Commerce and Society in Early Modern Europe

Wednesday, 4:15-6:15pm
Spring 2019
Dr. Francesca Bregoli
Office hours: Wednesday 3-4, or by appointment (room 5381)

Course description
The rise of global trade and imperial ambitions during the early modern period led to great political, cultural, and material changes. This course explores early modern practices of trade as well as cultures of exchange more broadly, and their repercussions in shaping European society from the late 15th to the end of the 18th century. What processes led to the expansion of the market, the success of trading networks, and the formation of a consumer culture? How did networks of trade impact and inform cross-cultural relations? How did global trade shape European perceptions of the world, and how did the new availability of consumer goods change behaviors and habits? The course approaches these questions from the perspective and with the tools of cultural and social history. Topics will include trans-regional merchant diasporas; cross-cultural trade and communication; the early modern culture of credit and obligation; the trade of drugs; piracy and captivity; brokerage and diplomacy; patronage and the gift economy; and the rise of consumer society. Although the main focus of the course is on early modern Europe and the Mediterranean, attention will be paid to the Ottoman Levant, North Africa, and the colonial world.

Goals
By the end of the course, students will be able to recognize and define key concepts and historiographical questions relative to merchant practices and cultures of exchange in early modern Europe.

Course requirements

1) Participation each week from the students, and a twenty-minute oral presentation on a chosen weekly topic (starting from week 3). Please coordinate with the other students to avoid overlaps. Students should be prepared to contextualize the readings, to discuss theses and sources, and to ask and answer questions. NB: If there are significantly fewer than 12 students, each student may be asked to present twice. 20%

2) One substantial research paper (15-20 pages, double-spaced TNR) based on first and secondary sources, due on May 15 by 4pm (50%). The last day of classes (5/8) will feature brief presentations on your research (10%).

2) Six short (2-3 pages max.) position papers on the assigned weekly readings. You can choose when to submit a paper based on your research interests, but I recommend submitting three by the middle of the semester to space them out. 20%
Course Schedule (subject to revision)

Week 1. 1/30. Introduction

Week 2. 2/6. Trade, Merchants, Markets

Martha Howell, Commerce before Capitalism in Europe, 1300-1600 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) [focus especially on chapters 1, 3, 5]. TBC


Week 3. 2/13: Commerce, Credit, and Kinship


Week 4. 2/20: Mobility and Cultural Hybridity


Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, A Nation upon the Ocean Sea: Portugal’s Atlantic Diaspora and the Crisis of the Spanish Empire, 1492-1640 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
Week 5. 2/27: Cross-Cultural Trade and Communication


Week 6. 3/6: Information Networks and Social Control


Week 7. 3/13: Cross-Cultural Relations and Identity


Week 8. 3/20: Cultural Mediation: Boundary Crossing and Boundary Maintenance


Week 9. 3/27: The Economics of Violence: Piracy and Captivity


Week 10. 4/3: Trading Drugs: Commodification and New Tastes

Pomeranz and Topik, The World that Trade Created, 81-118.


Week 11. 4/10: The Consumer Society and Attitudes to Wealth


**Week 12. 4/17: Commerce and the Production of Knowledge**


**Week 13, 4/24: No classes, SPRING BREAK**

**Week 14. 5/1: Early Modern Commerce and Society: Writing for a Popular Audience**


**Week 15. 5/8: Research presentations**