HUM 406.1 Reconstructing the Renaissance  
(Schedule # 21699)

Spring 2015, Wednesdays, 3:30-6:10pm, SH-109  
Dr. Pam Fox Kuhlken, email: pamfox@juno.com  
Office: AL 628; Hours: Tues. 12:30-1:30pm; Wed. 2:30-3:30pm; Thurs. 12:30-1:30pm and 6:00-7:00pm

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: Rebirth--broadly defined--to the present. The idea of progress. Humanities and the cult of antiquity. Innovation in arts and letters. Traversing the globe. Quest for virtue, fame, glory. Questioning the past. The nature of genius. (Formerly HUM 402.)

PREREQUISITES: Completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities required for nonmajors.

COURSE OVERVIEW: This course examines developments--literary, cultural, philosophical, and artistic--in Western culture during the 16-18th centuries in their historical and social context, and argues that the greatness of the Modern world is an extension the Renaissance ideals--resurrected Classical virtues themselves. YOU are the ultimate subject of this anthropocentric course, “Renaissance and Self,” which I’m calling, “Reconstructing the Renaissance,” since you’re at the heart of every weekly topic in this order:

~ Suggested by...SDSU (as the Medicis brought us the Renaissance);
~ Your Place in the Great Chain of Being (our Elizabethan/Modern world view?!");
~ As a Runner Passing on the Torch of Life (from Epicurus to Lucretius);
~ Made a Little Lower Than Angels (Mirandola’s dignified wo/man);
~ Attempting to Ask and Answer Big Questions (with Montaigne);
~ Navigating Between Madness and Genius (like Brunelleschi);
~ Moving From Darkness into Light (with Vasari’s great artists);
And after Spring Break:
~ Perceiving the Universe through the Minds and Hands of
  * Da Vinci
  * Shakespeare &
  * Renaissance Women

Explorations in the Humanities and Fine Arts  
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.

GRADING:
~ At each class you will be responsible for that day’s reading, for asking good questions, answering questions, and participating in the discussions.
~ One midterm essay/project and one final essay/project with prompts given in advance.
~ Weekly short responses, quizzes, or Discussion Board posts over the assigned reading or about the in-class discussion; very straightforward if you attend and stay current with the reading.
~ All grades will be kept as current as possible on Blackboard.
The following breakdown is an estimate as a courtesy to you; please be flexible since every semester has its own unique needs, personality, and interests.

60% Assignments, Quizzes, Discussion Board Posts, Attendance, Preparedness
20% Midterm Essay or Project (critical or creative, student’s choice)
20% Final Essay or Project (again, critical or creative, student’s choice)
100% Total

**NOTE:** Plagiarism, cheating, misrepresentation, and dishonesty of any kind “that is intended to gain unfair academic advantage” will be reported and result in the appropriate sanctions as defined by the SDSU Center for Student Rights & Responsibilities in the “Standard for Student Conduct” (41301, Title 5, California Code of Regulations).

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473 as soon as possible. I can only provide accommodations based upon disability once I have received an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services.

**MLA FORMAT**
~ Please do not turn in any assignment on ripped-out, frayed notebook paper. All outside papers should be typed following MLA format.
~ Refer to the OWL website (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/): use 12 pt. font, double-space, include page numbers in upper right (Last Name #); page one should have the following heading on the upper left margin: 1) your name, 2) professor’s name, 3) course, 4) date; finally, always center a thematic title on page one above your first paragraph.
~ Why bother? It looks like you care; your paper will stand out; it looks professional; it shows you can follow directions; shows respect for protocol; finally, it’s the only kind that gets an “A.”

**REQUIRED BOOKS:**


**RECOMMENDED BOOKS:**

*How to Live: Or a Life of Montaigne in One Question and Twenty Attempts at an Answer*, by Sarah Bakewell. Other Press, 2011. $17 cover. ISBN 978-1590514832. [We will be reading selected essays by Montaigne available online.]


PART ONE:

1) Wed. 1/21 THE RENAISSANCE: SPONSORED BY...THE MEDICIS
> WELCOME! SYLLABUS and COURSE OVERVIEW
> LIBRARY FIELD TRIP

RECOMMENDED: Birth of a Dynasty: The Medicis, YouTube (55 min), Cosimo de Medici’s rise to power and Brunelleschi’s Dome, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FFDJK8jmms
and The Magnificent Medicis, YouTube (55 min), Lorenzo the Magnificent’s reign and the art of Michelangelo, Botticelli, Da Vinci; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBlGkTTol9E

2) Wed. 1/28 THE GREAT CHAIN OF BEING
> READ: THE ELIZABETHAN WORLD PICTURE, by Tillyard
> DISCUSS: Progress from the Medieval World > Renaissance > Modern World > 21st century

