

Visiting Erasmus at the Historical Archive

Abstract

This course stems from two books by Erasmus currently found in our historical archive: a collection of his multiple adages or proverbs, such as the celebrated '[In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king](#),' and a second one... Erasmus's numerous epistles. Lectures will also explore Erasmus of Rotterdam both as a historical figure and as the putative originator of that intellectual tradition which places Ancient Greece at the very core of Western Culture.

It intends for its students to utilize the university's unique book collection at the archive and thus offer them as pivotal resources for investigations concerning the paradigms that helped shape or define our modern consciousness. Or, in other words, the course wishes to usher in a novel outlook on the considerable book collection housed at El Rosario's Historical Archive – an outlook that links the Archive's material to the university's undergraduate curriculum. It also hopes to encourage young students of different academic backgrounds to undertake research work that may expand their perspective as to the history of their Latin American identity.

The diversity of the books and that of the multiple languages their written in, their different origins, and the ideology cradled within them as heralds of European tradition in our continent – all of this which may reveal traces of the intellectual milieu that underscored the formation of American nations and which were paramount to the evolution of our particular sense of belonging.

Aim

The course aims at opening up the Archive's material to students from a range of various disciplines taught at the University. This specific course is based on the life and work of Erasmus of Rotterdam, a controversial figure during-and-after his time whose ideas re-shaped our perspective of the past. Erasmus established a new paradigm for the study and understanding of Ancient Greek culture as the foundation of Western Culture. His ingenious criticisms of the Catholic Church, contained in part in some of Erasmus's provocative books currently housed by the Archive, seem particularly engaging.

Erasmus is a polemic figure of his time and his ideas re-shaped our view of the past. He established a new order for the understanding of Greece as the based of the construction of the West, and as a critic of the church is particularly interesting the fact that we can found some of his controversial books in our Archive.

This course will therefore provide its students with basic research skills and resources, focusing on the compilation, organization, and integration of primary and secondary sources. Its objective is for students to produce proper academic research papers. It also hopes to kindle the students' inquisitive spirit and thus offer them the possibility of becoming researchers for brief intervals at the Archive.

Methodology

The course will be held as a seminar, where the Professor will expound the weekly material and discuss the readings with the students in order to encourage them to think critically about the material and pose questions in class that may be answered in group (if, ideally, a discussion among students, mediated by the Professor, emerges). As for grading, there will be an in-class mid-term halfway through the term, a final research paper about which the students will have to start thinking after the first four weeks or so, as the nature of academic research requires that time is both to compile material and answer whatever question the student chooses to work on (a list of possible topics will be provided to the class, although students are encouraged to devise their own research topics and questions – any personal research topic must be discussed with and approved by the Professor). There will be a few in-class quizzes too: these will be announced on the lecture previous to the examination and they will deal exclusively with lecture notes and readings. The student is also expected to complete four brief response papers on a specific reading throughout the semester, both as practice in academic writing and English grammar and composition. Given the nature of the course (a small seminar in which discussion among students will be crucial), students are expected to come to class at all times or present a medical or valid excuse to justify their absence.

In what pertains academic research, Professor Bocchetti will advise her students regarding the various topics broached by the course's subject-matter, and instruct them on how to focus and delve ever deeper into them. The working principle is as follows: the student poses a set of particular questions directly related to the course as it unfolds, of which he/she will select, develop, and answer one of them for the final paper, following both English and American academic criteria for essay-writing (which will also be covered in class). The process that has students posing specific queries in order to pursue thereafter one or more possible solutions to it will unfold alongside the course. Thus the course is based on research activity.

Evaluation

*Participation (Attendance, Quizzes, Four brief, one-page response papers) 30%

*Mid-Term 30%

*Final Paper (10-12 pgs., double-spaced) 40%

Weekly Sessions and Readings

WEEK 1

* Introduction

Reading:

- Whitney, J.P. "Erasmus." The English Historical Review 35.137 (1920): 1-25.

WEEK 2

* Erasmus: Life, Historical Context, and Contemporaries

Reading:

- Selections from Michel de Montaigne's Essays
- Selections from Francis Bacon's Essays

WEEK 3

* Introduction to In Praise of Folly

Reading:

- In Praise of Folly (first half)
- Response Paper #1

WEEK 4

* In Praise of Folly cont'd.

