

Modern Cultural History (A006718)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 2) English Gent

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Kurtz, Paul Michael LW03 lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

	crdts	offering
Bachelor of Arts in History	5	A
Exchange Programme History	5	A
Linking Course Master of Arts in History	5	A
Preparatory Course Master of Arts in History	5	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

Modern & Contemporary History, Culture, Nature, Cultural Productions, Knowledge, Germany

Position of the course

This advanced course offers a diachronic, thematic, and historiographical introduction to cultural history. It thereby integrates and extends both chronological and topical material covered in the History BA1 and BA2 on Antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Early Modern Period, and the Modern and Contemporary Period.

Modern Cultural History converses especially well with the BA courses (a) Conceptualizing Culture, (b) Theories of Cultural History, and (c) Introduction to Cultural Analysis, hosted elsewhere in the Faculty. Students should consider taking them in combination.

Contents

Note: this course places heavy emphasis on reading and discussion. Students must come to class having read all assigned (1) primary sources and (2) secondary literature carefully. They must also have them to hand during class and be prepared to engage them actively. This is a highly active class.

True to the title, this course focuses on modern cultural history. It centers on materiality – on objects and things – and their relationship to culture. The course thus considers the place of material culture in history and historiography. In doing so, the course draws on perspectives from anthropology, sociology, art history, and religious studies.

This course emphasizes deep, textured historical perspectives on the study of culture, with a center of gravity in the late 18th to mid 20th centuries. It aims to provide a firm historical grounding that stresses contextualist approaches and gives sustained attention to contest and debate in the past, a long chronological horizon (from antiquity to modernity), global interconnections, and non-human actors.

Initial competences

To have successfully completed the courses History of Ancient Greece and Rome, History of the Middle Ages, Early Modern History, and Modern and Contemporary

History – or to have acquired the necessary skills by other means.
Good active knowledge of English is required (speaking, reading, writing).
Good passive knowledge of German and French is recommended (reading).

Final competences

- 1 To be acquainted with broad and well-balanced knowledge and understanding of key theoretical and methodological aspects of cultural history
- 2 To be able to apply historical and interdisciplinary methods in a historiographical context, in order to facilitate sound analysis of historical issues
- 3 To be capable of evaluating historical-scientific studies as well as critically analysing textual, visual, and material sources
- 4 To be in the position of communicating accurately, precisely, and effectively in oral exchange, using correct terminology and with constant attention to style and argumentation in line with the conventions of the discipline of history
- 5 To be able to formulate, justify, and defend well-argued conclusions based on individual reading, judgment, and discussion
- 6 To be able to exchange views with peers in a critical, substantive, and constructive way

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Group work, Seminar, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

Note 1: This is a highly interactive course.

Independent work: required reading, with supplementary assignments

Group work: presentations

Seminar: discussion, in-class activities

Note 2: No lecture or seminar sessions are recorded or posted for this course.

Study material

Type: Reader

Name: Selection of articles and book chapters (PDF)

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Number of Pages : 500

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : No

Available in the Library : Yes

Available through Student Association : No

Additional information: Texts primarily in English, but on occasion French or German may be used. Reading: 500pp (ca. 50/week)

References

Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013).

Terry Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

Dan Hicks and William Whyte, eds, *A Cultural History of Objects*, 6 vols. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024).

Course content-related study coaching

Directly in class

Occasional support via UFORA

Office hours of the lecturers

Feedback after the exam

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation, Presentation, Written assessment with open-ended questions

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

not applicable

Extra information on the examination methods

Permanent assessment: (a) an in-class midterm written exam with open questions; (b) active, constructive, and regular participation in class based on readings assignments and guiding questions

Periodic assessment: oral exam with open questions based on the readings and discussions

Calculation of the examination mark

Combination of permanent assessment (60% of total score, of which 40% is written midterm exam and 20% is presentation) and periodic assessment (40% of total score).

If different group members show a different degree of input, then the participation marks of students belonging to the same group can still differ.

Students must pass both permanent and periodic assessments to pass the course as a whole: 10/20 or more for each component. If the total score does turn out to be a mark of ten or more out of twenty, this is reduced to the highest fail mark (9/20).

Facilities for Working Students

Possible rescheduling of the examination to a different time in the same academic year. Feedback can be given during an appointment during or after office hours.

For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy