

ID7004 *Medieval and Renaissance Foundations of Europe*

Module type Optional (programme module)

Term / hours Michaelmas / 22

ECTS 10

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Module description

This module aims to explore the medieval and early-modern historical and cultural (mainly literary, historical and philosophical) foundations of modern Europe. As the scholarship of Jacques Le Goff showed the invaluable import of medieval history for the construction of modern national states, so Ernst Robert Curtius demonstrated how European literature is deeply rooted in the Latin Middle Ages. The module will explore the cultural production of France, England, Ireland, Germany, and Spain during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Among other modern nations, the case of Italy, whose unity was obtained only in the second half of the 19th century, requires special attention. The identity of Italian literary civilisation has in fact a vocation that is all the more strongly European even while more weakly national. On that basis, we will be able to better understand Jacob Burckhardt's claim that the Italian humanists, in rediscovering classical antiquity, lay the groundwork for the creation of the modern individual and were therefore to be considered 'the first born among the sons of modern Europe'.

Assessment

The module is assessed through a 5,000-word essay.

Indicative bibliography

Primary texts by Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Chaucer, Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Valla, Machiavelli, Castiglione, Erasmus, Luther, Rabelais, Montaigne, Cervantes, and Shakespeare.

Auerbach, E., *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton UP, 2007).

Burckhardt, J., *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (Penguin 1960).

Celenza, C., *The Intellectual World of the Italian Renaissance* (Cambridge UP, 2017).

Curtius, E. R., *European Literature and Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton UP, 1952).

Curtius, E. R., *Essays on European Literature* (Princeton UP, 1973).

Le Goff, J., *The Birth of Europe*, translated by Janet Lloyd (Blackwell, 2005).

Witt, R., *The Two Latin Cultures and the Foundation of Renaissance Humanism in Medieval Italy* (Cambridge UP, 2012).

Witt, R., *In the Footsteps of the Ancients: The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Brill, 2003).

Learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

- LO1 Outline and define the historical and cultural continuity between medieval and Renaissance eras and modern and contemporary Europe.
- LO2 Identify and discuss the historical evolution of the idea of Europe on the basis of the long-lasting historical and cultural debate on European identity.
- LO3 Interpret the contemporary world by relying on the acquired knowledge of the medieval and Renaissance origins of Western Europe.
- LO4 Analyse and compare different ideas of Europe as developed in different countries by studying medieval and Renaissance history and culture in different geographical areas, such as France, England, Ireland, Germany, and Italy.
- LO5 Formulate critical statements on a composed and varied body of historical and literary sources.