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

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 drug trade; piracy and captivity; brokerage and diplomacy; patronage, the gift economy, and commodity exchange; and the rise of consumer society. Although the main focus of the course is on early modern Europe, attention will be paid to the Ottoman Levant, North Africa, and the colonial world.

Course requirements

1) Participation each week from the students and one oral presentation on a chosen weekly topic. 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. 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%

***The following reading list is preliminary and subject to change***


