Italian city-states helped define some of the most important characteristics of Western Civilization in the centuries that span the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of Early Modern Europe. These cities contributed to the development of distinct religious, cultural, political, and economic innovations that combined to create a powerful civilization. Understanding the evolution of these cities is therefore critical to understanding the evolution and character of European civilization.

We will examine the origins of the Italian city-state, which dates from the Etruscans; the decline and recovery of city-states following the end of the Roman Empire; and the Medieval urban renaissance that made possible a flourishing society that could support an explosion of cultural, scientific, religious, and economic creativity; we will explore the particular histories of some of the most important cities to establish a specific context for that creative explosion; and we will study a few of the most influential institutions and individuals that contributed to redefining the heritage of the Ancient and Medieval world into a distinctly European civilization.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

This course will provide students with the opportunity to:

- Acquire knowledge of the functions of cities
- Analyze how contrasting theoretical frameworks may explain the narrative of urban development in the Medieval and Renaissance eras
- Apply those theories and knowledge to case studies of particular cities
- Examine how contingencies affect the evolution of cities and societies
- Develop an understanding of how and what cities contributed to the economic, political, and cultural transformation of Europe from the fall of the Roman Empire to the High Renaissance

**REQUIRED BOOKS**

Gene Brucker, *Florence: The Golden Age, 1138-1737*
Ross King, *Michelangelo and the Pope’s Ceiling*
Frederic Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic*
Iris Origo, *The Merchant of Prato*
Frances Saunders, *The Devil’s Broker*
COURSE POLICIES

Students with disabilities should contact the University’s Disabilities Office to arrange for the appropriate assistance. The instructor cannot otherwise accommodate any special needs they may have.

The instructor expects all students to treat their colleagues with civility and respect. Behavior that does not conform to that standard will be referred to the appropriate Student Affairs Office for review.

Regular attendance and participation in class is an important part of the learning process. Students must contact the instructor and explain the reason for their absence when they are unable to attend class. Failure to do so, or excessive absences from class, can result in penalties that could affect a student’s final grade for the course.

Students must adhere to the standards of scholastic honesty established by University regulations. Cases of plagiarism will be referred to the appropriate office in Student Affairs for investigation.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be a midterm and a comprehensive final exam. Both will be take-home essays due on the days indicated in the Assignments listed below.

In addition, each student will write a five to eight page research paper based on secondary sources on a topic of his or her choice. Each student must identify a topic for this paper and submit the topic for approval by the instructor by the end of the second week of class. The paper’s due date is indicated below.

Grading Distribution:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept Papers*</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Concept Papers are limited to 3 pages, typed, and double spaced

Final Grades will be determined by a curve derived from the highest total points earned, using the standard grading breaks (90% and above, A; etc.)

COURSE OUTLINE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Lecture topics and dates are tentative and may change as circumstances warrant

Part I: Antiquity’s Heritage,  
c.500B CE to c.800 CE
January 17: Introduction
19: The Definitions and Functions of Cities
24: Central Place Theory: A Modern Theoretical Framework
26: Myth and Religion: An Ancient/Medieval Theoretical Framework
31: The Urban Inheritance: Etruscan/Roman urban systems

February 2: The Cultural Inheritance: Christianity before the Fall
7: Secular and Profane Rome: The Rise of Western Christianity

Concept Paper I: Define Centrality for Venice and Florence based on the reading assignments in Lane and Brucker

Part II: Rise of Italian City-States, 10th through 14th Centuries

February 9: The Nadir of the Papacy
14: Urban Development in the Early Medieval Ages
16: Origins of the Medieval Italian City-State, 962-1186
21: European Urban Renaissance, 1000-1350
23: Long Distance Trade
28: Social and Political Organization of Italian Cities, 1160-127

March 1: Class Discussion: Florence, Venice and Central Place Theory
Readings: Lane, pp. 1-170; Brucker, pp. 7-190
6: 13th Century City-State Politics: The Popolo
8: Changing Fortunes of the Papal States MIDTERM DUE
13: SPRING BREAK
15: SPRING BREAK

Part III: The 14th Century Crisis

20: Demographic Catastrophe in the European Urban System
22: Systemic Crisis in Western Catholicism
Concept Paper II: How did urban hierarchy promote both business and war in the 14th century? (Use Origo and Saunders)
27: A Century of Warfare
29: Urban Political Responses to Crisis I: The Rise of Signo

April 3: Urban Political Responses to Crisis II: Rise of Republican Oligarchy
April 5: Changes in the Urban Hierarchy
10: Class Discussion: Faith and Greed in a Century of Crisis
Readings: Origo, all; Saunders, all.
12:

Part IV: Cultural Revolution, City-State Decline
1400-1550

17: Changing Political Economy of Italian City-States, 14th thru 15th centuries
Concept Paper III: Analyze how Rome during the papacy of Julius II could become a new center of cultural innovation despite Florence’s previous dominance of that urban function. (King and Brucker)

19: Princely Courts as Centers of Cultural Change
24: Impact of Warfare on City-States
26: Renaissance Art  Read Lane, 203-39; Brucker, 191-212

May 1: Class Discussion: The Resurgent Papacy
      Reading: King, all.
3: STUDY DAY
May 4: STUDY DAY

FINAL EXAM: TBA

Contact Information:

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Email: David.Johnson@utsa.edu 
Office Hours: By Appointment