

HIST 1978L (FALL 2014)

AGE OF IMPOSTORS: FRAUD, IDENTIFICATION, & THE SELF IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

W 3-5:30PM, JWW 301

Prof. Tara Nummedal
Department of History
Sharpe House #106
x3-9757

nummedal@brown.edu

OCRA class password: charlatan



The masked revelers in Venice during carnival: Giacomo Franco, *Habiti d'uomini e donne Venetiane con la processione ...* [detail], Engraving, Venice, c.1610 © Trustees of the British Museum

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The history of early modern Europe (c. 1500-1800) is full of people assuming new identities: Jews and Muslims passing as Christians (or Protestants passing as Catholics), women dressing as men (and vice-versa), Europeans pretending to be exotic foreigners, commoners feigning noble rank, and the more prosaic examples of individuals claiming to be long lost husbands, wives, and children. Some of these ruses were acts of self-preservation; others were extraordinarily creative and opportunistic inventions of new personae. At the same time, faked objects circulated in a growing marketplace for antiquities, curiosities, and naturalia brought back from far-away lands. European political and cultural authorities developed increasingly elaborate means of discerning true from false in the early modern period, creating techniques of surveillance and identification that went hand in hand with an expanding early modern state.

This seminar will query what was distinctively early modern or European about these phenomena, as well as the responses to them. We will examine various instances and forms of fraud, dissimulation, falsification, and self-fashioning, with an eye to teasing out the difference between lying and self-fashioning, false objects and false identities, illusions and facts, as well as the techniques of discernment and identification that they generated. Since the very notion of inventing a new self implies that individuals have a stable, "authentic" self in the first place, we will also examine the history of the self, and its relationship to fraud, "Renaissance self-fashioning," and imposture.

LEARNING GOALS:

Our first goal is historical. This course will introduce you to a range of approaches to the social, cultural, intellectual, political, and visual history of early modern Europe (c. 1500-1800).

Our second goal is historiographical. By the end of this course, you should have a greater understanding of how historians of early modern Europe have written about this period in general, and about the history of fraud, identification, and the self in particular. To that end, our discussions will not only explore the content of the readings, but also the kinds of questions the authors are asking, how they are positioning themselves in relationship to other historians, and the kinds of theoretical positions they are staking out.

Finally, our third goal is to complete a research paper dealing in some way with our seminar topic. You may write on a topic of your own choosing, but keep in mind that your paper should be a serious historical engagement with the field. You are encouraged to use the Hay and John Carter Brown Libraries, both of which have excellent collections of early modern texts. Common readings will provide a general overview as well as the various theoretical and methodological approaches to the "Age of Impostors." Our common discussions are meant to serve as a jumping off point; beyond these texts, you will bring your own interests to our discussions. Collectively, then, you will gain a familiarity with a range of sources, theoretical approaches, and national contexts.

ASSESSMENT:

(1) **Research Paper** (60% total), including each of the following components:

Proposal & Bibliography (10%): A 2-3-page proposal for your project (details to follow), including an overview of the topic, survey of existing historiography, and your precise research question. Due Wednesday **October 15** in class.

Rough draft and comments (credit/no credit): Each student will turn in a rough draft of the final paper on Monday, **December 8**. We will then swap drafts, and each student will complete a peer review of another student's paper with constructive comments and suggestions for revision during reading period.

Final paper (50%): Due Monday, **December 15**, by 5pm.

(2) **Short Response Pieces** (20%): Approximately 4-6 short pieces (1 to 2 pages each) responding to the readings. We will discuss these in more detail at our first class meeting.

(3) **Participation** (20%): Because this is a seminar, everyone needs to participate in discussion. I do realize that some students find it difficult to speak up in seminars; if

you know that this is the case for you, please come talk to me at the beginning of the semester so that we can strategize about ways to ensure that you find a way to contribute to our seminar. See "course policies" sheet for more information.

READINGS (books are available on reserve at Rockefeller Library and for sale at the Bookstore; links to all articles marked * will be available on Canvas):

Davis, Natalie Zemon. *The Return of Martin Guerre*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Groebner, Valentin. *Who Are You? Identification, Deception, and Surveillance in Early Modern Europe*. Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2007.

Ravel, Jeffrey S. *The Would-Be Commoner: A Tale of Deception, Murder, and Justice in Seventeenth-Century France*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008.

