



HISTORY 2431F (570)
AGE OF ANXIETY: EUROPE IN THE EARLY MODERN ERA
Fall/Winter 2026 - 2027

Instructor: Dr. Nic Virtue
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Course Information

Mode of Instruction: in-person

Calendar Description:

This course examines the 16th through 18th centuries as a period of social, political, religious, and emotional anxiety for Europeans experiencing the tumultuous transition from medieval to modern. Topics include socio-economic pressures, religious reformations, state centralization, warfare, revolt, crime and punishment, witch hunts, and climate change.

Prerequisite(s):

Antirequisite(s): [History 2103](#), [History 2403E](#), [History 2450F/G](#), [History 2460F/G](#).

Extra Information: 2 lecture and 1 tutorial hour

Course Weight: 0.50

Breadth: Category A

Subject Code: History

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

HISTORY 2431F

AGE OF ANXIETY: EUROPE IN THE EARLY MODERN ERA

Instructor: **Nicolas Virtue** (nvirtue2@uwo.ca)

This course examines the 16th through 18th centuries as a period of social, political, religious, and emotional anxiety for Europeans experiencing the tumultuous transition from medieval to modern. The “early modern” period played host to religious reformations, scientific, commercial, and technological revolutions, and the development of modern state structures. Yet, it was also a time of superstition and magic, environmental catastrophe, and tremendous violence. It is precisely this overlap of tradition and innovation, and the relationship between continuity and change, that make this period so intriguing for historians today. This course surveys the history of early modern Europe, covering a range of theological, intellectual, political, military, social, and cultural developments. As an essay course, assignments and tutorials are designed to engage students in the historian’s craft by integrating the analysis of primary sources with historiographical debates.

Mode of instruction: in person.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- identify and explain the historical and present-day significance of key facts, ideas, events, and people related to early modern Europe
- analyze primary sources in their historical context
- read and understand scholarly secondary sources, with an awareness of the varying interpretations, approaches, and perspectives within the historiography of a topic
- weave together primary and secondary source evidence to interpret the past
- effectively communicate their ideas in writing and in small groups

COURSE TEXTS

Required:

The titles below are available to purchase from the [Western Bookstore](#) for the prices indicated.

Harrington, Joel F. *The Faithful Executioner: Life and Death, Honor and Shame in the Turbulent Sixteenth Century*. New York: Picador, 2013.

- Paperback (\$28.00)
- Also available on Course Reserve at King's Library

Konnert, Mark. *Medieval to Modern: Early Modern Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

- Paperback (\$148.95)
- Ebook (\$67.00)
- Also available on Course Reserve at King's Library

Morton, Peter A., ed. *The Trial of Tempel Anneke: Records of a Witchcraft Trial in Brunswick, Germany, 1663*. 2nd ed. Translated by Barbara Dähms. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017.

- Paperback (\$40.75)
- Ebook (\$31.00)
- Also available as an unlimited access ebook through [Western Libraries](#)

Note: Additional lecture and tutorial readings will be made available electronically.

COURSE EVALUATION

Tutorial Participation	25%	
Term Test	20%	October 27
Primary Source Essay	30%	December 4
Final Exam	25%	December Exam Period

Tutorial Participation (25%)

Weekly tutorial sessions will involve small-group discussions on course content. Students will be graded out of 5 for each tutorial, according to the following rubric:

- 0/5 — student failed to attend tutorial session
- 2/5 — student attended tutorial but did not participate or contribute
- 3/5 — limited participation in tutorial
- 4/5 — active, thoughtful, and respectful contributor
- 5/5 — exceptional level of preparation, comprehension, and analysis

Note: Participation during class lectures will also contribute to overall participation grades.

Term Test (20%)

The term test will cover lecture, tutorial, and reading material from the first seven weeks of the class. The test will include a map quiz, short essays based on lecture/textbook content, and a book essay based on Joel Harrington's *The Faithful Executioner*.

