FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

HIST 6310: Early Modern European Intellectual & Political History
Autumn 2013, Wednesdays 5.00-7.30
Dr Christopher Maginn; Phone (212) 636-7554; e-mail: cmaginn@fordham.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 3.00 – 5.00 (310 Dealy Hall) and Tuesdays, 2.30 – 4.00 (913a LC)

Course Description: This course will explore the major intellectual and political themes in the history of Europe during the period 1500-1700. The early sixteenth century witnessed the clustering together of new ideas, new discoveries and religious and political change which, together, conspired to destroy the European medieval world and to launch the continent on a path towards a world which was more recognizably modern. Europe’s journey toward ‘modernity’ in the two centuries after 1500, however, was characterized by religious and intellectual fragmentation, political upheaval and war. This course will explore how these intersecting phenomena shaped the formation of early modern European states and, ultimately, a European state-system which would go on to dominate the world until the early twentieth century. Central to our discussion of state formation in early modern Europe will be an investigation of the so-called ‘General Crisis’ of the seventeenth century. The debate as to the existence (or not) in the seventeenth century of an all-encompassing crisis, brought on by the political, intellectual and religious changes set in motion in the early sixteenth century remains one of the liveliest and most wide-ranging historiographical debates. Students will thus be responsible for an extended research paper which will address this basic question: was there a ‘General Crisis’ in early modern Europe?

General Course Outline

4th September: Introduction: Europe, c.1500: Between Medieval and Modern

11th September: The Historiographical Framework: ‘General Crisis’ or a Struggle for Stability?

18th September: Renaissance and Reformation

25th September: Composite Monarchy

2nd October: Introduction to early modern primary (and printed) source materials

9th October: War and Rebellion in Sixteenth-Century Europe

16th October: European monarchs: Elizabeth I and Philip II

23rd October: Varieties of European State Formation: Spain and the United Provinces

30th October: Varieties of European State Formation: Britain and Russia

6th November: Varieties of European State Formation: France, Austria and Prussia

13th November: The Thirty Years’ War and the Peace of Westphalia

20th November: ‘General Crisis’ Reconsidered
27th November: Europe, c.1700: Looking Back and Looking Forward

4th and 11th December: Presentations

**Required Reading**


**Supplementary and Further Reading**

Journal articles, available on-line through the Fordham Library, and other readings will be assigned each week. Much of the seminar’s weekly lectures and classroom discussions will revolve around these readings.

**Course Requirements**

Students will be responsible for an extended piece of research in the form of an essay which must be at least 30 pages in length and submitted as hard copy on the day of our course’s final meeting in December. The essay is intended to represent the sum of the course work for the semester. Students will choose an essay topic based on their own research interests and through consultation with the instructor. With a view to preparing for such a weighty undertaking, students will asked to complete four written assignments and to give a presentation to the class on the subject of their research. The first assignment – due 25th September – is intended to create a familiarity with the period and asks students to write a short essay (no more than 3 pages) tracing some of the central political and intellectual themes in sixteenth-century Europe; the second assignment – due 9th October – is another 3 page essay, but is concerned with the historiographical dilemma posed by the ‘general crisis’ theory. The third assignment – due 30th October – requires students to furnish the instructor with the title of their essay and a thesis statement (no more than a paragraph) outlining the intended direction of their writing and research. The next assignment – due 13th November – asks the student to write a book review (approximately 3 pages in length) on one of the central secondary sources which they are employing in their research. Finally, beginning 4th December and with their research (hopefully) taking shape, students will present to the class a summary of their work to date. This will include the distribution of an annotated bibliography (of no less than 15 entries) describing the views and the relevance of sources thus far consulted and a 20-25 minute scholarly discussion of the scope, direction and central thrust of their essay. Further information concerning the written assignments and presentations will be supplied in due course.
Class Participation

This course will be taught as a seminar and class participation – taken to mean regular attendance and meaningful input to in-class discussions – is an essential component.

Grading

Assignments and Presentation: 30%  
Research Paper: 50%  
Class Participation: 20%