RECOMMENDED: The Passion of the Western Mind by Richard Tarnas (excerpts on Blackboard under “Course Docs”), “The Rebirth of Classical Humanism” (pp. 209-19) and “Renaissance” (pp 224-32) and “Ancients and Moderns” (pp 291-97)

3) Wed. 2/4 LIKE RUNNERS PASSING ON THE TORCH OF LIFE
> READ: DE RERUM NATURA (On the Nature of Things) by Lucretius

> READ: THE SWERVE (three chapters on Blackboard under “Course Docs”)

4) Wed. 2/11 A LITTLE LOWER THAN ANGELS
> READ: ORATION ON THE DIGNITY OF MAN by Pico della Mirandola
> READ: One selected monologue from Shakespeare (either Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Tempest, Macbeth, or your favorite Shakespearean history)

5) Wed. 2/18 MONTAIGNE’S ATTEMPTS AT ANSWERING THE BIG QUESTIONS
> READ: Two essays of your choice by Montaigne (online)
> LECTURE: HOW TO LIVE: A LIFE OF MONTAIGNE by Sarah Bakewell, part one
> DUE: Discussion Board post on Mirandola’s ORATION and your selected monologue from Shakespeare

6) Wed. 2/25 MONTAIGNE’S ATTEMPTS AT ANSWERING THE BIG QUESTIONS
> LECTURE: HOW TO LIVE: A LIFE OF MONTAIGNE by Sarah Bakewell, part two
> PRESENT: You and Montaigne questioning the big questions and answers (select one topic)
7) Wed. 3/4  ARCHITECTURE 2.0, or THE FINE LINE BETWEEN MADNESS AND GENIUS
  > READ: *Brunelleschi’s Dome*, first half (Chs. 1-10)
  > RECOMMENDED ONLINE: Lecture on Brunelleschi’s Dome by Ross King at The Building/Engineering Center, 2012 (80 min.): http://vimeo.com/45824822

8) Wed. 3/11 ARCHITECTURE 2.0, or THE FINE LINE BETWEEN MADNESS AND GENIUS
  > READ: *Brunelleschi’s Dome*, second half (Chs. 11-19)
  > IN-CLASS QUIZ: Over last week’s discussion and main points in *Brunelleschi’s Dome*

9) Wed. 3/18 THE P.R. CAMPAIGN: FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT (Petrarch via Vasari)
  > READ: *Vasari’s Lives of the Artists* (selections)
  > RECOMMENDED VIEWING: BBC Travels with Vasari hosted by Andrew Graham-Dixon (three parts, 55 min. each) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZ31OKYtass

10) Wed. 3/25 THE P.R. CAMPAIGN: FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT (Petrarch via Vasari)
  > WORKSHOP/PRESENT MIDTERM ESSAY/PROJECT PROPOSALS/DRAFTS/OUTLINES: Your selected artist featured in Vasari compared/contrasted with two (2) additional Renaissance figures we’ve covered: Lucretius or Mirandola; AND Montaigne or Brunelleschi; final 6-9 page, MLA formatted at-home essay due posted on Discussion Board by Saturday 3/28 at midnight; or a creative project

No Class Wed. 4/1

üp HAPPY SPRING BREAK 3/30-4/3 üp

PART TWO

11) Wed. 4/8  HAVE THE UNIVERSE IN YOUR MIND AND HANDS
  > READ: selections from LEO’S NOTEBOOKS

12) Wed. 4/15  HAVE THE UNIVERSE IN YOUR MIND AND HANDS
  > CONTD READING: selections from LEO’S NOTEBOOKS

13) Wed. 4/22  A ROSE IS A ROSE IS A ROSE (Petrarch > Shakespeare > Gertrude Stein)
  > READ: selections from Vendler’s THE ART OF SHAKESPEARE’S SONNETS

14) Wed. 4/29  A ROSE IS A ROSE IS A ROSE (Petrarch > Shakespeare > Gertrude Stein)
  > CONTD READING: selections from THE ART OF SHAKESPEARE’S SONNETS
  > DUE: memorization of one sonnet of your choice (OP or RP, your choice) and close reading

15) Wed. 5/6 LAST DAY OF CLASS…ENTER: SHAKESPEARE’S SISTER...
  > PRESENT: Your selected Renaissance woman; ex cr for coming in costume, any gender

16) FINAL Wed. 5/13, 4-6pm
  > Essay or creative project (in-class or at home TBD) on any aspect of ART in Da Vinci, Shakespeare’s sonnet, and your selected Renaissance woman (how art constructs and mirrors “reality”; how art sharpens/deepens our perception of the world; the seen and/or vs. unseen world; relativity and quantum/where the macro- and microcosm meet; tradition and/or vs. innovation; the Renaissance seeds of Modern Art; gender constructions and expressions in art; etc.).