The make-up date for the Term Test is 6 November 2026. Please note, Friday Make-Up Exams may only be written with the instructor's consent.

Primary Source Essay (30%)

The major written assignment for the course is an essay of **3,000 words** (+/- 500) that will support a thesis (argument) with primary source evidence. Drawing from Peter A. Morton's sourcebook on *The Trial of Tempel Anneke*, students will fashion their own interpretation of the trial and what it tells us about the theme of anxiety in the early modern period. The book includes the complete archival records from the trial. Additional secondary source research will be required to interpret the sources and provide historiographical context. Students should cite **at least three academic secondary sources** (books, chapters, or journal articles) in their essay. Secondary sources should be cited in **footnotes** as outlined in the [Chicago Manual of Style](#). **Primary sources** from the sourcebook should be **cited in text** according to Document or Folio number, like this (doc. A) or (Folio 3). Papers are expected to be clearly structured and free from spelling or grammatical errors.

Final Exam (25%)

The course concludes with a three-hour final exam scheduled by Enrolment Services during the December exam period. The exam will comprise a combination of short and long essay questions. The short essay questions will be based on material covered after the Term Test. The long essay question will be cumulative.

COURSE POLICIES

Students should familiarize themselves with the College-wide and Departmental policies outlined in the pages appended to this syllabus. These appendices include useful information and links about late penalties, academic offenses, student absences, support services at King's, etc. In addition to these general policies, please note the following class-specific policies.

Essay Course Requirement

Because this is an Essay course, **all written work (i.e., the essay) must be submitted** in order to pass the course (even if late penalties would reduce an essay grade to zero).

Late Essays

This course adheres to the History Department's policy regarding written work submitted after the deadlines indicated in the course schedule: **late essays receive a 5 percent penalty for the first day after the deadline; 1 percent for each subsequent day**, including weekends; essays submitted after the seventh day following the deadline will receive a grade of 0.

Attendance and Absences

Attendance will be taken for tutorials, but not for lectures. Students who fail to attend at least three tutorial sessions may be debarred from writing the Final Exam.

Students with excused absences on dates of assessment will be offered extensions (for the essay), make-up opportunities (for test), or (in the case of tutorials) alternative written work.

Academic consideration for the Term Test requires submission of formal supporting documentation.

AI/ChatGPT

Within this course, **use of generative AI tools such as Chat GPT are permitted** as long as it aligns with the learning outcomes of the course and with standards of academic honesty and intellectual property. If AI tools are used, **students must acknowledge use** and state how the tool was used. Unauthorized use of AI will be subject to academic discipline. For examples of acceptable and unacceptable use of AI tools, students may **consult the table** developed by the AHA Ad Hoc Committee on AI in History Education (<https://www.historians.org/resource/guiding-principles-for-artificial-intelligence-in-history-education/#table>).

Turnitin Analysis

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

SCHEDULE (FALL 2026)

Note: a detailed schedule of lecture and tutorial readings will be provided on OWL Brightspace.

Week 0 (September 9–11) NO CLASS

Week 1 (September 14–18) INTRODUCTION

- Lecture Topics: overview of course themes and expectations
- Tutorial 1. Meet and Greet

Week 2 (September 21–25) CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOOD INSECURITY

- Lecture Topics: demographics; the Little Ice Age; food insecurity; agrarian reform
- Tutorial 2. The Faithful Executioner, Part I

Week 3 (September 28–October 2) STATUS AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

- Lecture Topics: Social orders; commerce and industry; social rank and mobility
- NO TUTORIAL (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation)

Week 4 (October 5–9) UNIVERSAL EMPIRE?

