



HIS 1101 | CRN: 90371/90801

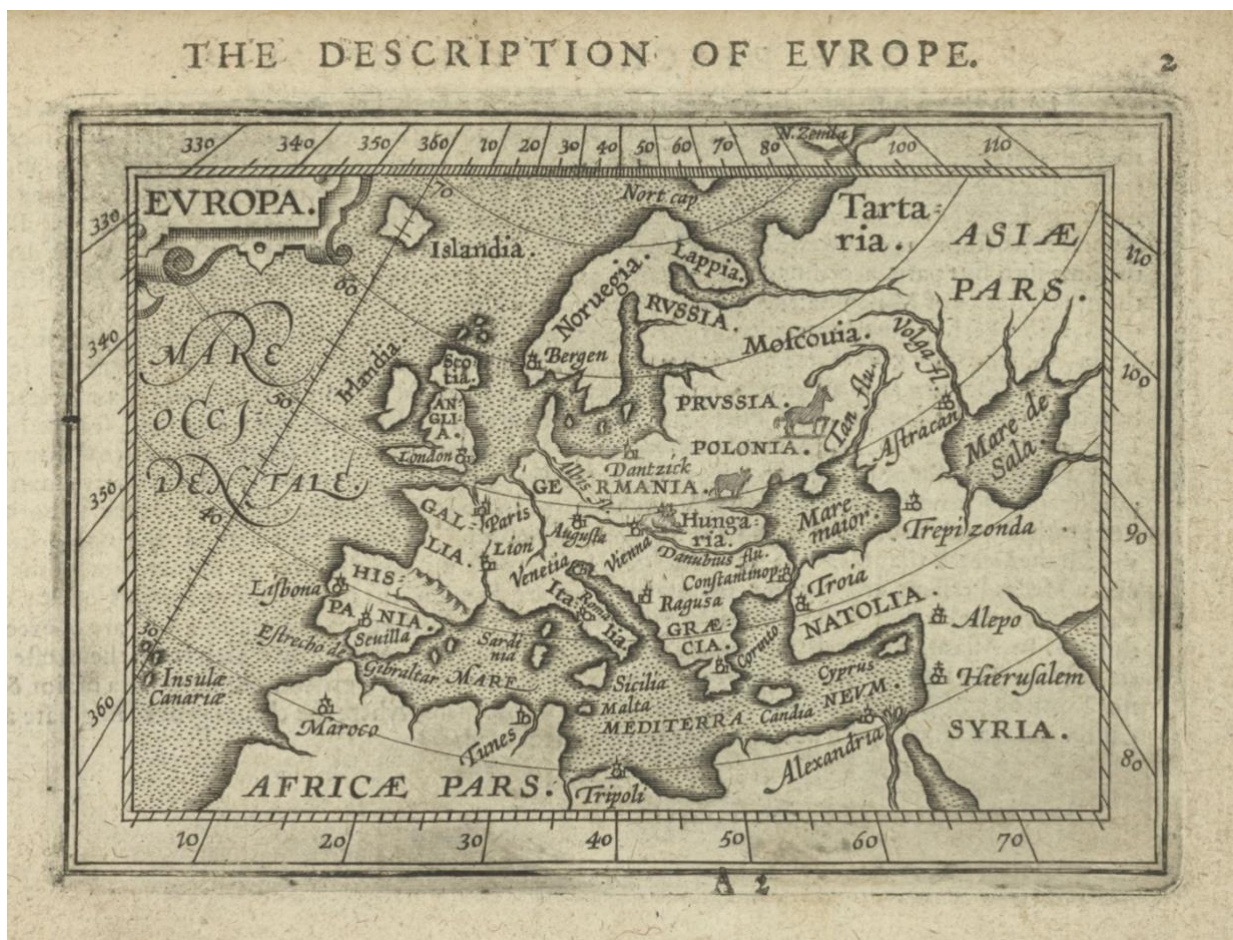
Instructor: Dr. Yisroel Ben-Porat | israel.benporat@yu.edu

