Course Description: Jules Michelet’s term Renaissance described 15th century Florence specifically, but it has come to mean the general flowering of Western culture in the two centuries after the Middle Ages, based in part on rediscovering the ideals and accomplishments of the Greco-Roman world that produced the last great Western civilization 1000 years earlier. Thus our focus here will be the masterpieces produced in Europe in this phase of the second millennium CE, the beginning of what we might consider the modern world. Historical trends and technological change propelled the development of this rich civilization that would produce the world-shaping European Empires. While vibrant cultures existed elsewhere across the centuries and the reaches of our planet, Western Europe at the time of the Renaissance, with its lucky confluence of political evolution, technological invention, exploratory curiosity, and imperial ambition, built a cultural legacy worthy of close and careful study, which will be our goal in this class.

Fittingly, then, after a preliminary review of the Gothic world, we’ll focus on two geographic areas over as many centuries: the Renaissance as it developed in Italy in the 15th century and the Renaissance in England during the Tudor Age. We’ll cover five areas of interest: art (painting and sculpture), architecture, literature (poetry, prose, drama, and philosophy), music, and science & technology. As such, we’ll consider the painting of the early great masters like Botticelli and Da Vinci; the painting and sculpture of Michelangelo; the architecture of Brunelleschi; the drama of Shakespeare and Marlowe; the philosophy of the humanists Erasmus and Machiavelli; the Christian thinkers Luther and More; and the establishment of Protestantism known as the Reformation. We’ll also view some episodes of the documentary series Art In The Western World, as well as select films that dramatize the age effectively (A Man For All Seasons, Elizabeth) and works of period drama (Hamlet, Dr. Faustus), with a possible theater field trip, if available.

E-mail / Internet: I make regular use of e-mail and the Internet in this class. Announcements, program changes, and class materials are distributed via e-mail or are placed on Blackboard for you to download. Therefore, it is necessary -- as necessary as your buying the textbook -- that you have a current e-mail address and check it at least once a week. I’ll go over materials in class as well, of course, but you may well miss them or receive them late if you’re not routinely on-line. It’s not a bad idea to check for last-minute announcements before coming to class, either. Finally, don’t be concerned if you don’t always receive a reply to any e-mail that you may send to me; I simply might deem it worth a collective response rather than an individual one, as the issue you’ve raised might concern the whole class.

Workload: Three exams; one presentation-paper; one reflection paper (of your choosing); several pop quizzes, given randomly and usually at the very start of class (to encourage prompt attendance). Typically, exams are multiple-choice, with some lecture slides to identify. One make-up session for a missed exam is offered the last week of term, with different
Student health, etc. Please let me know as early as possible if you need special accommodation for exams (Disabled Student Services, etc.) or have any other private concerns.

Advice on the readings: To help ground yourself in the various eras covered, you should read the timeline and the summary at the beginning and end of any chapter. Read all material within the assigned pages. Also, the page numbers refer to blocks of information that may fall slightly outside them, so if the discussion appears to start or stop in medias res, look back or forward to find where the paragraph actually begins or ends. Don’t be put off by seemingly lengthy readings; often they include several pages of plates interspersed with text. Last of all, “plates” = “pictures” -- simple enough.

Please read the following statements, which explain standard university policies on classes such as ours.

Courses that fulfill the 9-unit requirement for Explorations in General Education take the goals and skills of GE Foundations courses to a more advanced level. Your three upper division courses in Explorations will provide greater interdisciplinary, more complex and in-depth theory, deeper investigation of local problems, and wider awareness of global challenges. More extensive reading, written analysis involving complex comparisons, well-developed arguments, considerable bibliography, and use of technology are appropriate in many Explorations courses.

This is an Explorations course in the Humanities and Fine Arts. The Humanities and Fine Arts encompass works of the imagination, such as art, literature, film, drama, dance, and music, and related scholarship. Students better understand human problems, responsibilities, and possibilities in changing historical contexts and diverse cultures, and in relation to the natural environment. Students acquire new languages and familiarize themselves with related cultures. They gain the ability to recognize and assess various aesthetic principles, belief systems, and constructions of identity. Students acquire capacities for reflection, critique, communication, cultural understanding, creativity, and problem solving in an increasingly globalized world.

Completing this course will help you to do the following in greater depth:

1) analyze written, visual, or performed texts in the humanities and fine arts with sensitivity to their diverse cultural contexts and historical moments;

2) describe various aesthetic and other value systems and the ways they are communicated across time and cultures;

3) identify issues in the humanities that have personal and global relevance;

4) demonstrate the ability to approach complex problems and ask complex questions drawing upon knowledge of the humanities.
Course plan: All assignments and activities subject to change (modification / addition / deletion) if we get behind or find new topics to consider. Readings are due on the day assigned.

I: (1-24) Course outline and policies.

II: (1-31) Before the Renaissance: the Black Death & the End of Feudalism.

III: (2-2) The Great Florentine -- Dante's *Divine Comedy*.


VII: (2-28) Exam #1. Bring pen; review exam guidelines beforehand.


IX: (3-14) Field trip: *Hamlet* at Grossmont College.


XI (3-28) Spring Break


XIV: (4-18) Exam #2. Bring pen; review exam guidelines beforehand.


XVIII (5-12 to 5-19) FINALS WEEK. See Course Schedule for specific exam times.