UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Modern History

2627-1-E1902R058

Course title

Origins of human rights and the idea of public happiness in early modern times

Topics and course structure

The course is in Italian. It is focused on social, political and cultural history in early modern times (late 15th century to early 19th century). The course offers both a detailed introduction to the course of events in this period (in Europe and the world) and an in-depth analysis of a monographic subject, always selected among those which are more generally relevant to modernity, that is, to present day concerns. The purpose is to promote the knowledge and understanding of this historical period. A further general purpose is to develop intellectual and cultural tools for a better understanding of past and present society.

Objectives

Students will familiarize with 1) the basic chronologies and historical facts of early modern times; 2) historiographical terms; 3) methods of critical analysis of historiography.
Core skills (according to Dublin Descriptors):
Developing historical awareness and knowledge, as a means of knowing and measuring social and political reality (Knowledge and Understanding);
Developing independent judgement, through critical analysis and the integration of sources and information(Making Judgements);
Connecting and using methodological and factual knowledge in various contexts (Applying Knowledge and Understanding);
Developing the ability to identify and communicate problems and ideas (Communication Skills);

Being able to find one's way among sources to update one's knowledge continuously and developing critical thinking, to decipher past and present reality (Learning Skills)

Methodologies

Lectures (in Italian) plus collective discussions on sources or documents introduced by the professor (20% max). In person.

Online and offline teaching materials

Presentations, documents and recordings of the lectures will be uploaded (after each lecture) during the course.

Programme and references

Students will be conversant with the subjects treated in the lectures and read two books. Required reading:

1. one textbook on early modern history:
   Carlo Capra, Storia moderna. 1492-1848, Milano, Mondadori Education, 2021 (chapters 27 to 30 not included).

2. teaching materials (a few short texts provided during the course for collective reading)
3. one monograph in the following list (for the optional oral exam):
4. H. Burstin, Rivoluzionari. Antropologia politica della Rivoluzione francese, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2018
5. A. Celati, Donne che creano disordine. Storia di Caterina e altre eretiche nel Cinquecento, Torino, Einaudi, 2025;
6. R. Chartier, La mano dell'autore, la mente dello stampatore. Cultura e scrittura nell'Europa moderna, Roma, Carocci, 2015;
7. L. Hunt, La forza dell'empatia. Una storia dei diritti dell'uomo, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2018 e 2021;
8. T. Plebani, Le scritture delle donne in Europa. Pratiche quotidiane e ambizioni letterarie (secoli XIII-XX), Roma, Carocci, 2021;
9. M. Roggero, Le carte piene di sogni: testi e lettori in età moderna, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2006;
10. M. Roggero, Le vie dei libri. Letture, lingua e pubblico nell'Italia moderna, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2021;
11. E. Tortarolo, L'invenzione della libertà di stampa: censori e scrittori nel Settecento, Roma, Carocci, 2011;
12. A. Trampus, Il diritto alla felicità. Storia di un'idea, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2014.

Students not proficient in Italian: please contact the professor about the programme.

Assessment methods

No tests during the course. An optional written test will be available at the end of the course and can be taken instead of the ordinary written exam. The exam includes 1) a written test, an examination mode that was chosen because it ensures an objective assessment of the knowledge the student has attained (knowledge of facts and methodologies); 2) an optional oral test.

a) The written test (100 minutes) includes 15 multiple-choice questions on the Early modern History textbook (one correct answer= 1 point) and three open-ended questions on subjects treated in the lectures and collective discussions on brief texts (each answer, a brief essay, is rated from 0 to 5 points). Recordings of the lectures, slides and texts will be available on the website of the course.
b) The optional oral test is on a book chosen from the monographs listed above in the Syllabus (interview rated 0 to 5 points, to be added to the written paper grade). This conversation allows students who are particularly interested in the subject to exercise critical analysis and communication skills.

Office hours

Office hours are by appointment, either online or in the professor's office.

Programme validity

Until 30 September 2027.

Course tutors and assistants

dr. Tazio Morandini

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