

**Georgetown University – Fall 2009**  
*Medieval and Early Renaissance Italy - Hist. 102-61*

**Prof. Fabrizio Ricciardelli**  
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**Course description**

The fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 represents a crucial watershed in the history of European civilization. Nevertheless, the patrimony of ideas of pagan antiquity survives and continues to inspire political and religious beliefs. The course starts with a brief survey of the principal events which shaped this complex period in order to introduce some of the key lines of cultural history of the Middle Ages. A great transformation was later represented by the phenomenon of the re-birth of cities. In fact, around the eleventh century, demographic and economic factors produced a real urban revolution in some areas of Europe, and this turning point actually represents the transition from the feudal system to the late Medieval civilization. The course analyzes the society, the politics and the culture of medieval Italy, focusing mainly on cities from the eleventh to the fifteenth century. The structure of the city-state republic, the family, the daily life, the economy, the religious beliefs and practices, the world of the marginal and the mentality of the people will all be discussed in the effort of reconstructing the features of medieval urban civilization. Particular emphasis will be given to the city of Florence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The complex city universe expresses itself through a peculiar art and architecture (cathedrals, fresco cycles, city walls and gates, public palaces, altar-pieces, market squares and monasteries) which will be studied in order to reconstruct the material environment and the ideological aspects of late Medieval and early Renaissance Italian civilization.

**Meeting times:**

Tuesday: 13.45-15.15

Thursday: 13.45-15.15

**Readings:**

1. E. POWER, 'The Peasant Bodo. Life on a country estate in the time of Charlemagne', in IDEM, *Medieval People* [1924] (New York, 1992), pp. 18-38.
2. C. H. LAWRENCE, 'The Friars', in IDEM, *Medieval Monasticism. Forms of Religious Life in the Middle Ages* (London-New York, 1984), pp. 238-273.
3. A. VAUCHEZ, 'The Saint', in *Medieval Callings*, ed. by J. LE GOFF (Chicago, 1996), pp. 313-345.
4. H. PIRENNE, 'The Revival of Commerce', in IDEM, *Medieval Cities. Their Origins and the Revival of Trade* [1925] (Princeton, New Jersey, 1980), pp. 77-105.
5. J. LE GOFF, 'The Town as an Agent of Civilization, 1200-1500', in *The Fontana. Economic History of Europe. The Middle Ages*, ed by C. M. Cipolla, pp. 71-95.
6. J. H. MUNDY, 'In Praise of Italy: Italian Republics', *Speculum*, 64 (1989), pp. 815-834.
7. D. WALEY, *The Italian City-Republics* (London–New York, 1996), pp. 32-68.
8. A. JA. GUEREVICH, 'The Merchant', in *Medieval Callings*, ed. by J. LE GOFF (Chicago, 1996), pp. 243-283.

9. F. RICCIARDELLI, 'Exile as evidence of civic identity in Florence in the time of Dante: some examples', *Reti Medievali - Rivista*, V (2004), 1, url: [http://www.dssg.unifi.it/\\_RM/rivista/saggi/Ricciardelli.htm](http://www.dssg.unifi.it/_RM/rivista/saggi/Ricciardelli.htm), pp. 1-15.
10. N. RUBINSTEIN, 'Classical Themes in the Decoration of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence', in IDEM, *Studies in Italian History in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, I, Political Thought and the Language of Politics. Art and Politics*, ed. by G. Ciappelli (Rome, 2004), pp. 295-315.
11. N. RUBINSTEIN, 'Political Ideas in Sieneese Art: the Frescoes of Ambrogio Lorenzetti and Taddeo di Bartolo in the Palazzo Pubblico', in IDEM, *Studies in Italian History in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, I, Political Thought and the Language of Politics. Art and Politics*, ed. by G. Ciappelli (Rome, 2004), pp. 61-98.
12. B. GEREMEK, 'The Marginal Man', in *Medieval Callings*, ed. by J. LE GOFF (Chicago, 1996), pp. 347-373.
13. J. N. STEPHENS, 'Heresy in Medieval and Renaissance Florence', *Past and Present*, 54 (1972), pp. 25-60.
14. J. M. NAJEMY, 'Guild Republicanism in Trecento Florence: The Successes and Ultimate Failure of Corporate Politics', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (1979), pp. 53-71.
15. CH. KLAPISCH-ZUBER, 'Women and the Family', in *Medieval Callings*, ed. by J. LE GOFF (Chicago, 1996), pp. 285-311.
16. J. VERGER, 'The Universities', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, VI, ed by M. JONES (Cambridge 2000), pp. 66-81.
17. T. DEAN, *The rise of the Signori*, in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, V, ed. by D. ABULAFIA (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 458-478.
18. S. K. COHN JR., 'The Black Death. End of a Paradigm', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 107, No. 3 (2002), pp. 703-738.

