



HS350: THE BLACK DEATH AND ITS AFTERMATH

IES Abroad Siena

DESCRIPTION:

This course examines the impact of the Black Death (1347-1351) on Italy and Europe, with particular attention paid to the demographic, social, economic, and political consequences of this terrible pandemic. Beginning with an introduction to the medical knowledge and practice of the period, the course examines European and Italian (Sienese in particular) society in the years before and after the plague to discover how it changed the lives of the survivors and the successive generations. The class analyzes economic shifts, legal changes in society and how jurists interpreted them, the role of women and their newly gained wealth, changes in literature and art, improvements (or lack thereof) in agriculture and wages, and political rebellions. This course has two main, interrelated objectives: to give students familiarity with the main political, cultural, religious, and socio-economic features of life in medieval Italy and Europe, and to help students acquire a more critical and analytical approach to history in general, through the investigation of primary sources and the different ways in which historians have employed sources to construct historical interpretation. The course also provides an excellent key to interpret what might be the consequences in contemporary society in the event of pandemic or a natural disaster on such a scale.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: None

ADDITIONAL COST: None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

In-class lectures, discussions (based on assigned readings and films), and course-related trips to museums and various sites. Lectures include slideshow presentations, which will be available on Moodle.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Active class participation and discussion: 10%
- Moodle assignments: 25%
- Research paper: 25%
- Midterm exam: 20%
- Final exam: 20%

COURSE ELEMENT:

- **Active class participation and discussion:** Students are expected to complete all readings for each class and actively engage in discussions related thereto.
- **Moodle assignments:** There will be 4 online assignments (posted on and submitted through Moodle) that will assess students' understanding of course-related trips and themes of the previous lessons.
- **Research paper:** 10-12 page double-spaced pages on a topic chosen by the student and approved by the instructor. The topic should be decided during Week 10 and it will be due at the end of Week 15. Term-paper guidelines will be posted on Moodle together with grading framework (including penalties for late work).
- **Midterm exam:** In-class written exam with multiple-choice questions and short essays (2 hours).
- **Final exam:** In-class written exam with multiple-choice questions and short essays (2 hours).

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- engage with primary and secondary sources both critically and analytically;
- contextualize the historical, political, and social situations of Italy and Europe in the Middle Ages;
- evaluate medieval practices in medicine and public health;
- contemplate the wider consequences of plagues and pandemics, past and present;

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- employ cross-disciplinary methods of research to engage with history from multiple perspectives.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Successful progress of the program depends on the full cooperation of both students and faculty members; regular attendance and active participation in class are essential parts of the learning process. Attendance at and participation in all class meetings and course related trips are required. IES Abroad Siena allows a maximum of TWO excused absences per semester. Each further (unjustified) absence will automatically result in a penalty of two points off (2/100) of the final grade. SEVEN absences per course (including the 2 excused absences) will result in a failing grade for that course. Furthermore, an absence on the date of scheduled tests, presentations, or quizzes does not entitle the student to recover/reschedule such tests. Failure to attend the midterm and/or final exam will result in an F grade on that paper/exam.

CONTENT:

Session	Content	Assignments
Session 1	Introduction to the course: The Medieval Mediterranean • Communities facing the sea • commercial contacts and their development • the arrival of the bacillus <i>Yersinia pestis</i>.	• Benedictow, <i>The Black Death</i>, Ch. 7 • Aberth, <i>The Black Death</i>, Preface
Session 2	The “Dark Ages” • The mystique of the Black Death.	• Documentary <i>The Dark Ages: The Plague</i> • Moodle Quiz
Session 3	Medical Knowledge • Diagnosing the unknown • Greek treatises and the Latin tradition	• French, <i>Medicine before Science</i>, Ch. 2 • Van der Lugt, “Neither Ill nor Healthy”
Session 4	Practical Cures • The <i>Schola Salernitana</i> • Development of hospitals	• Garcia-Ballester, <i>Practical Medicine</i>, Introduction • Gies, <i>Life in a Medieval City</i>, Ch. 8
Session 5	The Rise of the Italian Communes, 12th-13th c • Conquest of the <i>contado</i> • Political organization and development of the <i>comuni</i> • Birth of new socio-political class	• Larner, <i>Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch</i>, Ch. 8, Ch. 9
Session 6	The Crisis of the 14th c • Overpopulation of Europe • Famines and health problems • Economic and political crises before the Black Death	• Larner, <i>Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch</i>, Ch. 6, Ch. 7
Session 7	The Spread of the Plague • Flight from cities • Problems in the countryside	• Bowsky, “The Impact of the Black Death upon Sienese Government and Society”
Session 8	Course-Related Trip • Visit to the Misericordia of Siena • Health services, 13th c to present-day	• Norman, “When Charity Fails: Andrea Gallerani and the Memory of the Misericordia in Siena.” • Moodle Quiz

