

CET Syllabus of Record

Program: CET Florence

Course Title: The Medici: History and Legend of an Italian Dynasty

Course Code: FL/ITLS 274

Total Hours: 45

Recommended Credits: 3

Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings: Italian Studies / History

Language of Instruction: English

Prerequisites/Requirements: None



Description

This course delves into the full story of the extraordinary Medici family, whose fortunes are traced over three hundred years (late-14th century to early-18th century)--from the rise of the bank under Cosimo the Elder, to the final collapse of the house of the Medici with the death of the Grand Duke of Tuscany in 1737. Since the power of the Medici family enabled family members to rule Florence, control the Papacy, "act as the needle of the Italian compass" and, sometimes, influence the policies of an entire continent, a study of this family provides students a thorough understanding of the history, politics and civic life of this period. The Medici were statesmen, scholars and patrons of art; collectors; entrepreneurs and impresarios. Some of them were poets; others were popes. This class attempts to explain a pattern of political control that led Florence from a republicanism uniquely energetic in its cult of liberty to the drowsy acceptance of near-absolutist rule.

The class also introduces students to relevant philosophies and artistic movements by discussing the most important achievements of artists and architects who worked for the Medici, such as Brunelleschi, Donatello, Michelozzo, Michelangelo, Botticelli, San Gallo, Bronzino, Vasari, Buontalenti, Cellini and different musicians who worked in the Medici court during the 16th and 17th centuries.

Slides and site visits supplement in-class lectures.

Objectives

During this course, students:

- Acquire a deep understanding of the lifestyle and historical artistic and cultural aspects of the Medicean period.
- Learn to ask, study and discuss larger questions about Medicean power: How was it acquired? In what way did it function? Why was it accepted?
- Gain a complete understanding of the historical factors at stake during the rise, flourishing and fall of the Medici family.
- Gain an preliminary understanding of the philosophies and artistic movements of the time.
- Learn to recognize the artistic works of many artists and architects who worked in the Medici court.
- Participate in numerous on-site lectures in order to enhance and validate their study of this topic.

Course Requirements

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Students are expected come to class having read all assigned readings and prepared to actively discuss that day's topics. Classes typically comprise lectures, discussions and on-site teaching. Alternative teaching media such as slides, videos, etc. are often used. Guided visits to churches, palaces, museums and galleries are as important as in-class lectures. Therefore, all site visits are mandatory.

Students complete several written papers, as well as a midterm and final exam.

Methods of Evaluation

Participation	20%
Written Assignments	30%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	30%

Primary Texts:

M. Hollingsworth, *The Medici*, Head of Zeus, 2017

J. Najemy: *A History of Florence (1200-1575)*, Blackwell: Oxford, 2005.

Secondary Texts:

J. Burckhardt: *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, the translation of S.G.C. Middlemore, revised and edited by I. Gordon, New American Library: New York, 1961.

S. Dall'Aglio: *The Duke's Assassin. Exile and Death of Lorenzino de' Medici*, translated by D. Weinstein, Yale University Press: New Haven-London, 2015.

J.R. Hale: *Florence and the Medici*, Thames and Hudson: London, 1977 (Phoenix Press: London, 2004).

C. Hibbert: *The Rise and Fall of the House of Medici*, Allen Lane: London, 1974 (Penguin Books, 1979).

L. Martines: *April Blood: Florence and the Plot Against the Medici*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2003.

T. Parks: *Medici Money. Banking, Metaphysics and Art in Fifteenth-century Florence*, Profile Books: London, 2005.

P. Strathern, *The Medici: Godfathers of the Renaissance*, Vintage, 2007

Outline of Course Content

Note: Fall/Spring students cover approximately 1 topic every 2 weeks. During the summer, when class periods are longer, students cover approximately 1 topic per week.

TOPIC 1 - The Social and Political Framework of Florence--The Founding of a Dynasty

The early days of the Medici family up until Giovanni di Bicci. The foundation of the Medici Bank in 1389.

The relation of the Medici bankers with the Catholic Church. Early Medicean Art Patronage.

TOPIC 2 - Exile and Triumph

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The Medici party. Cosimo the Elder: character and interests.
Cosimo: Father of the Fatherland or Godfather of the Fatherland?
The Council of Florence (1439) "East meets West".
Florence 'The New Athens', and the first public library in Europe (1444).

TOPIC 3 - Lorenzo the Magnificent

Poet, politician and Maecenas.
His position in Florence and in Italy.
Botticelli, his painter.
The "Adoption" of Michelangelo.
"April Blood": Florence and the plot against the Medici (the Pazzi Conspiracy).
Frà Girolamo Savonarola: "Scourge and fire" (1490-1498).

TOPIC 4 – Political Literary Production under the Medici

Analysis of the two works by Nicolò Machiavelli most closely connected to the Medici family: *The Prince* and *The Mandrake*.
Giovanni dei Medici as Pope Leone X, - the first Florentine Pope.
The clash with Martin Luther and Protestantism.

TOPIC 5 - From Republic to Duchy

The Medici popes. The Medicean restoration.
Pope Clement VII (1523-1534) (Giulio Dei Medici). The last Florentine Republic (1527-1530).
The siege of Florence. The return of the Medici. Alessandro Dei Medici Duke of Florence.

TOPIC 6 – The Last Republic and the First Medici Duke

Cosimo I dei Medici (1519 – 1574) – the Duke of Florence (1537 – 1569) and the Grand Duke of Tuscany (1569 – 1574).
The creation of a territorial Tuscan state.
Study of the works by Giorgio Vasari aimed at the glorification of the Medici Dynasty.

TOPIC 7 - The Decline of a Dynasty

Cosimo II, Ferdinando II, Cosimo III and his heirs.