

J.P.SOMMERVILLE

**History 351: Seventeenth Century Europe**

**SPRING 2017**

**Instructor:**

**Johann Sommerville**

Email: jsommerv@wisc.edu

Office: Mosse Humanities 4127;

Office Hours: Mondays at 12-1 and by appointment.

Phone: 608-263-1863

Mailbox: 4001 Mosse Humanities

**Course Description:**

This course is about Europe in the seventeenth century - probably the most important century in the making of the modern world. It was during the 1600s that Galileo and Newton founded modern science; that Descartes began modern philosophy; that Hugo Grotius initiated international law; and that Thomas Hobbes and John Locke started modern political theory. In the same century strong centralized European states entered into worldwide international competition for wealth and power, accelerating the pace of colonization in America and Asia. The Dutch, French, Spanish, Portuguese, English, and others, all struggled to maintain and extend colonies and trading-posts in distant corners of the globe, with profound and permanent consequences for the whole world. They also fought one another in Europe, where warfare grew increasingly complex and expensive. To gain an edge against other powers in war, European governments invested in research in military technology, and the seventeenth century was consequently an age of military revolution, enabling Europeans from then on to defeat most non-European peoples relatively easily in battle.

The course will examine the main social, economic, intellectual, religious, cultural and political developments that occurred in the seventeenth century. It will begin by exploring European religious divisions at the opening of the seventeenth century - divisions that led to assassinations and to widespread warfare, especially in the Thirty Years War of 1618-48. This war devastated much of Germany, and for a while made Sweden a great power. It also profoundly affected France, Spain and the Netherlands. In France, Cardinal Richelieu and Jules Mazarin strengthened and centralized state power, though at times their policies came perilously close to disaster. In Spain, disaster struck, and the Spaniards lost their long war with the Dutch, who formed a prosperous independent republic. Spain also lost control of Portugal, and for a while it seemed that Catalonia too would break free from Spanish control.

In the seventeenth century, Spain declined but France rose to become the greatest power in Europe. In the second half of the century Louis XIV increased royal power at home and

French power abroad, but at a very high cost in lives and cash. The France of Louis XIV threatened to dominate Europe, and to oppose him other powers laid aside their religious differences (which were becoming less important in the increasingly secularized and scientific atmosphere of the late 1600s) and joined forces against France. By the end of the century two powers in particular were rivaling France, namely Holland and England. Both benefited from the shift of Europe's economic center of gravity from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. In both, agricultural and commercial changes were taking place which would soon pave the way for the Industrial Revolution.

**For Further Information, lecture summaries, etc., see:**

<http://faculty.history.wisc.edu/sommerville/351/351OUTLINE.htm> and  
<http://faculty.history.wisc.edu/sommerville/351/351%20course.htm>

**Requirements:**

This is a three credit course. An honors credit is available. If you are registered for the wrong number of credits, please visit your MyUW site and follow the links to update your current course information.

**Undergraduates**

- attend lectures (MWF 11-11:50, 1651 Mosse Humanities)
- do the required course reading (for those who are interested there is additional optional reading;)
- and explore the material on this site by clicking the hyperlinks (starting with Course schedule.)
- do two midterms (in class on 3/1 and 4/14,) and take the final (7:45AM, Saturday 5/6, place to be announced;)

**honors students** do the same things and also write a term paper (due 5/3 in class.)

Your honors credit term paper should be double-spaced and about 5-6 pages in length; in addition to the 5-6 pages of text, the paper should also include a bibliography, and references to things you have read, giving your sources, and it should show familiarity with at least two books or articles in addition to the course reading. See this guide on how to cite references in your paper.

The paper should be on either:

(1) What was the impact of warfare on government and society in seventeenth century Europe?

or (2) In what ways did the long reign of Louis XIV benefit the French people, and in what ways did it harm them?;

or (3) Galileo is often seen as a martyr to the causes of truth, freedom, and scientific objectivity. Is that right, or was he in fact an obstinate and opinionated man whom the Catholic church was fully justified in prosecuting?;

or (4) another topic, by arrangement.

**How much are the exams (etc.) worth?**

Undergraduates:

3 credit: each midterm 25%; final 50%.

3 credit Honors: 25% Honors paper; 37.5% final; 18.75% each midterm

**Graduate students:**

Do 2 term papers (12-15 pp. including notes and bibliography; due 3/27 and 5/3; worth 50% each.) Topics by arrangement.