translated and edited by Daniel Donno. Washington: Bantam Books, 2003. ISBN 0-553-21278-8

Ozment, Steven. *The Bürgermeister's Daughter: Scandal in a Sixteenth-Century German Town*. New York: Harper perennial Press, 1997. ISBN 9780060977214

Wunderli, Richard. *Peasant Fires: The Drummer of Niklashausen*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992. ISBN: 9780253207517

Other readings including primary sources, chapters, articles, etc. posted on D2L.

Recommended

Turabian, K. L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Ninth Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-226-43057-7 [Quick Guide Website](#).

There are the six books for this course, and most are primary sources or contain a majority of primary source writing. There is no textbook for this course—lectures will serve this purpose. Each book will be paired with another for a paper topic: Alberti with Machiavelli; Luther with *Peasant Fires*; *The Bürgermeister's Daughter* with *Giovanni and Lusanna*. Each pairing provides insight into the two different periods of study on a variety of topics: the 'Renaissance man'; love, marriage, and family life; and angry peasants.

Please purchase or rent these books. If you would like to get a different edition or digital copy, you are welcome to do so. Please be warned, however, that if I refer to a page number, I will denote the page of the edition listed in the syllabus. Be ready to cite all appropriately regardless of format (Turabian—recommended but not required).

Study Hours and Tutoring Assistance

Located in Moffett Library, the Office of Tutoring and Academic Support Programs (TASP) offers a variety of resources designed to help students meet the demands of the college classroom, including both on campus and distance education tutoring. For more information go [here](#).

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work, not the individual to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct. [Office of Student Conduct](#)

Furthermore, writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are all part of the learning outcomes of this course, and thus all assignments should be prepared by the student. AI-generated submissions are not permitted and will be treated as plagiarism.

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student's studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information. Get started on this [Moffett Library webpage](#) to explore these resources and learn how to best utilize the library.

Grading

Course Grade - The grade for this course will be based on attendance and participation, three papers, and two take-home exams.

Table 1: Points allocated to each assignment

Assignments	Points
Attendance and Participation	150
Paper One	150
Paper Two	150
Paper Three	150
Exam One	200
Exam Two	200
Total Points	1000

Table 2: Total points for final grade.

Grade	Points
A	900
B	800 to 899
C	700 to 799
D	600 to 699
F	Less than 600

Assignments

All assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class time on the day due. All assignments should be submitted electronically on D2L.

Quizzes

I will not give quizzes as long as there is regular class participation.

Exams

There are two 'take-home exams' in the class over the first and second half of material covered. Each is worth 200 points, or 20% of the grade. More detailed information will be provided later.

Papers

Students will write three formal papers over the six primary source readings. Each is worth 150 points, or 15% of the grade. The assignments are provided at the end of this syllabus.

Extra Credit

No extra credit assignments are provided.

Late Work

Late work is not permitted.

Make-up Work/Tests

All assignments are due the to D2L on the due date indicated. This includes 'take-home exams'. Because you will know of all assignments beforehand, and because tests are take-home, there will be no make-up work or tests. Please plan accordingly; get your assignment in before you know you will miss. If you are ill, let me know and I will work with you on when/how to submit.

Important Dates

Last day for term schedule changes: 24 January 2025

Deadline to file for graduation: 17 February 2025

Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:" 30 April 2025

Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Attendance

I am assuming that you are an adult and that you can make your own decisions about coming to class. This is, however, an upper-division history course in which most information will be conveyed in person and in class. Your attendance grade is worth 150 points, or 15% of your grade. You will be given one unexcused absence; the total points allocated for attendance will drop by ten points for every additional time missed. You will also be counted as absent if you show up more than fifteen minutes late for class without an appropriate excuse or if you are consistently unprepared for class, fail to pay attention during class, and/or fail to participate in class discussion.

INCLEMENT WEATHER STATEMENT: If the university closes due to weather during our assigned class time, we will not meet. Assignments/meetings will be shifted accordingly.

