

**MORAVIAN COLLEGE**  
**SPRING 2008**  
**HISTORY 296: RELIGION, MAGIC AND SCIENCE IN THE**  
**RENAISSANCE**

**Dr. Jim Skalnik**  
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The aims of History 296, "Religion, Magic and Science in the Renaissance," are threefold. The first is to acquaint students with the course of European history in the Renaissance, with special attention to the intellectual and spiritual developments of the period and the transformation of the European mind that they brought about. The second is to explore the competing interpretations of these developments among historians by investigating some of the major historiographical controversies about the period. The third is to challenge our own categories of knowledge and belief through an examination of the competing but often complementary claims of what we know today as "religion," "magic" and "science."

The objectives of the course follow naturally from its aims. By the end of the term, students will:

- Be familiar with the chronology of Renaissance history and with the fundamental political, economic, religious and intellectual developments that shaped its course;

- Understand the differing approaches of historians to the evidence surviving from the period and be able to analyze them critically;

- Think critically about the categories they use to organize their own understanding of the past and the present;

- Improve their skills in research, writing and presentation.

Every student in the course will read the following two books (available in the bookstore):

Yates, Frances A. *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964.

Wilcox, Donald J. *In Search of God and Self: Renaissance and Reformation Thought*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1975.

In addition, each student is required to read two books on a topic chosen in consultation with me, as well as reviews of these books and other scholarly articles related to the topic. These readings will form the basis for the historiographical essay that is required from each student in the course.

Students will be assigned brief additional readings for several class meetings.

## **Assignments and Grading**

Book Review	15% (Due February 18)
Midterm	15% (February 25)
Historiographical Essay	30% (18 April)
Final Exam	20% (TBA)
Participation and Brief Essays	20% (TBA)

## **Attendance**

Students are required to attend every class meeting. Absences may be excused for a variety of reasons, including poor health and other college obligations, at the discretion of the instructor. Unexcused absences will reduce the participation grade in the course by 2 points for each absence.

Assignments are due in class on the day noted on the syllabus (or, in the case of the short essays, on the date announced in class). Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade for each day late.

## **Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism is unacceptable. If you plagiarize, you should expect to receive a zero on the assignment. Consult the Student Handbook for the college policy on academic integrity, a subject about which I will also distribute guidelines in class. You are always welcome to discuss your work with classmates and friends, but all the work you turn in to me—including essays, reviews, and exams—must be your own.

## Schedule of Classes

Monday 14 January	Introduction to the Course
Wednesday 16 January	The Discarded Image
Friday 18 January	The Character of the Renaissance Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, <i>Oration on the Dignity of Man</i> ; Wilcox, "General Introduction"
Monday 21 January	<b>Martin Luther King Day</b>
Wednesday 23 January	Plato, Plotinus and Pletho Yates, Chapters 1 and 2
Friday 25 January	Dante and Petrarch Wilcox, Chapters 3 and 4
Monday 28 January	The Star-Crossed Renaissance Yates, Chapters 3 and 4
Wednesday 30 January	Spiritual Magic Yates, Chapters 5 and 6
Friday 1 February	The Occult Sciences in the Renaissance Yates, Chapter 7; Wilcox, Chapter 7
Monday 4 February	From Magic to Science Yates, Chapter 8
Wednesday 6 February	The Copernican Revolution Wilcox, Chapter 8
Friday 8 February	The Sleepwalkers Reading TBA
Monday 11 February	The Mechanical Universe Reading TBA
Wednesday 13 February	From Alchemy to Chemistry Reading TBA
Friday 15 February	The Sciences of Life Debus, Man and Nature in the Renaissance (excerpt)
Monday 18 February	Technological Change: Gunpowder Handout ( <b>Book Review Due</b> )
Wednesday 20 February	Technological Change: The Printing Press Handout
Friday 22 February	Review
Monday 25 February	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
Wednesday 27 February	Art and Ideas I Wilcox, Chapter 11
Friday 29 February	Art and Ideas II No Reading Assignment
Monday 3 March	<b>Spring Break</b>

Wednesday 5 March	<b>Spring Break</b>
Friday 7 March	<b>Spring Break</b>
Monday 10 March	The Reformation in the Sixteenth Century Wilcox, Chapter 13
Wednesday 12 March	The Medieval Church Wilcox, Chapters 15 and 16
Friday 14 March	Mysticism and Nominalism Wilcox, Chapters 17 and 18
Monday 17 March	Northern Humanism Wilcox, pp. 268-81
Wednesday 19 March	Erasmus Wilcox, pp. 281-85
Friday 21 March	<b>Easter Recess</b>
Monday 24 March	Film: "The Dissenter"
Wednesday 26 March	Martin Luther Wilcox, pp. 288-94; Ross, pp. 652-61
Friday 28 March	Faith Alone Wilcox, pp. 294-306
Monday 31 March	Calvin Wilcox, pp. 308-15
Wednesday 2 April	Calvinism Wilcox, pp. 315-24
Friday 4 April	The Radical Reform Wilcox, pp. 361-73
Monday 7 April	The Catholic Reformation Wilcox, pp. 342-48
Wednesday 9 April	The Jesuits and the Council of Trent Wilcox, pp. 348-60
Friday 11 April	The Iron Century No Reading Assignment
Monday 14 April	Witchcraft Reading TBA
Wednesday 16 April	Witchcraft Handout
Friday 18 April	Witchcraft Handout ( <b>Historiographical Essay Due</b> )
Monday 21 April	Comenius Handout
Wednesday 23 April	Comenius Handout
Friday 25 April	Review