

Italian Renaissance Summer School

Reading List

Lucrezia Borgia: Life, Love, and Death in Renaissance Italy

by Sarah Bradford

The very name Lucrezia Borgia conjures up everything that was sinister and corrupt about the Renaissance—incest, political assassination, papal sexual abuse, poisonous intrigue, unscrupulous power grabs. Yet, as bestselling biographer Sarah Bradford reveals in this breathtaking new portrait, the truth is far more fascinating than the myth. Neither a vicious monster nor a seductive pawn, Lucrezia Borgia was a shrewd, determined woman who used her beauty and intelligence to secure a key role in the political struggles of her day. Drawing from a trove of contemporary documents and fascinating firsthand accounts, Bradford brings to life the art, the pageantry, and the dangerous politics of the Renaissance world Lucrezia Borgia helped to create.

The Medici : Godfathers of the Renaissance

by Paul Strathern

A dazzling history of the modest family which rose to become one of the most powerful in Europe, *The Medici* is a remarkably modern story of power, money and ambition. Against the background of an age which saw the rebirth of ancient and classical learning Paul Strathern explores the intensely dramatic rise and fall of the Medici family in Florence, as well as the Italian Renaissance which they did so much to sponsor and encourage. Strathern also follows the lives of many of the great Renaissance artists with whom the Medici had dealings, including Leonardo, Michelangelo and Donatello; as well as scientists like Galileo and Pico della Mirandola; and the fortunes of those members of the Medici family who achieved success away from Florence, including the two Medici popes and Catherine de' Medici, who became Queen of France and played a major role in that country through three turbulent reigns.

The Pope's Daughter

by Caroline P. Murphy

The untold story of how Felice della Rovere, the illegitimate daughter of Pope Julius II, became the most powerful woman in Rome. Caroline P. Murphy evokes not only the great turbulence and creativity of Renaissance Italy, but also Felice's daily life, from dealing with squabbles among servants to her advice on the best way to bribe a Pope.

Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy

by Lauro Martines

This work contends that the Italian Renaissance ought to be considered in two stages: one, the eleventh century to 1300 when the urban political groundwork is laid; and two, 1300 to 1600 when the resulting cultural explosion occurs.

The Tigress of Forli

by Elizabeth Lev

A strategist to match Machiavelli; a warrior who stood toe to toe with the Borgias; a wife whose three marriages would end in bloodshed and heartbreak; and a mother determined to maintain her family's honor, Caterina Riario Sforza de Medici was a true Renaissance celebrity, beloved and vilified in equal measure. In this dazzling biography, Elizabeth Lev illuminates her extraordinary life and accomplishments. Raised in the court of Milan and wed at age ten to the pope's corrupt nephew, Caterina was ensnared in Italy's political intrigues early in life. After turbulent years in Rome's papal court, she moved to the Romagna province of Forli. Following her husband's assassination, she ruled Italy's crossroads with iron will, martial strength, political savvy, and an icon's fashion sense. In finally losing her lands to the Borgia family, she put up a resistance that inspired all of Europe and set the stage for her progeny including Cosimo de Medici to follow her example to greatness.

The Ugly Renaissance

by Alexander Lee

Featuring the beauties of Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci, combined with the dark and hidden side of the Renaissance, by an acclaimed historian and expert in the period. Renowned as an age of artistic rebirth, the Renaissance is cloaked with an aura of beauty and brilliance. But behind the Mona Lisa's smile lurked a seamy, vicious world of power politics, perversity and corruption that has more in common with the present day than anyone dares to admit. Enter a world of corrupt bankers, greedy politicians, sex-crazed priests, rampant disease, and lives of extravagance and excess. Enter the world of the ugly Renaissance. Uncovering the hidden realities beneath the surface of the period's best-known artworks, historian Alexander Lee takes the reader on a breathtaking and unexpected journey through the Italian past and shows that, far from being the product of high-minded ideals, the sublime monuments of the Renaissance were created by flawed and tormented artists who lived in an ever-expanding world of bigotry and hatred. The only question is: will you ever see the Renaissance in quite the same way again?

The Cardinal's Hat

by Professor Mary Hollingsworth

Working with Ippolito's letters and ledgers, recently uncovered in an archive in Modena, Italy, Mary Hollingsworth has pieced together a fascinating and undeniably titillating tale of this Renaissance cardinal and his road to power and wealth in sixteenth century Europe. The ledgers document every aspect of Ippolito's comings and goings, and he comes to life out of the minutiae, as do the lives of his staff.

A Short History of the Italian Renaissance

by Virginia Cox

The extraordinary creative energy of Renaissance Italy lies at the root of modern Western culture. In her elegant new introduction, Virginia Cox offers a fresh vision of this iconic moment in European cultural history, when - between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries - Italy led the world in painting, building, science and literature. Her book explores key artistic, literary and intellectual developments, but also histories of food and fashion, map-making, exploration and anatomy. Alongside towering figures such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, Petrarch, Machiavelli and Isabella d'Este, Cox reveals a cast of lesser-known protagonists including printers, travel writers, actresses, courtesans, explorers, inventors and even celebrity chefs. At the same time, Italy's rich regional diversity is emphasised; in addition to the great artistic capitals of Florence, Rome and Venice, smaller but cutting-edge centres such as Ferrara, Mantua, Bologna, Urbino and Siena are given their due. As the author demonstrates, women played a far more prominent role in this exhilarating resurgence than was recognized until very recently - both as patrons of art and literature and as creative artists themselves. 'Renaissance woman', she boldly argues, is as important a legacy as 'Renaissance man'.

Art of the Italian Renaissance Courts

by Alison Cole

This fascinating study of Renaissance courtly art and culture in fifteenth and early sixteenth-century Italy encompasses the most recent scholarship on the courts, court art and noble values. Alison Cole not only considers the role of artists, but explores the distinctive uses to which art was put at the courts, from the smaller duchies and princely courts of Ferrara, Mantua and Urbino to the larger courts of Naples and Milan. The social, intellectual and artistic milieu of each court is brought vividly to life, along with the complex personalities of the rulers, their relationships with the civic and ecclesiastical authorities, and the role of court women as patrons of the arts. Drawing on a wide range of contemporary texts and visual material, Cole paints a rich picture of these extraordinary courts in the moment of their greatest brilliance.