Computer Requirements

While this is not an online class, we do rely rather extensively on D2L, which requires you to have access to a computer (with Internet access) to complete and upload your assignments. It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. ****Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered a reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.*** Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. ****Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!!*** There are many places to access your class! Our online classes can be accessed from any computer in the world that is connected to the internet. Contact your instructor immediately upon having computer trouble. If you have technical difficulties in the course, there is also a student helpdesk available to you. The college cannot work directly on student computers due to both liability and resource limitations however they are able to help you get connected to our online services. For help, log into [D2L](#).

Instructor Class Policies

Please refrain from behavior disruptive to the conduct of class, including but not limited to arriving late, leaving early, making trips to the vending machines, talking with other students, and viewing videos on TikTok. Do not bring work unrelated to class. Do not watch soccer (or other games) in class. Think

carefully about how you are spending your tuition money. If you sleep in class and if you snore, people are likely to laugh at you.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the [Schedule of Classes](#) each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees, and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. However, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans, and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make an application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

College Policies

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibit the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state, and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License-to-carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by the MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [MSUReady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled "Run. Hide. Fight." which may be electronically accessed via the University police department's webpage: "[Run. Hide. Fight.](#)"

Grade Appeal Process

Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

***Notice:** Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Schedule:

Week or Module	Activities/Assignments/Exams	Due Date
Week 1 1/21-1/24	Introductions/Defining Renaissance	READINGS: Alberti, Machiavelli, and <i>Giovanni and Lusanna</i>
Week 2 1/27-1/31	The Formation of the Italian Communes	READINGS: Alberti, Machiavelli, and <i>Giovanni and Lusanna</i>
Week 3 2/3-2/7	From Communes to Signories	READINGS: Alberti, Machiavelli, and <i>Giovanni and Lusanna</i>
Week 4 2/10-2/14	The Republican Myth: Renaissance Oligarchies	READINGS: Alberti, Machiavelli, and <i>Giovanni and Lusanna</i>

Week or Module	Activities/Assignments/Exams	Due Date
Week 5 2/17-2/21	The Renaissance Economy Culture	READINGS: Alberti, Machiavelli, and <i>Giovanni and Lusanna</i> Paper One Due
Week 6 2/24-2/28	Politics and State Building/Renaissance Society	READINGS: Alberti, Machiavelli, and <i>Giovanni and Lusanna</i>
Week 7 3/3-3/7 Spring Break: 9-15 March	Renaissance Intellectual History: Humanism	READINGS: Alberti, Machiavelli, and <i>Giovanni and Lusanna</i>
Week 8 3/17-3/21	Twilight & Crisis: The Italian Peninsula after 1494	READINGS: "Did Women Have a Renaissance?", <i>Giovanni and Lusanna</i> Exam One Due
Week 9 3/24-3/28	The Northern Renaissance: From Humanism to Reformation/Defining Reformation	READINGS: "Did Women Have a Renaissance?", <i>Giovanni and Lusanna</i> , <i>Start Bürgermeister's Daughter</i>
Week 10 3/31-4/4	Religious Mentalities and Practices	READINGS: "Did Women Have a Renaissance?", <i>Giovanni and Lusanna</i> , <i>Start Bürgermeister's Daughter</i> and Luther Paper Two Due
Week 11 4/7-4/11	Luther	READINGS: <i>Bürgermeister's Daughter</i> , and Luther
Week 12 4/14-4/16 Holiday Break 17-20 April	Luther	READINGS: Luther and <i>Peasant Fires</i>

Week or Module	Activities/Assignments/Exams	Due Date
Week 13 4/21-4/25	The Peasants' War and Other Radical Movements	READINGS: Luther, <i>Peasant Fires</i> , "Twelve Articles of the Peasants"
Week 14 4/28-5/2 Last day to drop for a "W": 4/30	Calvin and Geneva	Readings: Calvin Handout Paper Three Due
Week 15 5/5-5/9 Last Day of Classes 5/9	Council of Trent and the Counter Reformation	Readings: Council of Trent Handout
Finals Week 5/12-5/16	Final Exam Time: Thursday 13 May 8:00 am – 10:00 am	READINGS: None Final Exam Due

History 4253: Ren/Ref Paper One: The Renaissance 'Man'

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to help you develop historical analysis skills through identifying defining contemporary ideas based on the source material from the period in question. This paper also asks you to provide primary source examples to support your argument.

