History 211

Foundations of Western Civilization

TTH 11:00-12:15,

Professor Elizabeth McCahill

Office: McCormack 4-645

Office Hours: TTH 12:30-2:30 and by appointment. I will be on campus most Wednesdays, so email me if you would like to meet on a Wednesday. Please do not come to my office with questions right before class.

Phone: 617-287-6864 Email: Elizabeth.McCahill@umb.edu

We are lucky enough to have a wonderful graduate assistant assigned to History 211. You can contact Tara Lynch for questions about any aspect of the course. I especially recommend that you ask her for help preparing for exams. The best way to reach Tara is through her UMB email, Tara.Lynch001@umb.edu. She will have weekly office hours at a time to be determined.
Course Description:

Because of the large time span covered (approximately 2400 years), this course does not offer a complete picture of pre-modern Western history. Instead, we will consider a series of complex primary texts and work together to understand some of the issues that mattered most to Europeans in the period between 800 BC and 1600 AD. Why was it so important to Homer that Achilles return the body of Hector? In what ways did the tragic heroine Antigone and the famous philosopher Socrates decide to practice civil disobedience? Why was the hero Aeneas praised first and foremost for his piety? How did Paul’s idea of religious commitment turn this Roman ideal of piety on its head? What was the process by which corrupt kings provoked important constitutional innovations in the ancient, medieval, and early modern West? What prompted the Christian poet Dante to choose the pagan poet Virgil as his guide through Hell and Purgatory? And why did Martin Luther’s personal religious breakthrough have such important social and political consequences?

As these questions suggest, the course is premised on the idea that literary, political, judicial and religious texts can all offer important insights into the culture of an age. We will read primary sources simultaneously as products of their own, very particular periods and also as works that have helped to shape modern Western culture—and thus all the cultures that have been impacted by the West. As the course progresses, we will not only analyze the works in isolation but also compare and contrast their messages and agendas. The goals of the course are to explore some of the problems and issues that helped to shape European culture, to achieve an appreciation of a diverse range of primary sources, and to hone your ability to make sophisticated arguments about historical texts both orally and in writing.

Course Structure:

There is only one required book for this class, a short textbook:


The textbook is intended to provide background information and context. However, most of the class will be based on primary source readings, all of which are available on the course libguide. The libguide site is [http://umb.libguides.com/hist211](http://umb.libguides.com/hist211). **Please bring a copy of all assigned readings to class. You may bring an appropriate electronic device to class if you do not want to print out the libguide readings. You may also share a copy of the readings with a partner. It is essential that you have in-class access to the libguide readings in some form.**

In addition to primary source readings, the libguide also includes discussion questions, information about assignments, class power points (posted after class), and other relevant information. Please add this site as a “favorite” on your computer and look at it to see what is posted before emailing Tara or me with questions about tests, papers, etc.

In general, the textbook questions posted on libguide ask you to pick out salient facts, and the primary source questions call for more interpretation. Most classes will begin with discussion of the textbook questions; then, I will lecture to provide additional context for the primary texts assigned for that day. We will spend the remainder of class time analyzing the primary texts.
together. I will be calling on individuals for answers to the questions posted on libguide, and they will also be the basis for small group discussions and activities. While you do not have to write out a formal answer to the questions, I strongly suggest that you take some notes so that you will be ready to respond to them.

**Course Requirements:**

**PARTICIPATION: 15%**

One of the most important requirements for this class is thoughtful, informed participation at each of our meetings. To achieve this, you must read all the material assigned for a particular day before we meet. Each student will be graded on participation after each class. If you do not attend class, you will receive a 0 for participation for that day. More than three absences will seriously jeopardize your participation grade and your ability to succeed in the class. However, it is important to remember that even perfect attendance will not give you a good participation grade unless you also engage in class discussions. If speaking in class is difficult for you, please come to see me so we can talk about strategies that might help you.

