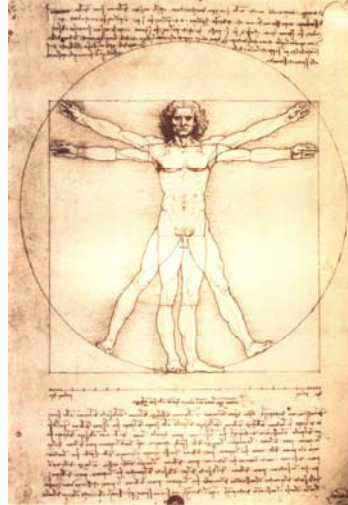


**Knowing and Unknowing in  
Early Modern Europe  
History 337 (3 units)  
Spring 2010  
MWF 2:10 – 3  
T-A 1**



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Europe in the early modern period can be talked about in two basic and different ways. This period saw the intensification of regional and national identities, identities that by the end of the period would lead to the rise of the modern nation-state. This period also saw profound ideological changes that were discussed and debated in an international community of letters, comprised of intellectuals, scholars, clergy, and statesmen across national boundaries. The time is one of both change and stability, of both multinational community and regional particularism.

This course will focus on ideological changes, those that were discussed in the community of letters, rather than events that contributed to the formation of individual nation-states. We will focus our analysis of intellectual life in the period by looking at one central theme – the dichotomy of knowing and unknowing. How did early moderns know what they knew? How did they prove it? How did they argue? Who had access to what kind of knowledge? Was there a virtue to unknowing, such as in the cases of religious mysticism, intuition, or folly? Did ignorance have its own wisdom? This semester, we will be considering these questions as a way of understanding aspects of early modern mentalities.

Class time will consist of a mixture of lecture, discussion of primary source texts, and group activities. The goal will be to use primary source documents and insights from historians to go beyond a dry recitation of facts, in favor of a deeper understanding of people who lived in the past. We will both learn about their experiences and think about the ways in which their lives and thoughts have provided and continue to provide a framework for our own.

This course is an upper-level division course in Europe before or after 1500 for the History major or minor. The only prerequisite for this course is English 214. This course also counts as one of the social science electives for the European Area Studies minor.

It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with documented

disabilities must register with the DPRC to facilitate the reasonable accommodations process. Students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor. The Disability Programs and Resource Center is available to facilitate the reasonable accommodations process. The DPRC, located in SSB 110, can be reached by telephone at 338-2724 (voice/TTY) or by e-mail at [dprc@sfsu.edu](mailto:dprc@sfsu.edu).

Academic integrity is a fundamental principle of the university. Academic dishonesty, in the form of cheating or plagiarism, represents an attempt to gain an unfair advantage and it is expressly prohibited by the San Francisco State University Student Code of Conduct. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, gaining unfair access to answers to exams, fabrication of work, helping other students to cheat, etc. Plagiarism can be defined as using another person's words or work without proper acknowledgment (see also <http://online.sfsu.edu/~rone/StudentHelp/Plagiarism.html#what> for more information on avoiding plagiarism). Students who are found to have cheated or plagiarized will be subject to discipline ranging from receiving a failing grade for the specific assignment to referral to the Office of Judicial Affairs and Student Discipline to possible suspension or expulsion. All instances of academic dishonesty are reported to the Department Chair and College Dean. Students are responsible for knowing the SFSU regulations concerning cheating and plagiarism, found in the University Bulletin and online at: <http://www.sfsu.edu/%7Ehelpdesk/docs/rules/conduct.htm>.

### **Goals and Objectives for the course –**

In this course, we will strive to:

- Learn about the experiences of people from the past,
- Work together to learn how to read and interpret historical documents,
- Conduct enthusiastic and respectful discussions in the classroom,
- Improve writing skills and produce clear, well-organized essays,
- Think about the ways in which ideas can change societies.

### **Attendance Policy –**

Attendance and participation will make up 10% of your final grade for the course. You are encouraged to ask questions at any time and are expected to participate in any class activity, discussion, or exercise. An attendance sheet will be passed around at the beginning of every class. You must sign the sheet in order to be counted as present. If you need to arrive late, please make sure you sign in before you leave the room at the end of class.

The classroom is a special environment in which students and faculty come together to promote learning and growth. It is essential to this learning environment that respect for the rights of others seeking to learn, respect for the professionalism of the instructor, and the general goals of academic freedom are maintained. Differences of viewpoint or concerns should be expressed in terms which are supportive of the learning process.