Session	Content	Assignments
Session 9	Contemporary Accounts of the Plague 14th-c literature and chronicles	- Boccaccio, <i>Decameron</i> (various excerpts) - Horrox, <i>The Black Death</i>
Session 10	Containing the Disease - Efforts by health officials - Remedies - Investigations as to causes	- Gottfried, <i>The Black Death: Natural and Human Disaster in Medieval Europe</i>, Ch. 6 - PAPER TOPICS DUE
Session 11	Citizens, Saints, and Sinners How the populace helped their own, and turned on each other	- Cohn, "The Black Death and the Burning of the Jews" - Archambeau, "Healing Options during the Plague"
Session 12	MIDTERM EXAM	-
Session 13	Course-Related Trip: Artistic and Architectural Development in Siena before and after the Black Death Walking tour with visit to the Pinacoteca Nazionale di Siena	- Steinhoff, <i>Sienese Painting after the Black Death</i>, Ch. 4, Ch. 6 - Hub, "Politics and the Art of City Planning in Republican Siena." - Moodle Quiz
Session 14	The Plague in Art Representations of disease in European art	Marshall, "Manipulating the Sacred: Image and Plague in Renaissance Italy."
Session 15	Consequences of the Plague - Social and economic changes - The role of women	- Becker, <i>Florence in Transition</i>, Ch. 4 - Lansing, "Concubines, Lovers, Prostitutes"
Session 16	Subsequent Plagues and Famines Geo-political reorganization and formation of regional states in northern and central Italy	- Cohn, <i>The Black Death Transformed</i>, Ch. 8 - Chittolini, "Cities, 'City-States,' and Regional States in North-Central Italy"
Session 17	Course-Related Trip: Walking tour of Siena with visit to Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala Explore areas where Siena dealt with healing, death, and burial.	Moodle Quiz
Session 18	Economic and Social Changes - Political reorganization in the city - Opening government to lower classes	- Carmichael, <i>Plague and the Poor in Renaissance Florence</i>, Ch. 4, Ch. 5 - Becker, "Economic Change and Emerging Florentine Territorial State" - Brucker, "The Florentine Popolo Minuto and its Political Role, 1340-1450"

Session	Content	Assignments
Session 19	Social Crises at the End of the 14th c Rural and urban revolts	- Dean, <i>The Towns of Italy in the Later Middle Ages</i> ("Revolt in a Republic: Siena 1371") - Brackett, "The Florentine Criminal Underworld" - TERM PAPERS DUE
Session 20	Conclusions - What happened after the Black Death? - Lessons to learn today?	Barro et al., "The coronavirus and the Great Influenza epidemic"
Session 21	FINAL EXAM	-

COURSE-RELATED TRIPS:

These are intended to enrich students' experience by discussing core concepts *in situ*. Please note that the session number of the course-related trips is subject to change depending on the institution's opening hours and the overall IES semester calendar.

REQUIRED READINGS:

All the required excerpts and articles (in English) are available on the course's Moodle site in PDF format. The instructor is happy to suggest additional readings (both in English and Italian).

- Aberth, John. *The Black Death: A New History of the Great Mortality in Europe, 1347-1500*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Archambeau, Nicole. "Healing Options during the Plague: Survivor Stories from a Fourteenth-Century Canonization Inquest." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 85 (2011): 531-559.
- Barro, Robert T., Jose F. Ursua and Joanna Weng, "The coronavirus and the Great Influenza epidemic: Lessons from the 'Spanish Flu' for the coronavirus' potential effects on mortality and economic activity." *American Enterprise Institute*, 2020.
- Becker, Marvin. *Florence in Transition. Vol. 2 Studies in the Rise of the Territorial State*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968.
- Becker, Marvin. *Florentine Essays: Selected Writings of Marvin B. Becker*. Collected by James Banker and Carol Lansing. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002.
- Benedictow, Ole J. *The Black Death, 1346-1353: The Complete History*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004.
- Boccaccio, Giovanni. *Decameron*. Translated by G.H. McWilliam. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955.
- Bowsky, William M. "The Impact of the Black Death upon Sienese Government and Society". *Speculum* 34 (1964): 1-34.
- Brackett, John K. "The Florentine Criminal Underworld: The Underside of the Renaissance," in *Society and Individual in Renaissance Florence*, edited by W. Connell. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Brucker, Gene. "The Florentine Popolo Minuto and its Political Role, 1340-1450", in *Violence and Civil Disorder in Italian Cities 1200-1500*, edited by L. Martines. Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: 1972.
- Carmichael, Ann G. *Plague and the Poor in Renaissance Florence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Chittolini, Giorgio. "Cities, City-States and Regional States in North-Central Italy", in *Cities and the Rise of States in Europe, A.D. 1000 to 1800*, edited by C. Tilly and W. P. Blockmans. Boulder-San Francisco-Oxford: Westview Press, 1994.
- Cohn, Samuel K. Jr. *The Black Death Transformed: Disease and Culture in Early Renaissance Europe*. London, Arnold, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Cohn, Samuel L. "The Black Death and the Burning of the Jews". *Past and Present* 196 (2007): 3-36.
- Dean, Trevor. *The Towns of Italy in the Later Middle Ages*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000.
- French, Roger. *Medicine Before Science. The Rational and Learned Doctor from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- García-Ballester, L. et al., eds., *Practical Medicine from Salerno to the Black Death*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