**PAPERS: 45%**

February 18: 2-3 pg. paper, 10%

March 31: 3-4 pg. paper, 15%

May 10: 5-7 pg. paper, 20%

The purpose of these papers is to develop your ability to make interesting, original arguments about primary texts. For all three papers, you will be asked to construct an argument using two primary sources. Topics will be suggested, but you are also encouraged to develop a topic of your own. While you may want or need to cite material from the textbook or lecture to provide context for your argument, your focus in these essays should be on the primary sources. We will be discussing how to develop original theses, the construction of convincing arguments, and proper forms of citation in class.

**GENERAL PAPER GUIDELINES**

All papers should be double spaced, with 12 pt. Times New Roman font, and 1 inch margins. Please note that I will be grading the style, organization, and English composition of your papers, as well as their intellectual substance. Therefore, you should make every effort to write clear, grammatical English. Except in extraordinary circumstances, which should be discussed with me BEFORE the paper is due, late papers will be penalized by a grade reduction. All papers should be submitted in hard copy AND emailed to me. Elizabeth.McCahill@umb.edu.
EXAMS: 40%

March 8: Exam on Ancient Greece and Rome, 10%

April 19: Exam on the Middle Ages 10%

Final Exam Period: Exam on Early Modern Europe and the course as a whole, 20% (10% ids—early modern Europe only, 10% essay—cumulative)

Exams will consist primarily of ids. Lists of possible ids will be posted on libguide at the beginning of each of the three segments of the course. For the exams, you will be asked to discuss a certain number of the ids. (For example, there are 30 ids for the Ancient segment of the course. 11 of these will appear on the first exam and you will have to answer 8 of the 11). A full answer will include who or what the id is, where and when it lived/ took place/ was written or made, and, most importantly, what was its significance.

You will only be asked to write an in-class essay during the final exam. Questions for this essay will give you the opportunity to draw together some of the themes of the class. However, with the final essay as with earlier papers, it will be important to draw extensively on specific primary sources. Be sure that you will have access to all primary sources during the final exam.

PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THE FOLLOWING POLICIES FROM THE UNIVERSITY CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT

It is the expressed policy of the University that every aspect of academic life not only formal coursework situations, but all relationships and interactions connected to the educational process shall be conducted in an absolutely and uncompromisingly honest manner. The University presupposes that any submission of work for academic credit indicates that the work is the student’s own and is in compliance with University policies.

A. Academic Honesty Violations

The University defines violations to include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Submitting as one’s own an author’s published or unpublished work (e.g. material from a journal, Internet site, newspaper, encyclopedia), in whole, in part, or in paraphrase, without fully and properly crediting the author.
2. Submitting as one’s own work or materials obtained from another student, individual, or agency without full and proper attribution.
3. Submitting as one’s own work material that has been produced through unacknowledged or unauthorized collaboration with others.
4. Submitting substantially the same work to more than one course without prior approval from
all instructors involved: i.e., dual or multiple submission.

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10. Interfering with an instructor’s ability to evaluate accurately a student’s competence or performance; misleading any person in connection with one’s academic work.

We will be discussing when and how to cite sources correctly at various points throughout the semester.

The University Code of Conduct can be found at: http://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/policies/code

**Accommodations:** Your success in this class is important to me. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this class, please let me know as soon as possible so that we may work together to develop strategies for adapting assignments to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. The Ross Center for Disability Services at UMass Boston (617.287.7430), www.umb.edu/academics/vpass/disability provides resources for students with disabilities. You will need to provide documentation of disability to them in order to receive official university services and accommodations.