The Background:

The Renaissance Man, the Universal Man (in Italian, *Uomo Universale*), the Polymath, the title given to those who are believed to be able to do it all—the 'Jake of all trades, master of none.' This notion was an ideal put forth by the Humanists of the Renaissance, and it is best exhibited in the 'men' who could do it all, such as Leon Battista Alberti, Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni, Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici, and Niccolò Machiavelli.

You have been reading two works by 'Renaissance Men': Machiavelli's *The Prince*,¹ and Alberti's *On Painting*.² Machiavelli's work also serves as a guide to the 'Renaissance Man', as it was dedicated to and about an important ruling family of 'Renaissance Men'. Alberti's *On Painting* is not a guide to the 'Renaissance Man' but does reveal important aspects of the well-rounded individual. Finally, you've been reading Brucker's *Giovanni and Lusanna*.³ Although a piece on love and marriage, it holds important insight into the culture of the 'Renaissance Man'. All three works tell us about the 'Renaissance Man' and the culture that surrounded them.

The Instructions: In the format of a formal paper (introduction, thesis, body paragraphs, and conclusion all required):

1. Choose and use at least two of three readings (*The Prince*, *On Painting*, *Giovanni and Lusanna*)—you may use all three without penalty.
2. Create a definition of the 'Renaissance Man' based on these works and historical perceptions (not my definition above or a definition from a random website).
3. Explain how these primary sources (or analysis of sources in the case of *Giovanni and Lusanna*)⁴ provide a window into the life of a 'Renaissance Man/Men'.

¹ If I wanted to cite Machiavelli, I would do so as follows: Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Daniel Donno trans. and ed. (New York: Bantam, 2003). I would include a page number, which is not indicated here.

² If I wanted to cite Alberti, I would do so as follows: Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, Cecil Grayson, trans. (New York: Penguin Books, 1991). Again, I would, as a good student, include a page number.

³ If I wanted to cite *Giovanni and Lusanna*, I would do so as follows: Gene Brucker, *Giovanni and Lusanna: Love and Marriage in Renaissance Florence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). Page number, anyone?

⁴ Oh...Alberti and Machiavelli are primary sources! What if I want to cite something from the introduction? Do this: Daniel Donno, in Machiavelli, *The Prince*, PAGE. Cecil Grayson, in Alberti,

4. Finally, make an argument: Is this concept of the 'Renaissance Man' real and based on real power and ability? Or, is it something more imaginary?
5. Be sure to back up your response with argument and evidence and not just conjecture and opinion.

Other Items of Consideration:

1. Typed.
2. Reasonable, 12-point font.
3. At least three pages; no more than four pages.
4. Must cite all sources in Chicago/Turabian—don't screw this up! I have modeled this above. Copy and paste if you must.
5. Must use footnotes.
6. Due at the beginning of class to the dropbox on D2L.

On Painting, PAGE. Notice how these are shorter—it's because it is the second time citing. You can shorten them!

History 4253: Ren/Ref

Paper Two: Love, Marriage, and Politics

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is two-fold. First, I want you to think about periodization: is it arbitrary, problematic, useful, exact, etc. Second, I want you to think about gender roles and how different people experience different events.

Background: We have finished the lectures on the Italian Renaissance, and you wrote a paper on the so-called "Renaissance Man." You have read *Giovanni and Lusanna*, while you will soon be reading "Did Women Have a Renaissance" by Joan Kelly-Gadol and *The Bürgermeister's Daughter* by Steven Ozment. Kelly-Gadol, as you will find, challenged the traditional periodization that we use as historians, suggesting that these periods (medieval, Renaissance, etc.) speak to male experience and not female experience. She also suggested that women *did not* have a Renaissance like that experienced by men. Instead, because "female chastity and passivity better suited the needs of the expanding bourgeoisie and declining nobility,"⁵ women suffered a setback and were subordinated in position. Looking at the tale of Giovanni and Lusanna, this idea might be confirmed. Yet, it could also be disputed, especially if we accept Brucker's championing of Lusanna and her abilities despite her social class. Similarly, *The Bürgermeister's Daughter* tells of Anna Büschler who often defied the social mores of the sixteenth century.