## Readings –

There is no textbook for this course. Basic information that you need in order to understand the primary source readings will be given in the Monday lectures.

Most of our primary source readings will be found on-line on our course website. On-line readings will be available in .pdf format. These can be read with the Adobe Acrobat reader, which can be downloaded for free. When the readings are posted on-line, **please either print out the on-line excerpt or take detailed notes on the text.** You can access the on-line readings at **ilearn.sfsu.edu** – log in with your ID# and pin#.

There are two required books that will be available at the SFSU bookstore. Peter Mancall's *Travel Narratives from the Age of Discovery: An Anthology* is a collection of excerpts from early modern travelogues, and Francois Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* is an early French novel. We will be reading longer selections from these two books, and your two essays will be based on them. You may use any edition of these two books that you like or borrow them from libraries (plan ahead, if you want to do this – "I couldn't get the book" is not a valid excuse), but you must acquire copies of them. These readings will not be found on-line.

Peter Mancall, *Travel Narratives from the Age of Discovery: An Anthology*, ISBN 978-0195155976

Francois Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, M.A. Screech, trans., Penguin Classics edition, ISBN 978-0140445503

## Course Requirements –

In addition to informed and enthusiastic participation in class activities, discussions, and exercises, students in the course will also complete two short essays and a group presentation to help the class review for the final. The two essays will be completed at home and handed in at the start of class on the days that they are due. If the assignments are late, they will immediately lose points and will continue to drop in score the longer they are late. The course will also feature a midterm exam in week 9 and a final exam in December, which will cover material from the entire course.

The course grade will be determined as follows:

Participation and attendance: 10%  
First essay (5 pp., due week 4): 15%  
Midterm (week 9): 10%  
Second essay (5 pp., due week 10): 25%  
Group presentation (week 15): 15%  
Final exam: 25%

If you are a History major and have already completed Hist 300, you may have the option to write a primary source research paper (10 – 15 pp.) in lieu of the two essays. You will choose the topic and create your own thesis. If you choose this option, you must have your topic approved by the professor before week 5. You will hand in a thesis statement 2/26, a first draft 4/23, and the final version 5/14. The thesis statement will count 5% toward the final grade, the first draft 10%, and the final paper 25%.

If you are a graduate student, you will write a primary source research paper or secondary source historiographical essay (20 pp. +) in lieu of the two essays and midterm. You are advised to hand in a thesis statement and first draft, but they will not count toward your final grade. The research paper will count 50% toward the final grade.

### **Syllabus –**

This syllabus and schedule are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. **If you are absent from class**, it is your responsibility to check on announcements made while you were absent. If you are not present in class to pick up a worksheet or assignment sheet, they will also be available on-line.

When the syllabus says a text is on-line, it can be found on our course website. **Log on to our website at [ilearn.sfsu.edu](http://ilearn.sfsu.edu) by putting in your ID # and pin #.**

### **PART I: KNOWING IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE**

#### WEEK 1 – Beginnings and Definitions

1/25: Course Introduction

1/27: Lecture – The Black Death

1/29: Discussion – Boccaccio's *Decameron*

- Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, excerpts (on-line)

#### WEEK 2 – Renaissance Humanism

2/1: Lecture – Renaissance Humanism

2/3: Discussion – Petrarch

- Petrarch, “The Ascent of Mount Ventoux” (on-line)

2/5: Activity – Presentations on Renaissance Art

#### WEEK 3 – Reformations, Protestant and Catholic

2/8: Lecture – Religious Reform

2/10: Discussion – The Protestant Reformation

- Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, excerpts (on-line)

2/12: Discussion – The Catholic Reformation

- Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, excerpts (on-line)

WEEK 4 – Travel Knowledge

2/15: Lecture – Travel and Travelogues in the Early Modern World

2/17: Discussion – Travel to the East

- Peter Mancall, ed., *Travel Narratives from the Age of Discovery: An Anthology*, excerpts

2/19: STATE BUDGET CLOSURE DAY – NO CLASS

**ESSAY (5 pp.), due in class Wednesday 2/24 – Write a clear, well-organized essay with a coherent thesis statement using the travelogues from Peter Mancall’s *Travel Narratives from the Age of Discovery*. Questions will be distributed in class on 2/12. This assignment must be typed and double-spaced with sensible margins, must include footnotes or parenthetical citations, and must have a bibliography or Works Cited page. Please use Times New Roman 12 for your type font. You do not have to confine yourself to the selections assigned for class, but you are not expected to do additional research beyond the book itself.**