**Schedule of Classes and Assignments:**

**January 26: Introduction: Why study Western Civilization?**

Part I: Ancient Greece and Rome

**January 28: Archaic Greece**

Homer, *The Iliad*, excerpt from book 24—libguide
Hunt, 25-35, 47-61

**February 2: The Golden Age of Athens**

Thucydides, “Pericles’ Funeral Oration” from *History of the Peloponnesian War*—libguide
Hunt, 61-67, 75-86

**February 4: Athenian Drama**

Sophocles, excerpt from *Antigone*
Hunt, 86-90, 96-100

**February 9: The Peloponnesian War**

Thucydides, the “Melian Dialogue” and another passage from *The History of the Peloponnesian War*—libguide
Hunt, 100-106
February 11: A Critic of Athens
   Plato, *Apology*—libguide
   Hunt, 67-70, 90-96

February 16: Introduction to Roman History
   Livy, “Romulus and Remus” and “The Rape of Lucretia”—libguide
   Excerpts from the 12 Tables—libguide
   Hunt, 139-148

February 18: The Punic Wars and the Heyday of Republican Rome
   Polybius, “Rome at the End of the Punic Wars” from his *Histories*—libguide
   Hunt, 148-158

PAPER #1 MUST BE SUBMITTED DURING OR BEFORE CLASS ON FEBRUARY 18

February 23: The Fall of the Republic
   Cicero, *First Oration against Catiline*—libguide
   Hunt, 158-166

February 25: Augustus and the Creation of the Principate
   Augustus, *Res Gestae*—libguide
   Hunt, 169-177

March 1: A Roman Achilles?
   Virgil, *The Aeneid*, excerpts from books 2, 6 and 8—libguide

March 3: The Roman Empire and its Decline
   Marcus Aurelius, excerpt from the *Meditations*—libguide
   Hunt, 177-186

March 8: EXAM ON ANCIENT GREECE AND ROME

Part II: Late Antique and Medieval Europe

March 10: Introduction to Christianity
   Jesus, “Sermon on the Mount,” Matthew: 5-7—libguide
   Hunt, 186-199, 203-210

March 13-20 SPRING BREAK
March 22: The Dark Ages and the Rise of Monasticism

St. Benedict, excerpts from *The Rule of St. Benedict*—libguide
Two accounts of the conversion of Clovis—libguide
Hunt, 210-227

March 24: The Carolingian Renaissance

Einhard, excerpts from the *Life of Charlemagne*—libguide
Hunt, 251-260, 280-289

March 29: Feudalism: A useful historical category?

Selected sources from the Medieval History sourcebook—libguide
Hunt, 289-301

March 31: NO CLASS, PROFESSOR MCCAHILL AT CONFERENCE.

PAPER #2 DUE BY 12:15 MARCH 31—submit via email

April 5: The Crusades

Libguide readings tbd
Hunt, 322-327

April 7: The Magna Carta and the Investiture Controversy

*The Magna Carta*—libguide
Hunt, 312-319, 328-330, 344-349

April 12: Dante and Scholasticism

Dante, selected cantos from the *Divine Comedy*—libguide
Thomas Aquinas, excerpt from the *Summa Theologiae*—libguide
Hunt, 337-344, 375-380

April 14: Dante on Towns

Dante, selected cantos from the *Divine Comedy*—libguide
Hunt, 305-312, 380-382

April 19: EXAM ON THE MIDDLE AGES

Part III: Early Modern Europe

April 21: Dante, Boccaccio and the Origins of the Italian Renaissance

Dante, selected cantos from the *Divine Comedy*
Boccaccio, excerpt from the *Decameron*
Hunt, 386-389, 399-407, 408-411
April 26: Renaissance Thought

Bruni, *Panegyric on the City of Florence*—libguide
Hunt, 411-413, 418-427

April 28: Renaissance Art

Vasari, excerpts from *Life of Leonardo da Vinci*—libguide
Hunt, 414-418

May 3: New Worlds and the Age of Exploration

primary source reading TBD
Hunt, 431-436

May 5: Luther’s Breakthrough

Luther, excerpts from *The Freedom of a Christian*—libguide
Hunt, 436-448

May 10: New Worlds and New Science

Francis Bacon, *The New Atlantis*—libguide
Rene Descartes, excerpts from *Discourse on Method*—libguide
Hunt, 481-488

PAPER #3 MUST BE SUBMITTED DURING OR BEFORE CLASS ON MAY 10

FINAL EXAM DURING EXAM PERIOD