- Lecture Topics: Political geography; the Ottoman Empire; the rise and decline of the Habsburgs
- Tutorial 3. The Faithful Executioner, Part II

Week 5 (October 12–16) READING WEEK

Week 6 (October 19–23) SALVATION ANXIETY

- Lecture Topics: Christianity in crisis; Martin Luther; John Calvin; Reformations; Renaissance and Baroque art
- Tutorial 4. Luther's Reformation

Week 7 (October 26–30) TERM TEST

- **TERM TEST** (held in class during lecture period)
- Tutorial 5. Palaeography

Week 8 (November 2–6) WARFARE

- Lecture Topics: Wars of Religion; the Military Revolution; military contractors; the impact and experience of war
- Tutorial 6. The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre

Week 9 (November 9–13) WITCH HUNTS

- Lecture Topics: the origins of the witch hunts; demonology; law; gender; social dynamics
- Tutorial 7. Essay Workshop

Week 10 (November 16–20)

ENTERTAINMENT AND ESCAPE

- Lecture Topics: popular entertainment; literature; carnival; the Psychoactive Revolution
- Tutorial 8. Broadside Ballads

Week 11 (November 23–27)

SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION

- Lecture Topics: origins of the Scientific Revolution; astronomy and the heliocentric model; medicine; challenges to authority
- Tutorial 9. Galileo's Trial

Week 12 (November 30–December 4)

CENTRALIZING STATES

- Lecture Topics: the General Crisis; state-building; royal absolutism
- NO TUTORIAL
- **DUE: ESSAY** (via OWL by 11:59pm on Friday)

Week 13 (December 7–9)

ENLIGHTENMENT

- Lecture Topics: intellectual movements; Enlightened Despotism; secularism and religious tolerance; transatlantic revolutions
- NO TUTORIAL

Mid-Year Exam Period (December 11–22)

- **FINAL EXAM** (Scheduled by the Office of the Registrar)

**KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2026-27**

1. Academic Accommodations (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found at [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

2. Academic Consideration for Student Absences

Students must be approved to write a makeup exam or for an extension of the assignment deadline. If you need to miss an exam or the deadline for the assignment, please follow these instructions.

There are two ways to seek academic consideration:

(i) Academic consideration based on medical or compassionate grounds

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate grounds), they should contact the Academic Advising Office. As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration.

For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is the appropriate documentation. The SMC is available at <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical-certificate.pdf>

- King's students: The Academic Advising Office website is located in DLH 104. The Academic Advising website is <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>.
- If your home faculty is Huron or at Western, please submit your documentation to your faculty's academic counselling office.
- Requests must be made as soon as possible, and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

You may submit requests for academic consideration through the **Student Absence Portal**, linked on this website:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>.

(ii) Academic consideration through an undocumented absence

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per half-course (0.5) weight.

- Note that instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline to confirm this which assessment has been designated as requiring documentation for consideration (that is, exempt from undocumented absences).
- Undocumented absences can not be used as the basis for academic consideration for December or April exams.

If an instructor has built flexibility into their assessments (e.g., “complete 8 of 10 quizzes”), this flexibility will already address consideration needs and thus academic consideration may be denied.

For further information on the academic consideration policy, please see https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

c) Absences from Final Exams

If you miss the Final Exam, **contact your Academic Advising Office** as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the “Special Examination” (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a multiple exam situation (i.e., you are scheduled to write more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)).

d) Religious Accommodations

Students should consult the University’s list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and their Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

3. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King’s University College:
<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/accessibility-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King’s University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/campus-life/student-supports/>

Good2talk is an online and phone resource for students, available 24/7, with services in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options on how to obtain help: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental-health/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King's University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/academics/academic-supports/>

4. Statement on Gender-Based Sexual Violence

King's and Western are committed to reducing incidents of gender-based sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: [Mental Health and Wellness at King's](#).

You can reach supports at King's by emailing care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a Social Worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by email (health@uwo.ca) or by calling 519-661-3568. Additional support services can be found <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/support/index.html>

5. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see https://kings.uwo.ca/sites/2025/assets/files/campus/Kings_Code_of_Student_Conduct.pdf

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

6. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. **Check with you instructor to check which tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in each course.** Note that although some courses may permit the use of such tools, it does not mean use of such tools is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

7. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

8. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

9. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.