HIS BC 1101x    INTRODUCTION TO EUROPEAN HISTORY:
THE RENAISSANCE TO THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Required texts  (available for purchase at Book Culture):

Steven Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution* (Chicago).

Early modern European history is about fundamental problems that continue to engage us today: the consequences of human desire for riches, power, truth, and beauty. Now that you’re finally enrolled in college, you may wish to contemplate the benefits as well as the shortcomings of western culture in its formative period: the ideals of humanism, visible today in your own liberal arts education and institutions like research foundations and museums; the civic values of the Renaissance, alive in modern-day notions of civil society; the beliefs, values, and perils associated with religious freedom, perpetuated in contemporary practices and conflicts worldwide; innovative and sometimes brutal centralized political power, institutions and methods of governance; new modes of scientific inquiry that revised the way we understand life on this planet; social and political revolutions, replete with exhilarating and destructive ideals revived in later centuries; new forms of production and global realms of commercial relations,
along with the institution of slavery in American colonies; an enormous transformation of material life and patterns of consumption; and finally, a culmination of cultural practices associated with acquiring knowledge, including a fearless curiosity associated with the word “enlightenment.” All along the way, we will discuss why this material is worth knowing. To quote a recent book on colleges in the United States, this course should help you “in figuring out just what it is that’s worth wanting.” It may also, to quote W.E.B. DuBois, help you pursue the “one goal” of the “true college”: “not to earn meat, but to know the end and aim of that life which meat nourishes.”

Our approach is designed to engage students who are unfamiliar with European history and wish to learn both the subject matter and the methods used to understand the past. We shall meet for two lectures every week and discussion groups led by the teaching assistants. Attendance at all meetings is required. Please be an active participant. That means (1) keeping up with the assignments; (2) taking good notes at lectures and discussion groups; (3) reflecting on the material at hand, commenting and asking questions during lecture whenever appropriate; (4) participating in discussion class and turning in assignments on time. Because of the number of students in the class, no extensions will be given. Plan ahead and organize your time accordingly. Don’t hesitate to seek help when you need it.

Learning objectives, or what you can expect to achieve through successful completion of this course:

-- appreciation for the diversity and complexity of human experience
-- critical understanding of the relationship between past events and modern life
-- the ability to conduct close readings of key texts, primary and secondary
-- the ability to analyze and interpret historical material
-- the skill of responding constructively and critically to the views of others
-- the skill of presenting arguments cogently and logically in writing and speaking

Laptops will not be permitted in lectures. Please refrain from using cell phones in any way during class. Texting and even simply reading your email will distract others and detract from your ability to listen, take notes, and participate in discussions. Everyone loses by your exempting yourself from the rules; please be courteous and honor this request.

This syllabus and other supplementary material are available on Canvas. Make sure that you have created a shortcut to Canvas on your personal computer. You will need to follow your syllabus carefully in order to know what material you are responsible for at each meeting.

Required texts are available for purchase at Book Culture on 112th Street. If you need to economize, look for used copies of required books in stores around New York City or on the Internet. Assignments marked with an asterisk (*) indicate readings available through links on Canvas and/or on reserve. You are encouraged to xerox short reserve readings for personal use. Reading assignments will always be available at the Reserve Desk of the Barnard College interim library on the first floor of Barnard Hall.
The course requirements are as follows:

- a 4-page essay (typed, double-spaced) due October 4 (25%)
- a mid-term exam on November 1 (25%)
- attendance and active engagement at discussion section meetings (25%)
- a final exam on December [xx] (25%)

I. The Renaissance: when, where, why? (Sept. 6, 11)


II. The Material Culture of Renaissance Europe (Sept. 13, 18)


Please study the following map:
http://www.euratlas.com/history_europe/europe_map_1500.html

III. Humanism, Women, and a New World (Sept. 20, 25)

Sir Thomas More, *Utopia*.

IV. The Reformation: A Challenge to Authority (Sept. 27, Oct. 2, 4)


*E. William Monter, “The Sociology of Jura Witchcraft” and

Please study the following map:
http://wps.ablongman.com/wps/media(objects/262/268312/art/figures/KISH_13_309.gif

E. Early Modern State: Centralization of Power (Oct. 9, 11, 16)


**FILM: "The Return of Martin Guerre"**
**date & time: TBA**

VI. The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: Civil War and Political Revolution (Oct. 18, 23)

*Keith Thomas, "Women in the Civil War Sects," *Past and Present*, no. 13 (April 1958), pp. 42-62. [You may access this via Courseworks as an E-Reserve reading.]

VII. The Scientific Revolution and the Wider World (Oct. 25, 30)


*************** MID-TERM – NOVEMBER 1st ***************

No class – November 6
ELECTION DAY HOLIDAY
(Make sure you are registered and be sure to vote!)
VIII. The Age of Absolutism  (Nov. 8, 13)


Please speed-read the following documents, available at this link, following the guidelines that will be handed out in class (this will be a fun-filled assignment):

John Pinkerton, *A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in all Parts of the World* (17 vols.):


Vol. 8, *Extract from Tavernier’s Voyages* (1678);
Vol. 9, *The Travels of Sir John Chardin* (1671ff);
Vol. 11, *An Account of New Holland and the Adjacent Islands* (1699) by Capt. William Dampier;
Vol. 14, *An Historical Relation of the Kingdom of Chile* (1649) by Alonso de Ovalle, Jesuit.

IX. Eighteenth-Century Capitalism and the World Economy  (Nov. 15, 20, 27)


X. The Enlightened Eighteenth Century (Nov. 29, Dec. 4)


*Immanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” [e-reserves and in Courseworks folder]*

*Jean-Jacques Rousseau, excerpt from *Emile*; Catharine Macaulay-Graham, excerpt from*

Baron de Montesquieu, Persian Letters, available at the following website:

http://rbsche.people.wm.edu/teaching/plp/

Read the following: Letters 10-14 (inclusive); 24-26; 46-48; 55-56; 83-95; 105-106; 116-117; 125-128; 142-145.
Please examine the following map:

http://www.euratlas.net/history/europe/1700/index.html

XI. The Old Regime and the Coming of the French Revolution (Dec. 6, 11)


Review and advice for Final Exam: an evening before the exam, TBA

FINAL EXAM - DATE: December [ ]
(You are expected to consult the university exam schedule before making travel arrangements.)