Summary of the course: One aspect of the Renaissance was the attempt to go back to a half-imaginary, pre-medieval past of Greco-Roman culture or (depending on one’s taste) pure Christianity. Another aspect was the pride in that had been done since the Middle Ages, and a pride in individual achievement. Holy Roman Emperor Charles V came closest to recreating the Roman Empire; Martin Luther came closest to reviving the European church. Neither man had time for the other. Each frustrated the other, leading to a Europe split into separate countries and separate and mutually antagonistic versions of Christianity.

Explorers and traders were extending European control to new regions of the world. The European powers that would extend their control into the larger world were at odds with one another. Further, they were not quipped to deal with the medical and economic consequences of the discovery of America. A century and a half of economic and social discomfort and warfare followed, culminating in the Thirty Years War (1618-1648).

During this century and a half of expensive warfare, European political units were torn between the claims of their central governments to control finance and the army, and the claims of traditional medieval consultative bodies to have a say in the matter. After armed struggle, the central monarchy would sometimes win, creating the absolutist and corporatist ancien régime state—perfected by Louis XVIII and the monarchs who followed him in France and elsewhere. Sometimes the pressures of war meant that both the monarchy and the overall parliamentary body would collapse, as in the German lands, or that the state itself would collapse and be overrun, as with Poland. But sometimes the Parliament would win, leading to the control of the state by the rich and aristocratic classes. They were then free to try proto-industrial economic experiments, such as stripping the land away from the poor in favor of larger farms. The Parliament won in England and Holland.

The grand scale, the shift to big farms in England was a part of a world-wide shift to larger agricultural units, characterized by plantation monoculture—a shift that took place because of the trade and competition carried by European shipping. Eventually, a European war became a world war fought over far sources of commodities—the Seven Years War, 1756-1763, a war whose after effects, especially in America, would help lead to the French Revolution.

Meanwhile, profits from the world trade in commodities and slaves fed the growth of middle-class artisanal groups in northern Europe. New classes could use for themselves the freedom won by aristocrats in countries such as Holland and Great Britain to turn around and criticize the aristocrats, or to make more general speculations on the world and how it ought to be run. In addition, the growing affluence and size of the middle classes most everywhere, even in the absolutist countries and in the fragmented German lands, led to an explosion of print capitalism, uniting European intellectuals into the Enlightenment but also reinforcing a sense of national unity and patriotism in the major nation-states, sometimes allied to a desire for political reform. And economic and scientific changes began to create the world we live in, where very few of us are farmers.

All the while, from 1492 to 1789, the question of how we know what we know about humanity, society, and the material world was of consuming interest. In religion and in other fields of knowledge, Early Modern people asked themselves whether they knew more than the ancients. After all, America had been discovered by moderns, and the ancients knew nothing of it. Or was the ancient world still to be the source of learning and religious truth? Are texts and authorities supreme, or is it more important to think for yourself? And how can we think for ourselves? Through inward reflection? Scientific experiment? Pooling all our observations in big compendia and looking for a pattern? Do men make all the observations that matter, or might old women who have a knowledge of plants know a thing or two? Or are the old women merely witches, who must be suppressed by the male authority-figures?

LEARNING GOALS: Let's step back a minute and consider what history has to offer: History does not give quantifiable, generalizable laws about human nature, laws that can be used to predict what will happen in any one situation the way scientists can predict the flight of an asteroid or doctors the course of a disease. Instead of striving for generalized scientific laws like that, historians retell stories about the past so that society will be a bit wiser than otherwise might be. Historians help society to remember things, helping people to think about the specifics of each situation. This is a kind of knowledge that might be lost by trying to strip things down into some (fairly dubious) general law of human behavior.