Rowland, Ingrid D. *The Scarith of Scornello: A Tale of Renaissance Forgery*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Snyder, Jon R. *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

[optional] Wiesner, Merry E. *Early Modern Europe, 1450-1789*. Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS:

Sept. 3	Introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * David Samuels, "The Runner," <i>The New Yorker</i>, Sept. 3, 2001, pp. 72-85 * Nicholas Schmidle, "A Very Rare Book," <i>The New Yorker</i>, Dec. 16, 2013, pp. 62-73.
Sept. 10	Framing the problem: the "age of impostors" or the "birth of the modern self"? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Jacob Burckhardt, <i>The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy</i> [1860] (New York: The Modern Library, 1954), p. 100-108. * Marcel Mauss, "A Category of the Human Mind: the Notion of Person; The Notion of Self," in <i>The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History</i>, edited by Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes (Cambridge University Press, 1985). * Stephen Greenblatt, <i>Renaissance Self-Fashioning</i>, Introduction. * Martin, John J., "Inventing Sincerity, Refashioning Prudence: The Discovery of the Individual in Renaissance Europe," <i>The American Historical Review</i>, Vol. 102, No. 5 (Dec. 1997), pp. 1309-1342.

I. Inventing	
Sept. 17	Self Invention Natalie Zemon Davis, <i>The Return of Martin Guerre</i> (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983). * FILM (available on Canvas): Daniel Vigne, <i>Le retour de Martin Guerre/The Return of Martin Guerre</i> (1982)
Sept. 24	Fashioning Gender Catalina de Erauso, <i>Lieutenant Nun: Memoir of a Basque Transvestite in the New World</i> (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996). * Gary Kates, "The Transgendered World of the Chevalier/Chevalière d'Eon." <i>The Journal of Modern History</i> , Vol. 67, No. 3 (Sep., 1995), pp. 558-594. * Isabelle Parseys, "The Dressed Body: The Moulding of Identities in Sixteenth-Century France," in <i>Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe</i> , IV: Forging European Identities, 1400-1700, edited by Herman Roodenburg, 227-57 (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
Oct. 1	Simulating Status Jeffrey Ravel, <i>The Would-Be Commoner: A Tale of Deception, Murder, and Justice in Seventeenth-Century France</i> . (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008).
Oct. 8	Wonders from Afar * Christine R. Johnson, "Buying Stories: Ancient Tales, Renaissance Travelers, and the Market for the Marvelous," <i>Journal of Early Modern History</i> vol. 11 (2007), p. 405-446. * Davies, Surekha, "The Wondrous East in the Renaissance Geographical Imagination: Marco Polo, Fra Mauro and Giovanni Battista Ramusio," <i>History and Anthropology</i> , Vol. 23, No. 2 (June 2012), pp. 215-234. * Breen, Benjamin. "No Man Is an Island: Early Modern Globalization, Knowledge Networks, and George Psalmanazar's Formosa." <i>Journal of Early Modern History</i> 17, no. 4 (January 1, 2013): 391-417.
II. Concealing	
Oct. 15	Keeping Secrets Jon R. Snyder, <i>Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe</i> (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009) → NB: Proposal & bibliography due at the beginning of class.

Oct. 22	<p>Keeping the Faith</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Ronald E. Surtz, "Morisco Women, Written Texts, and the Valencia Inquisition," <i>The Sixteenth Century Journal</i>, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Summer, 2001), pp. 421-433. * Stefania Tutino, "Between Nicodemism and 'honest' dissimulation: the Society of Jesus in England," <i>Historical Research</i>, vol. 79, no. 206 (November 2006), pp. 534-553. * Martin, John J., "Marranos and Nicodemites in Sixteenth-Century Venice," <i>Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies</i>, vol. 41 no. 3 (Fall, 2011), pp. 577-599. * Graizbord, David, "Religion and Ethnicity Among 'Men of the Nation': Toward a Realistic Interpretation," <i>Jewish Social Studies</i>, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Fall 2008), pp. 32-65.
III. Faking	
Oct. 29	<p>Forgery</p> <p>Ingrid Rowland, <i>Scarith of Scornello</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * D. Graham Burnett and Anthony Grafton, "Deception as a Way of Knowing: A Conversation with Anthony Grafton," <i>Cabinet Magazine</i> * Christopher S. Wood, "The Credulity Problem," in <i>Antiquarianism and Intellectual Life in Europe and China, 1500-1800</i>, ed. Peter N. Miller and François Louis, 149-179 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012).
Nov. 5	<p>Authority and Expertise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Katharine Park, "Country Medicine in the City Marketplace: Snakehandlers as Itinerant Healers," <i>Renaissance Studies</i>, vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 104-120. * Tara Nummedal, "Anna Zieglerin's Alchemical Revelations," in <i>Secrets and Knowledge in Medicine and Science</i>, edited by Elaine Yuen Tien Leong and Alisha Rankin, 125-41 (Aldershot, England; Brookfield, Vt., USA: Ashgate, 2011). * Paula Findlen, "Inventing Nature: Commerce, Art, and Science in the Early Modern Cabinet of Wonders," in <i>Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science, and Art in Early Modern Europe</i>, edited by Pamela H. Smith and Paula Findlen, 297-323 (New York: Routledge, 2002). * Maciejko, Pawel, "Sabbatian Charlatans: the First Jewish Cosmopolitans," <i>European Review of History: Revue europeenne d'histoire</i>, Vol. 17, No. 3, pp. 361 – 378.

