

# Rebirth and Reinvention in Early Modern Europe



In Europe the period 1500-1800 witnessed a series of rebirths and reinventions, usually couched in the language of tradition but often representing a sharp break from the classical and Christian heritage. HIST 4340 will examine five key movements in this era:

**The Rebirth of the Golden Age.** Renaissance artists, sculptors, and humanists idolized and then sought to recreate the glories of ancient Greece and Rome; Christian reformers, Protestant and Catholic, looked to the apostolic church as a model. Both of these movements led to a reorientation of the traditional society of orders.

**The Reinvention of the Polis.** European cities grew rapidly in the early modern period, bringing about both social mobility and challenges in urban planning. Capitals such as London, Paris, and Madrid formed the nerve centers of rising nation-states, marked by the extension of royal authority through bureaucracies and remodeled armies.

**The Reinvention of the Cosmos.** The Renaissance spirit of inquiry fueled innovations in mapmaking and exploration, astronomy and physics, with important implications for the place of humankind in the universe. These discoveries contributed to the power of the West but also reshaped European agriculture and the environment.

**The Rebirth of the Public Sphere.** The development of printing with moveable type led to increased literacy, and the evolution of a public sphere encompassing both dissent and government propaganda. In this revolutionary world the citizens of Europe engaged in popular politics as never before, and created a market of consumers for a global array of goods.

**The Reinvention of Europe.** The emergence of the West as a hub of global trade led to increased contact with the Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Asian worlds. Europeans revived the practice of slavery on an unprecedented scale and sought to control trade routes, but also took part in debates, exchanges, and a process of reflection on the role of Europe in the world.