- Gies, Frances, and Joseph Gies, *Life in a Medieval City*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1969; repr. 2016.
- Gottfried, R. *The Black Death: Natural and Human Disaster in Medieval Europe*. London: Robert Hale, 1983.
- Horrux, Rosemary. *The Black Death*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994.
- Hub, Bertold, "Vedete come è bella la cittade quando è ordinate: Politics and the Art of City Planning in Republican Siena." In *Art as Politics in Late Medieval and Renaissance Siena*, ed. by Timothy B. Smith and Judith B. Steinhoff. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012.
- Lansing, Carol. "Concubines, Lovers, Prostitutes. Infamy and Female Identity in Medieval Bologna" in *Beyond Florence. The Contours of Medieval and Early Modern Italy*, edited by P. Findlen et al. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.
- Lerner, John. *Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch 1216-1380*. London and New York: Longman, 1980.
- Marshall, Louise. "Manipulating the Sacred: Image and Plague in Renaissance Italy." *Renaissance Quarterly* 47 (1994): 485-532.
- Norman, Diana. "When Charity Fails: Andrea Gallerani and the Memory of the Misericordia in Siena." In *The Kindness of Strangers. Charity in the Pre-Modern Mediterranean*, ed. by D. Stathakopoulos, 91-118. London: Centre for Hellenic Studies Occasional Publications, 2007.
- Steinhoff, Judith B. *Sienese Painting after the Black Death: Artistic Pluralism, Politics, and the New Art Market*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Van der Lugt, Maaïke, "Neither Ill nor Healthy: The Intermediate State between Health and Disease in Medieval Medicine." *Quaderni storici* 46 (2011): 13-45.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Ascheri, Mario and Bradley Franco. *A History of Siena: From its Origins to the Present Day*. London: Routledge, 2020
- Balard, M. Genuensis. "Civitas in extremo Europae: Caffa from the Fourteenth to the Fifteenth Century." In *Medieval Frontiers: Concept and Practices*, edited by D. Abulafia and N. Berend. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002.
- Bosker, Maarten, Steven Brakman, Harry Garretsen, Herman de Jong, Marc Schramm, "Ports, plagues, and politics: explaining Italian city growth 1300-1861." *European Review of Economic History* 12 (2008): 97-131.
- Bowsky, William M. *A Medieval Italian Commune. Siena under the Nine, 1287-1355*. Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 1981.
- Brown, Alison. *The Renaissance*. London and New York: Longman, 1988.
- Cohn, Samuel K. Jr. *Creating the Florentine State: Peasants and rebellion, 1348-1434*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Dean, Trevor. *The Towns of Italy in the Later Middle Ages*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000.
- Frugoni, Chiara. *A Day in a Medieval City*. Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Green, Monica H. *Women Healthcare in the Medieval West*. Ashgate Publishing 2000.
- Herlihy, David and Samuel K. Cohn, eds. *The Black Death and the Transformation of the West*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Hyde, J. K. "Contemporary Views on Faction and Civil Strife in Thirteenth and Fourteenth-century Italy." In *Violence and Civil Disorder in Italian Cities 1200-1500*, edited by L. Martines. Berkeley-Los Angeles- London: 1972.
- Jackson, Philippa and Fabrizio Nevola, eds. *Beyond the Palio: Urbanism and Ritual in Renaissance Siena*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Meiss, Millard. *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death. The Arts, Religion and Society in the Mid-Fourteenth Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.
- Nicholas, David. *The Later Medieval City 1300-1500*. London and New York: Longman, 1997.
- Siraisi, Nancy. *Medicine and the Italian Universities 1250-1600*. Leiden-Boston-Köln: Brill, 2001.