In the first half of this course, we explore the ancient foundations of traditional western culture by examining the political and social institutions, religious beliefs and value systems of the Romans and early Christians through close reading and analysis of the works of Livy, Cicero, Plutarch, Virgil, Apuleius, Augustine and the New Testament. We then turn to the world of the Italian Renaissance, defined for our purposes as the period between the composition of Dante’s *Inferno* around 1300 and the death of Michelangelo in 1564. Renaissance means rebirth, and during this period Italian intellectuals, writers, painters and sculptures saw themselves as contributing to a rebirth of western culture by turning for inspiration to the philosophical, literary and artistic legacy of the ancient world that we studied in the course’s first seven weeks. Authors like Dante and Boccaccio, political theorists like Machiavelli and art critics and biographers like Vasari helped redefine the way we understand our world and respond creatively to it in ways that brought forth many masterpieces which continue to be read, discussed, and viewed right down to the present.

**Course requirements:** The requirements of this course are: 1) Weekly attendance at lectures and participation in recitation sections (15% of grade). 2) Ten weekly two-page response papers (double-spaced, standard font and margins), to be handed in *in person to your preceptor at the beginning of class* each Thursday. **NO PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER CLASS BEGINS.** The papers should not be summaries of the week’s reading, but rather should identify an idea or argument in the reading that has surprised, perplexed, or inspired you. Two of these papers, those for weeks XI and XIV, should be based *both* on the Vasari or Cellini reading and a viewing of appropriate works of Renaissance art found at the Metropolitan Museum or another New York artistic institution (like the Frick). The papers will be graded check plus, check, check minus and zero (not handed in on time) (25% of grade). 3) An in-class midterm on March 24 (25% of grade). 4) A one hour fifty minute final exam on **Thursday, May 14 from 8 to 9.50 in Silver 101A** (35% of grade).

Professor Ertman’s office is in the Core office, 9th floor of Silver. His e-mail te11@nyu.edu and his office hours are Thursdays 3.30-4.30 and by appointment. All books for the course have been ordered at the NYU Bookstore but are often available for less on line.

**PLEASE NOTE:** THE USE OF COMPUTERS, IPHONES, IPADS, IPODS OR OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES DURING LECTURE WITHOUT SPECIAL PERMISSION IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED AND WILL RESULT IN A GRADE REDUCTION
I. THE ANCIENT ROMANS I

Lecture Topics
1. (Jan. 28) Course Introduction
2. (Jan. 30) Livy’s History of Rome

Required Reading

II. THE ANCIENT ROMANS II

Lecture Topics
1. (Feb. 4) Rome’s Subjugation of Italy
2. (Feb. 6) Rome’s Emergence as a World Power and Plutarch’s Lives

Required Reading

III. THE ANCIENT ROMANS III

Lecture Topics
1. (Feb. 11) The Social and Political Consequences of Victory
2. (Feb. 13) Cicero and the End of the Roman Republic

Required Reading
IV. THE ANCIENT ROMANS IV

Lecture Topics
1. (Feb. 18) Augustus and Imperial Rome
2. (Feb. 20) Virgil’s “Aeneid”

Required Reading


V. THE ROMANS AND THE COMING OF CHRISTIANITY I

Lecture Topics
1. (Feb. 25) The “New Testament” and Jesus of Nazareth
2. (Feb. 27) The Emergence of Christianity

Required Reading


VI. THE ROMAN NOVEL AS A WINDOW ON EVERYDAY LIFE

Lecture Topics
1. (March 3) Love, Sex and Belief in Late Imperial Rome
2. (March 5) The Only Complete Roman Novel: Apuleius’s “The Golden Ass”

Required Reading


VII. THE ROMANS AND THE COMING OF CHRISTIANITY II

Lecture Topics
1. (Mar. 10) The Spread and Consolidation of Christianity
2. (Mar. 12) Augustine’s “Confessions”

Required Reading

Saint Augustine, Confessions, trans. Sarah Ruden (Modern Library), Books 1-6, 8-9.

**IN-CLASS MIDTERM TUESDAY, MARCH 24**
VIII. THE COLLAPSE OF ROME AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE ITALIAN CITY-STATES

Lecture Topics
1. (Mar. 24) In-class Midterm
2. (Mar. 26) The Emergence of the Commune of Florence

Required Reading
Dante, The Divine Comedy I: Inferno (Penguin Classics, 2002), Cantos I-VII.

IX. EARLY RENAISSANCE FLORENCE AND DANTE’S DIVINE COMEDY

Lecture Topics
1. (March 31) Dante’s Divine Comedy I
2. (April 2) Dante’s Divine Comedy II

Required Reading
Dante, Inferno, Cantos XIV-XIX, XXIV-XXVII, XXXI-XXXIV.

X. THE REEMERGENCE OF NARRATIVE FICTION: BOCCACCIO

Lecture Topics
1. (April 7) Courtship, Love and Sexuality in Ancient Rome and Renaissance Florence
2. (April 9) Giovanni Boccaccio’s Decameron

Required Reading

XI. THE REEMERGENCE OF PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

Lecture Topics
1. (April 14) Vasari’s The Lives of the Artists
2. (April 16) Why Did the Visual Arts Revive in 14th and 15th Century Italy?

Required Reading
XII. MACHIAVELLI I

Lecture Topics
1. (April 21) The Politics of the Italian City-Republics
2. (April 23) Machiavelli’s *Discourses on Livy*

Required Reading


XIII. MACHIAVELLI II

Lecture Topics
1. (April 28) The Decline of the City Republics
2. (April 30) Machiavelli’s *The Prince*

Required Reading


XIV. THE END OF THE RENAISSANCE

Lecture Topics
1. (May 5) Theory and Practice in the Visual Arts of the High Renaissance
2. (May 7) The End of the Renaissance: Cellini’s *My Life*

Required Reading


**FINAL EXAM THURSDAY, MAY 14 FROM 8 TO 9.50 IN OUR CLASSROOM (Silver 101A)**