While looking at the past, historians do several things: (1) We use evidence carefully to keep the stories grounded in reality and to bring them to life. Going back to primary sources (sources written at the time) helps historians to avoid repeating the errors that have crept into the story over the years. (2) Though we love primary sources, we do look at what previous historians and other thinkers have said about past events, to see if we agree with these interpretations and whether we can improve on them. (3) Historians also try to express things in clear language, so as to pass on the knowledge of the past most effectively. Historians tend to believe that striving for clear language means stripping away confusion and getting closer to the plain essence of a situation.
If the second point (looking at the record of scholarly interpretations and seeing if we can modify it a bit) makes historians something like social scientists, then the third point (striving for simple language) makes historians more like professors in the other humanities departments. That is, we test what we are saying against our wider reading and sense of the roundness of humanity, and not by making isolated experiments or running statistical tests on narrow points. We test what we are saying by whether we use evidence well and can express ourselves clearly.

What does all this mean in practice, for you? It means that in this class you will research and writing clear papers on subjects of your own choice, within the overall subject area of the class as outlined above. Can you look at evidence about the past, select what you need from that evidence, integrate it into well-supported stories and arguments about key historical questions and key humanistic issues, and express yourself clearly?

The key goals, then, might be mastering chronology (learning something like the story as I have summarized it at the beginning of the syllabus); mastering evidence (by doing the readings, including the major primary source readings so you can experience the past directly); putting these readings into context by examining them in their historical background; and exercising your powers of synthetic thinking and expression (putting the story, the evidence, and the context together into balanced and clear oral and written arguments).

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:** You can demonstrate that you have met the learning goals by being able to select, organize, judge, and incorporate into a thesis-evidence argument important evidence about some of the major trends and themes that we are studying. *Your task in your papers is not to summarize the reading. Your task is to exercise selection and judgment in taking from the readings whatever you need to make your points.* The arguments that you choose (and the understanding that you show in researching and expressing things) will help me to see that you know enough about the history. *Let me be clear: I do not want to read summaries or book reports; I want to read arguments of yours – arguments that show that you have mastered the readings and key issues.*

**PART ONE: THE SOUTHERN RENAISSANCE.**

WEEK I {24/26 AUG.}: THE RENAISSANCE: ORIGINS

WEEK II {31 AUG/2 SEPT.}: THE SOUTHERN RENAISSANCE.
Readings: Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (on-line – see my website); Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron* (on-line); Wiesner-Hanks, 117-146 in 1st edn, 128-159 in 2nd edn.

WEEK III {7/9 SEPT.}: HOW TO GET ON IN SOCIETY.

**PART TWO: REFORMATION AND COUNTER-REFORMATION.**

WEEK IV {14/16 SEPT.}: THE RENAISSANCE PROJECT / THE CONFLICT BETWEEN LUTHER AND CHARLES V

WEEK V {21/23 SEPT.}: CALVIN, LOYOLA, THE COUNCIL OF TRENT.
Readings: John Calvin (on-line), Council of Trent (on-line); Wiesner-Hanks, 172-181 in 1st edn; 186-196 2nd.

**PART THREE: THE NORTHERN RENAISSANCE: THE RENAISSANCE/REFORMATION IN NATION-STATES AND THE SEARCH FOR ORDER.**

WEEK VI {28/30 SEPT.}: TUDOR ENGLAND, 1485-1603.

WEEK VII {5/7 OCT.}: FRANCE FROM 1494 TO HENRY IV.
Readings: Fugger Letters (distributed in class); selections from Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*.

**PART FOUR: WAR AND THE STRUGGLE OVER WHO PAYS FOR IT, 1618-1715; SCIENCE.**

WEEK VIII {12/14 OCT.}: THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR AND INTERREGNUM, 1642-1660.
Readings: Fugger Letters (distributed in class); Wiesner, 285-297, 303-307 in 1st edn; 316-328 in 2nd

WEEK IX {19/21 OCT.}: ENGLAND TO AND FROM THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION, 1688/9.

WEEK X {26/28 OCT.}: SCIENCE.
Reading: Read most of Steven Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution*. 
WEEK XI {2/4 NOV.}: THE FRONDE AND LOUIS XIV.
Readings: Finish Shapin; read Simon's account of Versailles and an account of the Edict of Nantes (both on-line); Wiesner-Hanks, 297-302, 371-374 1st edn; 328-332, 415-420 2nd edn

PART FIVE: THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY—THE OLD RÉGIME.