**Course requirements:**

- Class presentation on the research topic 10%
- Research paper (12 to 15 pages) 25%
- Midterm Exam 30%
- Final Exam 35%

**Class schedule**

**Week I:**

**8 September**

- a. Course introduction
- b. The Fall of Roman Empire

**10 September**

- a. Foundation of Medieval Italy
- b. The feudal age

**READING: POWER, 'The Peasant Bodo'**

**Week II:**

**15 September**

- a. Monasticism

b. Medieval theology and philosophy

**READING: LAWRENCE, 'The Friars', in IDEM, *Medieval Monasticism***

**17 September**

*The Name of the Rose*

**READING: VAUCHEZ, 'The Saint'**

**Week III:**

**22 September**

a. A thousand and no more

b. The age of Crusades

**READING: PIRENNE, 'The Revival of Commerce'**

**24 September**

a. Agricultural resources

b. The re-birth of cities

**READING: LE GOFF, 'The Town as an Agent of Civilization'**

**Saturday, September 26**  
**Fieldtrip to San Gimignano**

**Week IV:**

**29 September**

a. Cities as 'states of mind'

b. *Societas militum* and *societas populi*

**READING: MUNDY, 'In Praise of Italy: Italian Republics'**

**1 October**

a. The consular commune. Guelfs and Ghibellines

b. Internal divisions: the *Podestà*

**READING: WALEY, *The Medieval City-Republics***

**Week V:**

**6 October**

a. Merchants

b. The coming of the *Popolo*

**READING: GUEREVICH, 'The Merchant'**

**8 October**

a. Laws against Magnates

b. Political exclusion

**READING: RICCIARDELLI, 'Exile as evidence'**

**Week VI:**

**13 October**

Visit to *Piazza della Signoria* and *Palazzo Vecchio*

**READING: RUBINSTEIN, 'Classical Themes in the Decoration of the Palazzo Vecchio'**

**15 October**

a. Political propaganda

b. Communal art and power

**READING: RUBINSTEIN, 'Political Ideas in Sieneese Art'**

**Week VII:**  
**20 October**  
**REVIEW SESSION**  
**22 October**  
**MIDTERM EXAM**

**Fall Break 23 October – 01 November**

**Week VIII:**  
**3 November**  
*The Sourceress*  
**READING: GEREMEK, ‘The Marginal Man’**  
**5 November**  
a. Heresy  
b. The formation of a persecuting society  
**READING: STEPHENS, ‘Heresy in Medieval and Renaissance Florence’**

**Week IX:**  
**10 November**  
a. The world of work  
b. The guild system  
**READING: NAJEMY, ‘Guild Republicanism in Trecento Florence’**  
**12 November**  
a. Medieval families  
b. Women and the family  
**READING: KLAPISCH-ZUBER, ‘Women and the Family’**

**Week X:**  
**17 November**  
a. Schooling: the level of knowledge  
b. The creation of Universities  
**READING: VERGER, ‘The Universities’.**  
**19 November**  
a. Governments of the *Popolo* and their political evolution  
b. Territorial states between Republics and *Signorie*  
**READING: DEAN, ‘The rise of the *signori*’**

**Week XI:**  
**24 November**  
a. Famine and the crisis  
b. The Black Death  
**READING: COHN JR., ‘The Black Death. End of a Paradigm’**  
**26 November**  
**Thanksgiving Holiday, no classes**

**Week XII:**

**1 December**

- a. Class Presentations
- b. Class Presentations

**3 December**

- a. Class Presentations
- b. Class Presentations

**Week XIII:**

**7-10 December**

**FINAL EXAMS**

**RESEARCH PAPER DUE BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF THE FINAL EXAM**