Instructions: In the format of a formal paper (introduction, thesis, body paragraphs, and conclusion all required):

1. Review *Giovanni and Lusanna*.⁶
2. Read "Did Women Have a Renaissance" and *The Bürgermeister's Daughter*.⁷
3. Answer:
 - a. Did women have a Renaissance (and Reformation) or were they limited by the rise of the merchant class and the decline of the nobility?
 - b. What can we learn from these combined works about women, men, relationships, class, periodization, ideology, etc. (hint: you might think about how different people experience different events)?

Other Items of Consideration:

1. Typed.
2. Reasonable, 12-point font.
3. At least three pages; no more than four pages.

⁵ Joan Kelly-Gadol, "Did Women Have a Renaissance," *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, 1st edition, eds. Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), 175.

⁶ Gene Brucker, *Giovanni and Lusanna: Love and Marriage in Renaissance Florence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). Page number, anyone?

⁷ Steven Ozment, *The Bürgermeister's Daughter: Scandal in a Sixteenth-Century German Town* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1997), PAGE.

4. Must cite all sources in Chicago/Turabian—don't screw this up! I have modeled this below. Copy and paste if you must.
5. Must use footnotes.
6. Due at the beginning of class to the dropbox on D2L.

History 4253: Ren/Ref

Paper Three: Luther—More Than Just Religion

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to dispel certain beliefs about periods of time and to better understand how something classified as religious might have social, political, and cultural ramifications. I want you to see the whole and not just the part.

Background: We are making our way through the lectures over the Reformation. We have read and discussed *The Bürgermeister's Daughter*. In the near future you should read Luther's *Three Treatises*, *Peasant Fires: The Drummer of Niklashausen*, and "[The Twelve Articles of the Peasants](#)."⁸

As you will soon find out, the Reformation paved the way for more than just religious reform. It also helped spur social and political reform by challenging the social and political conventions of the period. Why? Simply put, Luther's message resonated with the peasants, and the peasants became cranky. As Steven Ozment notes,

in Swabia and Franconia the vast majority of peasants rebelled against their secular and ecclesiastical landlords in 1525, culminating decades of determined but lesser protest. They did so in the name of some of Martin Luther's most popular teachings, particularly the freedom and equality of all Christians and the right of local congregations and depose their own (Evangelical) pastors.⁹

Similarly, Richard Wunderli describes the peasants of Niklashausen as "trapped socially, economically, politically, and mentally in their own peasant world of poverty."¹⁰ It is no wonder that the peasantry, under the leadership of Hans the Drummer, wanted to "kill the ravenous priests. Kill them all."¹¹

The Task:

1. Review *The Bürgermeister's Daughter*.
2. Read Luther's *Three Treatises*
3. Read *Peasant Fires*
4. Read "The Twelve Articles of the Peasants."
5. Answer the following questions:
 - a. How did the Reformation, which was religious, upend society, social norms, and social behaviors?

⁸ "Twelve Articles of the Peasants," in James Harvey Robinson, *Readings in European History, A Collection of extracts from the sources chosen with the purpose of illustrating the progress of culture in Western Europe since the German Invasions*, Vol. II (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1904-6), 94-99.

⁹ Steven Ozment, *The Bürgermeister's Daughter* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1997), 79.

¹⁰ Richard Wunderli, *Peasant Fires: The Drummer of Niklashausen* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 34.

¹¹ Wunderli, *Peasant Fires*, 97.

- b. How did Luther's ideas about spiritual egalitarianism resonate with the peasantry?
- c. Finally, what did Luther mean and what did the peasants hear: was Luther really advocating for social reform or not? Be sure to incorporate all three readings listed above.

Other Items of Consideration:

1. Typed.
2. Reasonable, 12-point font.
3. At least three pages; no more than four pages.
4. Must cite all sources in Chicago/Turabian—don't screw this up! I have modeled this above. Copy and paste if you must.
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