

Graduate courses with a Renaissance / early modern focus offered in the fall of 2023

REN-R501 The Culture of the Renaissance (4 cr.) will be taught by Sarah Van der Laan and will meet with CMLT-C 525 and ENG-L 611 — Wednesdays 1:50-4:20 in Ballantine Hall 237

The early modern period in European history begins in the late Middle Ages and arrives at the threshold of the Enlightenment, encompassing the birth of humanism, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the European wars of religion, and the scientific revolution. This course charts both historical continuity and cultural change to ask how this rich, paradoxical, and often contradictory age remains profoundly distant from our own yet laid the foundations of the modern world.

The course is organized as a series of interlocking investigations into the forces that shaped the early modern world: courts and court culture, book and print culture, networks of knowledge, humanism, encounters with the world beyond Europe and the beginnings of European colonialism. It explores the impact of those forces across national and disciplinary boundaries, drawing on both primary texts and secondary readings. Blending cultural history and literary criticism, this course introduces students to a range of methodological and theoretical approaches to studying the distant past.

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

CMLT-C 525 The Culture of the Renaissance
Taught by Sarah Van der Laan
Wednesdays 1:50-4:20, Ballantine Hall 237

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ENGLISH

ENG-L 646 / L 740 Pastoral: A Critical Genealogy
Taught by Shannon Gayk
Mondays 3-6pm, Ballantine Hall 018

This seminar will explore the long history of a single literary mode—the pastoral. Over the course of the semester, we will think carefully about what constitutes pastoral, from its premodern poetic pasts to its practical and speculative agrarian futures. To do so, we will read widely and diachronically, beginning with Theocritus, Virgil, Hesiod, and Ovid, touching on medieval agrarian writings, considering the popularity of pastoral in the Renaissance, moving through the pastoral elegies of Milton and Wordsworth, examining the nonfiction pastoral of American nature writing, and concluding with the anti-, neo-, and post-pastoralism of

contemporary poetry and prose. Our transhistorical reading in the primary corpus will be matched with an equally expansive survey of critical and theoretical discussions of pastoral by Frank Kermode, Raymond Williams, Leo Marx, Paul Alpers, Annabel Patterson, Terry Gifford, Lawrence Buell, and many others. As we consider this corpus, we will reflect on the radical and conservative affinities of the mode, its intersection with other modes (especially elegy and lyric), its shifting relationship to industrialization and technology, its representation of the status of the rural and the urban, and its influence on the development of ecocritical methodologies. The course will be open-ended, and the direction we take in the final weeks will be based in part on the interests of students. Assignments will include an in-class presentation, a short piece of public writing, participation in a class project with the Center for Rural Engagement, and a final paper or creative project (conference-length for L646 and article-length for L740).

[For this course to count towards the Renaissance Studies minor, the final project needs to be on a Renaissance / early modern topic.]

ENG-L 611 The Culture of the Renaissance
Taught by Sarah Van der Laan
Wednesdays 1:50-4:20, Ballantine Hall 237

See description of this course above.

FRENCH AND ITALIAN

FRIT-F 630 Expressions of Absolutism, between Dream and Nightmare
Taught by Hall Bjørnstad
Tuesdays 4:30-6:30pm, Ballantine Hall 135

In recent years the label of “absolutism” has frequently been used about present-day autocratic rulers from Trump and Putin to Orbán and Erdoğan. But what exactly is conveyed by such a characterization? What *is* absolutism today and what *was* it back in its heyday under Louis XIV at Versailles? In this course, we will explore the logic and political imaginary undergirding the age of Louis XIV, not only to understand the past but also our own present.