IV. Discerning	
Nov. 12	Identification Valentin Groebner, <i>Who Are You? Identification, Deception, and Surveillance in Early Modern Europe</i> (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2007.)
Nov. 19	Truthiness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Stuart Clark, "The Reformation of the Eyes: Apparitions and Optics in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe," <i>Journal of Religious History</i> 27 (2003), 143-160. * Nancy Caciola and Moshe Sluhovsky, "Spiritual Physiologies: The Discernment of Spirits in Medieval and Early Modern Europe," <i>Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies of the Preternatural</i>, Vol. 1, no. 1 (2012), pp. 1-48. * Daniel Margoszy, "Certain Fakes and Uncertain Facts: Jan Jonston and the Question of Truth in Religion and Natural History," in <i>Fakes!? Hoaxes, Counterfeits, and Deception in Early Modern Science</i>, ed. Marco Beretta and Maria Conforti (Sagamore Beach: Science History Publications, 2014).
Nov. 26	Thanksgiving: no class
Dec. 3	Modernity and Personhood? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * David Warren Sabean, "Production of the Self during the Age of Confessionalism," <i>Central European History</i>, Vol. 29, No. 1 (1996), pp. 1-18. * Moshe Sluhovsky, "Discernment of Difference, the Introspective Subject, and the Birth of Modernity," <i>Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies</i> Vol. 36, No. 1 (2006), pp. 169-200. * Claudia Ulbrich, "Person and Gender: The Memoirs of the Countess of Schwerin," <i>German History</i>, Vol. 28, No. 3 (2010), pp. 296-309.

COURSE POLICIES

LATE POLICY FOR ASSIGNMENTS: All late papers will be penalized one grade per day (including Saturday and Sunday). (A "B" paper turned in 2 hours late, for example, will receive a "C".)

PARTICIPATION: The following is a guide to my assessment of participation.

Outstanding: Contributions in class reflect exceptional preparation. Ideas offered are always substantive, provide one or more major insights as well as direction for the class. Challenges are well substantiated and persuasively presented. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished markedly.

Good: Contributions in class reflect thorough preparation. Ideas offered are usually substantive, provide good insights and sometimes direction for the class. Challenges are well substantiated and often persuasive. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished.

Adequate: Contributions in class reflect satisfactory preparation. Ideas offered are sometimes substantive, provide generally useful insights but seldom offer a new direction for the discussion. Challenges are sometimes presented, fairly well substantiated, and are sometimes persuasive. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished.

Non-Participant: This person says little or nothing in class. Hence, there is not an adequate basis for evaluation. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would not be changed.

Unsatisfactory: Contributions in class reflect inadequate preparation. Ideas offered are seldom substantive, provide few if any insights and never a constructive direction for the class. Integrative comments and effective challenges are absent. If this person were not a member of the class, valuable air-time would be saved.

COMMUNICATION: I will do my best to facilitate learning in the class. To that end, I will attempt to answer questions as they arise. Contact me via e-mail or—and this is especially encouraged—come to office hours. If you cannot make posted hours, make an appointment. Please speak with me immediately if you're having a problem in the class. I can be more understanding of your needs if you bring them to my attention before they become a serious problem.

ACCOMMODATIONS: Students who need accommodations in order to meet the course requirements must consult [Student and Employee Accessibility Services](#) (SEAS) and meet with me by the end of shopping period to make appropriate arrangements.

ACADEMIC CODE: Students are responsible for familiarity with the Academic Code, which is available on the Dean of the College website. I take academic integrity seriously and will file a report of any violations during this course. If you are unsure about how to footnote or cite a source, check the online version of the *Chicago Manual of Style* (available via Josiah) or come speak with me.

MISCELLANEOUS: I expect all students to arrive to class on time, with the relevant readings, and prepared for discussion. Please silence your phone. Consistent lateness or disruption of class will affect your participation grade.

In order to pass this class, students must attend at least 50% of class meetings and complete all assignments.