WEEK 5 – Map-making and Representations of the World

2/22: STATE BUDGET CLOSURE DAY – NO CLASS

2/24: Lecture – Mapmaking and Imaginative Geography in Premodern Europe

2/26: Discussion – “Cartefacts”

- Look at ilearn site for maps for discussion (on-line)

WEEK 6 – Scientific Revolution

3/1: Lecture – Scientific Revolution

3/3: Discussion – Copernicus

- Nicolaus Copernicus, selections from *On the revolutions*, Edward Rosen, trans., xix – xxi, pp. 3 – 22 (on-line)

3/5: Discussion – Galileo

- Galileo Galilei, “Letter to the Grand-Duchess Christina” and “Abjuration” from *The Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, printed in *The Galileo affair : a documentary history* (on-line)

WEEK 7 – The Age of Reason

3/8: Lecture – The Seventeenth-Century Worldview

3/10: Discussion – Descartes

- Rene Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, excerpts (on-line)

3/12: Discussion – Hobbes and Locke

- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, excerpts (on-line)

- John Locke, *Two Treatises of Civil Government*, excerpts (on-line)

WEEK 8 – The Enlightenment

3/15: Lecture – The Enlightenment

3/17: Discussion – *The Encyclopédie*

- Denis Diderot, et.al., entries from *The Encyclopédie* (on-line)

3/19: Lecture – Women in the Enlightenment

WEEK 9 – Review Week and Midterm

3/22: Midterm Review

3/24: **MIDTERM EXAM – IN CLASS**

3/26: STATE BUDGET CLOSURE DAY – NO CLASS

SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES 3/29 – 4/2

**PART II: UNKNOWNING IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE**

WEEK 10 – Utopia

4/5: STATE BUDGET CLOSURE DAY – NO CLASS

4/7: Lecture – The Road to Nowhere: Travels to Utopia

4/9: Discussion – Thomas More

- Thomas More, *Utopia*, excerpts (on-line)

WEEK 11 – The Wisdom of Folly

4/12: Lecture – The Fool in Early Modern Thought

4/14: Discussion – Erasmus

- Desiderius Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, excerpts (on-line)
- Francois Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Book 3: Prologue, pp. 239 – 247

4/16: Discussion - Rabelais

- Francois Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Book 3: chs. 7 – 10, pp. 262 – 271, ch. 25, pp. 306 – 310, chs. 29 – 38, pp. 319 – 343, chs. 45 – 48, pp. 357 – 365.

**ESSAY (5 pp.), due in class Monday, 4/19 – Write a clear, well-organized essay with a coherent thesis statement, using Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Questions will be distributed in class 4/9. This assignment must be typed and double-spaced with sensible margins, must include footnotes or parenthetical citations, and must have a bibliography or Works Cited page. Please use Times New Roman 12 for your type font. You do not have to confine yourself to the selections assigned for class, but you are not expected to do additional research beyond the book itself.**

WEEK 12 – Magic and Witchcraft

4/19: Lecture – Black Magic, White Magic

4/21: Discussion – Mystical Thought and Practice

- Tyson, Donald, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy, Written by Henry Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim*, excerpts (on-line)

4/23: Discussion – The Witch Craze

- *Witchcraft in Europe, 400-1700 : a Documentary History*, Alan Kors and Edward Peters, eds., selections from the *Malleus Maleficarum* and the trial of Suzanne Gaudry (on-line).

WEEK 13 – Mysticism

4/26: Lecture – The Cloud of Unknowing

4/28: Discussion – Mystical Thought and Practice

- Author unknown, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, excerpts (on-line)
- Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*, excerpts (on-line)

4/30: Group Preparation for Class Presentations

WEEK 14 – Limits to Knowledge in the Enlightenment

5/3: Lecture – The Dark Side of the Enlightenment

5/5: Discussion – Captain Cook

- Captain James Cook, *Journals*, excerpts (on-line)
- Tony Horwitz, *Blue Latitudes*, excerpts (on-line)

5/7: Group Preparation for Class Presentations

WEEK 15 – Review week

5/10: Class Presentations

5/12: Class Presentations

5/14: Class Presentations

**CLASS PRESENTATIONS, due in class 5/10 – 5/14. Guidelines and assignment will be given in class 4/28, and groups will have two class sessions and any additional time they choose to prepare.**

**FINAL EXAM – Monday, May 17, 1:30 – 4**