

BLHS-107-40 The Early Modern World

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Mondays, 5:25 PM-10:00 PM, Summer 2012

Berkley Center Conference Room, 3307 M Street NW Suite 200

Georgetown University (SCS)

Credits: 4

General Course Description:

This course examines the rise of modernity, from roughly the opening of the 16th century to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. Units will study the Reformation, Humanism, and the Counter-Reformation, the literature of Shakespeare and Donne, the rise of scientific method and early modern science, and the early theories of the modern self and the modern nation-state. We will study representative texts situated within the social, economic, political, religious, and cultural history of the early modern world.

The course will be conducted mostly through discussion and in-depth analysis of the assigned readings, with some background lectures as appropriate. Students should be prepared to participate actively, based on a thoughtful reading of the texts.

Course Goals

- To explore and understand the intellectual, material, and historical character of the early modern world.
- To understand the arguments early modern thinkers made for new ways to envision human life in its many facets through religious, literary, and philosophical texts and with attention to other theoretical, cultural, and literary forms
- To understand the impact of the Reformation on the Christian Church and on theories of individuality and humanity.
- To explore new visions of human knowledge and methods for understanding the world, particularly with the rise of early modern scientific methods

This course will allow the student to analyze and summarize issues in the early modern world, from roughly the close of the medieval period in the 15th century to the rise of the modern nation-state and the Peace of Westphalia (1648). Student learning will be documented on the written descriptions and analyses of texts from specific representative time periods, and the analytical papers will show how the student reflects synthetically and analytically on the issues. Successful students will gain knowledge about the theoretical and historical issues of the time period and be able to engage in analytical reasoning about the following issues:

- 1) Articulate the diversity of thought about the intellectual, material, and historical character represented in the early modern world.
- 2) Describe the basic issues of Reformation and Renaissance thought and

articulate the transformations from the medieval religious situation.

3) Articulate the impact of the Reformation on the transforming Christian Church and on theories of individuality and humanity at the dawn of modernity.

4) Articulate the arguments early modern thinkers made for new ways to envision human life in its many facets, including the relation of the self to the Divine, the moral relation between persons, and the political relation between each and every other human.

5) Understand and describe the new modes of human freedom, manifest in transformed moral, social, and political realities, unlocked by the Reformation and Renaissance thinkers

6) Describe the new modes of human knowledge of the self, of nature, and the Divine, analyzing the relation of these to changes in moral, political, and religious thought and institutions.

7) Articulate how these new modes of human knowledge and methods for understanding the world, particularly about the natural world and causality, gave shape to modern scientific methods and the basic contours of a new cosmology

8) Explore and utilize a variety of genres and methods, including literary, religious, philosophical, historical, and political theories, to comprehend at a general level the diversity of scientific, religious, literary, and philosophical texts and thought of the early modern period.

Expectations and Assignments

- You should strive to achieve the **ideals of a liberal arts education**: free and candid exchange of ideas, rigorous critique of claims, and toleration for considering variant positions.
- **Thoughtful reading** of the texts in preparation for the class is expected and essential.
- Students should be prepared to participate actively in each week's seminar discussions. **Participation in class is worth 15% of your grade.**
 - Students are expected to be 'ready' to participate at each moment, including 'being called upon' and to discuss and analyze the arguments of particular texts. I will take note of students who do well, poorly, or are not adequately prepared for class. To receive the full credit for class participation, students do not need to ask brilliant questions or answer questions correctly in all circumstances; rather, the credit will be received when it is clear that a good faith attempt has been made by the student to read and comprehend the material and the student can ask reasonable questions about the material, even if they may on occasion not be perfectly correct in their understanding of a particular case or issue. If it is clear that students did not make a good faith effort to read and understand material, and do not make a good faith effort to participate in class (either in passing when directly asked a question or in never voluntarily contributing on their own), then they will receive reduced or no credit for class participation.