Reading:

- In Praise of Folly (second half)
- Foucault, Michel. Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Vintage-Random House, 1988: Preface, pgs. 3-38.

WEEK 5

* Rules of Academic Research and Essay Composition

* Epistolary Literature I: Erasmus's Letters

Reading:

- Selection from Erasmus's Letters
- Trueba, Jamile. El Arte Epistolar en el Renacimiento Español. Boydell & Brewer, 1997: pgs. 59-72.

WEEK 6

* Epistolary Literature I cont'd: Erasmus's Letters

Reading:

- Wengert, Timothy. "Famous Last Words: The Final Epistolary Exchange between Erasmus of Rotterdam and Philip Melanchthon in 1536." Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook. 25 (2004): 18-38.
- Response Paper #2

WEEK 7

* Epistolary Literature II: Erasmus's Adages

Reading:

- Selection from Erasmus's Adages
- Wesseling, Ari. "Intertextual Play: Erasmus's Use of Adages in the Colloquies." Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook. 28 (2008): 1-27.

WEEK 8

* Epistolary Literature II cont'd: Erasmus's Adages

Reading:

- Ter Meer, Tineke. "A True Mirror of the Mind: Some Observations on the Apophthegmata of Erasmus." Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook. 23 (2003): 67-93.

WEEK 9

* In-class Mid-Term

WEEK 10

* The Art of Engravings and Heraldry in Books

* Ars Typographorum

* Scribes and Scholars

Reading:

- Hayum, Andrée. "Dürer's Portrait of Erasmus and the Ars Typographorum." Renaissance Quarterly. 38.4 (1985): 650-687. [Visit Amazon's L. D. Reynolds Page](#) [search results](#) [Learn about Author Central](#)

WEEK 11

* The Revolutionary Erasmus

* Erasmus and the Catholic Church

Reading:

- MacPhail, Eric. "Erasmus the Sophist?" Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook. 26 (2006): 71-88.
- Backus, Irena. "The Church Fathers and the Canonicity of the Apocalypse in the Sixteenth Century: Erasmus, Frans Titelmans, and Theodore Beza." The Sixteenth Century Journal. 29.3 (1985): 651-666.

WEEK 12

* Erasmus and Antiquity

Reading:

- Goldhill, Simon. Who needs Greek: Contests in the Cultural History of Hellenism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002: pgs.1-13, 14-59.
- Response Paper #3

WEEK 13

* A New Paradigm?: Ancient Greece at the core of Western Civilization

Reading:

- McCallum-Barry, Carmel. "Why Did Erasmus Translate Greek Tragedy?" Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook, 24 (2004): 52-70.

WEEK 14

* Erasmus in the Visual Arts

Reading:

- Panofsky, Erwin. "Erasmus and the Visual Arts." Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 32 (1969): 200-227.

WEEK 15

* Erasmus: Influence and Legacy

Reading:

- Homza, Lu Ann. "Erasmus as Hero, or Heretic? Spanish Humanism and the Valladolid Assembly of 1527." Renaissance Quarterly, 50.1 (1997): 78-118.
- Response Paper #4

WEEK 16

* Final Paper Due

External Links

“Erasmus.” <http://www.ciger.be/erasmus>.

The Knitting Circle. “Desiderius Erasmus.” <http://myweb.lsbu.ac.uk/~stafflag/erasmus.html>.

Sauer, Joseph. “Desiderius Erasmus.” New Advent.

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05510b.htm>.

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. “Erasmus.”

<http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/e/erasmus/htm>.

Sauer, Joseph. “Desiderius Erasmus.” New Advent.

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05510b.htm>.

Desiderius Erasmus. [Praise of Folly](#). (Translated by John Wilson, 1688.)

<http://smith2.sewanee.edu/Erasmus/pof.html>.

Crawford, Chris. “Quotations.” Erasmus the Hero.

http://www.erasmatazz.com/library/Erasmus_the_Hero/Quotations.html.

Beck, Sanderson. “Erasmus and Humanism.” <http://www.san.beck.org/WP9-Erasmus.html>.

Pabel, Hilmar. “[Retelling the History of the Early Church: Erasmus’s Paraphrase on Acts](#).” Church History, 69 (2000): 63.

Crawford, Chris. “Erasmus The Loner.”

http://www.erasmatazz.com/library/Erasmus_the_Hero/Peacemaker.html.