WEEK XII {9/11 NOV.}: THE LITTLE LOUIES: THE FRENCH MODEL ELSEWHERE.
Readings: Voltaire, *Candide*; Voltaire, *Philosophical Letters* 8, 9, 11 (online); Wiesner-Hanks, 312-324, 343-362 in 1st edn; 347-360, 383-403 in 2nd edn

WEEK XIII {16/18 NOV.}: GLOBALIZATION: THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR, 1756-1763; THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION; AND THE EFFECTS ON FRANCE.
Readings: begin Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Régime*...; Wiesner-Hanks, 439-480 in 1st edn; 492-530 in 2nd

WEEK XIV {23/NOV}: ECONOMIC CHANGES -- AND PROTO-REVOLUTIONS?
Reading: finish Tocqueville, *The Old Régime*...; Wiesner-Hanks, 418-435 in 1st edn; 469-487 in 2nd edn

WEEK XV {30 NOV./2 DEC.}: “VERY HEAVEN”—ON THE HORIZON.
Readings: Tom Paine, *Common Sense*.

WEEK XVI {7/9 DEC.}: REVIEW.

BOOKS:
Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Early-Modern Europe, 1450-1789* (1st or 2nd edn)
Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*
Tom Paine, *Common Sense*
Steven Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution*
Jonathan Swift, *A Modest Proposal*
E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture*
Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Régime and the French Revolution*.
Voltaire, *Candide*

ASSIGNMENTS:
PLEASE NOTE: I will be marking your papers carefully. Any special patterns of grammatical, stylistic, or citation errors are marked so that you will not make the same mistakes in subsequent papers. To that end, please turn in a copy of each previous paper with each new paper, held together with a document clip.

PERSONAL CONTACT POLICY: All papers must be handed to me in person in class or in office hours. They cannot be left for me in any place or mailed to me in any form. AND the discussion of the paper topic that you must have with me by the end of Week XII must be in person in my office hours or by appointment.

FAILING PEOPLE FOR CHEATING POLICY: When I read your work, I do not want to read pieces of Wikipedia or other online sources. That is cheating.

The purpose of assignments is not to assemble something for me to read out of what you have found on the Web, but for you to exercise your mind in thinking and writing about history. If you assemble what others have said, you may have filled pages but you have not done your work; someone else has done the thinking for you. Doing your work properly means giving me something that could only have been written by you, out of the sources in front of us in this class, and out of other decent sources that you have found and properly cited. If you turn in a paper that leaves me in no doubt that you have done these things, then you will probably get a better grade. Meanwhile, there are university polices on cheating. They involve the professor reporting each incident to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, and assigning an F either on the paper or in the course. I have followed those policies, and I will do so again.

TWO READING WRITE-UPS (each 15% of the course grade): On the Mondays of Week V and X, you need to turn in a 4-page, typed, double-spaced, thesis-evidence based write-up on an important issue from that part of the course, with an introduction, a body, and a conclusion, and Chicago-style footnotes. A write-up turned late will be docked one-third grade per business day.

7-9 PAGE PAPER (35% of the course): This paper will have all of the attributes of the reading write-ups, but it will be longer and involve more research. The topic will be up to you, except there needs to be at least one source from the material after Week X. You must see me in my office hours and get your topic approved by the end of Week XII—if you have not, you will get an “F” on the paper. The paper will be due on the Monday of Week XV. Late work will be docked one-third grade for each business day.

FINAL EXAM (35% of the course): The exam will be in the regularly scheduled exam period, Mon., 14 Dec, 1:00-3:00.

LANGUAGE WHICH THE UNIVERSITY NOW REQUIRES IN SYLLABI FOR CLASSES OF THIS KIND:
This is an Explorations course 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.

Language which the university now requires in every syllabus:
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. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Sect. 1, 21786, MW 2:00-3:15, AH-3130 Office: A&L 572 Ed’s Office Hours: M 12:30-1:30, T/Th 2:30-3:30
Tel.: 594-0761 (email preferred) EDWARD.BEASLEY@SDSU.EDU http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~ebeasley/