- **Class Presentations:** Each week, one or two students may volunteer (or may be assigned) to undertake the task of co-leading the class discussion. We will discuss this more in class, but in general, your task will be to help present an overview of key themes and issues from the reading and pose questions which the class should consider, as related to the topic of the course. Brief handouts are encouraged. Depending on the flow of class discussions, this may not be necessary.
 - This participation portion of the grade will take into account familiarity with the readings, your active and keen questioning of the text and your colleagues, attendance, your time as a discussion leader, and the quality of your class participation in general.
- **Grades:** The grading scale for the course will be:
 - A 93-100 Excellent work
 - A- 90-92
 - B+ 88-89
 - B 83-87 Good work
 - B- 80-82
 - C+ 78-79
 - C 73-77 Average work
 - C- 69-72
 - D+ 66-68
 - D 60-65 Poor work
 - F Below 60 Failure to present satisfactory work
- You may use your **Laptop Computers** in class for note-taking, for looking up relevant items on the web related to class issues, and for referring to related class readings. All other uses of laptops during class time are unacceptable.
- Students must adhere to the principles of conduct set forth in the Georgetown University **Honor System** unconditionally. I assume you have read the honor code material located at www.georgetown.edu/honor, and in particular have read the following documents: Honor Council Pamphlet, “What is Plagiarism?”, “Sanctioning Guidelines”, and “Expedited Sanctioning Process.”
 - Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge:
 - *In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.*
 - Any sign of violations, including plagiarism, dishonesty, or cheating will be referred to the Honor Council and your Dean(s).

information. The Center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.

Readings

The seminar will involve close textual readings and discussion. Students are expected to attend class with the readings. Some readings will be distributed via email in .pdf format (and may be distributed as well in hard copy format). The following books are available for purchase at the Leavey Center Bookstore:

1. Luther and Calvin, *On Secular Authority* (Cambridge, Hopfl, ed.) ISBN: 0521349869
2. Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* (Bantam, Bevington ed.) ISBN: 0553212990
3. Shakespeare, *MacBeth* (Bantam, Bevington ed.) ISBN: 0553212982
4. Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Chicago, Mansfield ed.) ISBN: 0226500381

Schedule

- Week 1 (May 14): Introduction: The Early Modern World
- Week 2 (May 21): Ideals of Renaissance Humanism and Late Medieval Catholic Thought:
- Pico della Mirandola—*Oration on the Dignity of Man* (handout)
 - Louis Dupre—*Passage to Modernity* (handout)
- Week 3 (May 28) The Reformation: Luther and Erasmus on Free Will and Bondage of the Will:
- Selections from Luther: *Pagan Servitude of the Church, The Bondage of the Will, and 95 Theses* (handout);
 - Erasmus: *The Freedom of the Christian* (handout)
- Week 4&5 (June 4/11): The Reformation: Luther and Calvin on Politics:
- In Hopfl: Luther: *On Secular Authority*, pp. 3-43;
 - In Hopfl: Calvin: *On Civil Government*, pp. 47-86;
 - **Paper #1 due June 6**
- Week 6 (June 18): The Radical Reformation and The Counter-Reformation:
- Background: Nicolas of Cusa: *Catholic Concordance*
 - Muentzer and a few other handouts from the radical reformers;
 - Ignatius of Loyola: *Spiritual Exercises* (handout);
 - Council of Trent (handout);
 - Teresa of Avila (handout);
 - Vitoria (handout)
- Week 7 (June 25): Machiavelli—*The Prince* **Paper #2 due June 27**
- Week 8 (July 2): Shakespeare—*MacBeth*
- Weeks 9 (July 9): Shakespeare—*The Merchant of Venice*

- Week 10 (July 16): Shakespeare—continued **Paper #3 due July 18**
- Week 11 (July 23): Montaigne—*The Essays* (selections)
- Week 12 (July 30): Early Modern Science:
- Copernicus, Tycho, Kepler, and Galileo (handouts);
 - Bacon and empirical methods (selections)
- Week 13 (August 6): Early Modern Theology:
- Grotius (handout)
 - Milton (handout)
 - Fenelon (handout)
 - Hooker—*Laws of Ecclesiastical Piety* (selection)

Final paper due on August 15