This inquiry has its origin in a historiographic conundrum. As modern historians have long noted, the study of the absolutist culture under Louis XIV has resulted in “the contradiction of an absolutism that we know incomparably well in its details but without a good grasp of its totality or coherence” (Cosandey and Descimon). In this course we will aim at getting at this “totality and coherence” by approaching the concept differently from what most historians have done. As an analytic tool, the notion is useful less on account of its indexical value – pointing to a stable definition or sparking discussion on what that definition should be – than because it brings into focus the practices of self-representation that found and sustain the power of the king. Indeed, the only place where absolutism incontestably exists is in its manifestations, in the image of itself that royal power projects outwards but also inwards.

We will study this dynamic by looking closely at various artistic expressions of absolutism (court festivals, theater, poetry, architecture, portraiture, etc.) that respond to and help construct the image of Louis XIV. The collective and interdisciplinary endeavor of the course, where each participant will specialize in a specific expression, is organized in the firm conviction that if not the totality, then certainly the coherence of French absolutism under Louis XIV best can be grasped through a careful examination of the various aspects of its expressions. We will look particularly closely at instances where the collective celebratory dream of absolutism may seem, for us as modern observers, intriguingly close to a nightmare, as in situations of military defeat or with the introduction of seemingly “tyrannic” administrative measures (e.g. with the revocation of the nearly

century-long relative religious toleration of the Edict of Nantes and the introduction of the infamous slave code known as *Le Code Noir*, both in 1685).

Readings will include primary texts by Molière, Racine, Boileau, La Fontaine, Bossuet, Perrault, Félibien, and Louis XIV himself, as well as critical essays by Louis Marin, Peter Burke, Roger Chartier, Norbert Elias, and Patrick Boucheron, among others. Weekly response papers and scaffolded final research project, where approaches that pursue the parallel between absolutism then and now are encouraged. All readings in French (English translations available). Seminar conducted in English.

FRIT-M 604 The Italian Erudite Comedy

Taught by Massimo Scalabrini

Wednesdays 4-6pm, Woodburn Hall 007

In this course we will analyze in depth the Italian *commedia erudita*, from Ludovico Ariosto to Giordano Bruno. We will pay attention to the classical models and the humanist antecedents, the style and the themes of the genre. We will also discuss the role played by this genre in what has been defined the “great comic culture” of the Italian Renaissance. We will do so by engaging the current scholarship and in conversation with key theoretical reflections on comedy from classical antiquity, the Renaissance, and the modern era. Students will give a presentation, take a final exam, write a short review article as well as a research paper. The course will be conducted in English.

SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE

HISP-S 569 Archives and the Colonial project

Taught by Kathleen Myers

Thursdays 4:45-7:15, BH 123

This course will explore the vital role of archives in the creation of knowledge systems and the promotion of imperial and nation-building narratives and projects. Defining colonialism broadly across temporal and geographical boundaries, but with a special focus on the Hispanic world, we will study recent theory about decolonizing the archives and consider how collections are created, maintained, and used within distinct historical and geographical settings from early modern times to the early 21st century. We also will explore who is represented in the archive and why, and how we can engage with archival materials in our own research projects.

The course will be divided into three complementary segments. First, we will read about the creation of a variety of archival systems (private and state manuscripts and books, museum materials, film, etc.) and discuss such issues as who maintains archival materials and who is allowed access to them. Next, we will study concrete examples of curated materials (for example, Spain’s first chronicler of America, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Juan Francisco Manzano, Pablo Neruda, Spanish film during the Franco era, the creation of the Museo del Templo Mayor etc.), focusing on how archival and digitized materials have been employed to bring new readings and methods of inquiry to a variety of disciplines, including literary and cultural studies, history, and anthropology. The last section of the course will consist of hands-on experience working in archives at IU (for example, the Lilly Library, the Mesoamerican Archive, and others depending on student interest) and digital archives in individual students’ research area. Students will be encouraged to select materials at one of the IU sites and a digital site outside of IU that coincides with their field of specialization or a field they would like to explore. This course will focus primarily on Spanish-based texts in the Humanities but is open

to students working in any time period, as well as students working in other languages. Course assignments will include a report on an archive, a cultural analysis of material from an archive, draft of a grant to fund further work, and a final project.

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