Time: M/W 10:25 – 11:40 AM (SCW) | M/W 3:00 – 4:15 PM (YC)

Office hours: by appointment

Emergence of Europe

This course examines the history of Europe as the story of Western Civilization, from the rise of ancient Greece to the aftermath of the Renaissance and Reformation. It aims to introduce the discipline of history alongside the study of pre-modern Europe. In addition to considering the central political, cultural, and religious developments of each era, we will read selections from classic works of the Western canon. Co-sponsored by the Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought, this course will also feature a field trip and occasional guest lectures.



Abraham Ortelius, *Europa* (1603)



**Syllabus subject to change*

Learning Goals

Students who successfully complete the course will have gained the following skills, knowledge, and experiences:

- Broad familiarity with major themes, events, and texts that shaped European history and the story of Western Civilization, from antiquity to early modernity.
- Thinking historically, reading sources critically, and evaluating competing viewpoints.
- Comparing canonical Western texts to parallel Jewish sources
- Crafting a clear essay that incorporates primary sources into an argument-driven analytical composition.

Course Requirements & Grading

- **Attendance and Participation: 25%**
 - Please read and reflect on the assigned materials prior to each class. Come on time to each class in person and, drawing on your preparation, substantively contribute to classroom discussions with comments, questions, or connections to other readings, while remaining respectful and attentive.
- **Short Paper: 25%**
 - In consultation with the instructor, select one canonical Western text from the course syllabus, read a full edition of it (beyond the assigned excerpt), and compare it to a parallel Jewish source in a 5-paragraph essay (1000-1200 words). Due before class on November 11th.
- **Guest Lecture and Field Trip Reflections: 25%**
 - Using the Straus Center's *YU News* blog posts as a model (yu.edu/news/straus), write a report (300-500 words) on each guest lecture or field trip during the course. With permission from the student, select submissions may be edited and featured on *YU News* with the student's byline. Due 1 week after each event.
- **Final Paper: 25%**
 - A longer take-home essay (1200-1500 words) reflecting on broad themes in the course, such as defining Europe and the West, determining what belongs in the canon, and identifying the role of Hebraic sources in Western Civilization. Due December 26th.

Policies & Information

Academic Integrity: The submission by a student of any examination, course assignment, or requirement is assumed to guarantee that the thoughts and expressions therein not expressly



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credited to another are the student's own. Evidence to the contrary will result in appropriate penalties as outlined here: <https://www.yu.edu/academic-integrity>.

Artificial Intelligence: This course follows Yeshiva University's [Academic Integrity Policy](https://www.yu.edu/academic-integrity) on artificial intelligence. The use of generative artificial intelligence or any platform with generative artificial intelligence capabilities is prohibited in this course. The use of assistive artificial intelligence is also prohibited in this course. Please see <https://www.yu.edu/academic-integrity> for further information.

Special Accommodations: Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations should make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services, akelsen@yu.edu, during the first week of class. The office is in Furst Hall, Suite 412. Once you have been approved for accommodations, please submit your accommodation letter and discuss any specifics with me to ensure the successful implementation of your accommodations.

Writing Center: Free Help with Your Writing! The Wilf Campus Writing Center offers individualized tutoring that can support your projects for this course. All writers need feedback, even strong ones. Find out more and make an appointment at <https://yu.mywconline.net/>

Learning Success Center: Any undergraduate student interested in improving study skills and academic performance is welcome and encouraged to visit the Learning Success Center office for academic support. A learning specialist helps you develop the reading, writing and study skills necessary for academic success. For more information, or to schedule an appointment, please email learningsuccesscenter@yu.edu.

Libraries: Need help with your research? The [Yeshiva University Libraries](#) offer individualized consultations that will help you locate and cite journal articles, books, and other credible sources for solid papers, presentations, and reports. Stop into the libraries or [make an appointment](#) with a librarian. You can also [email us](#) any time or contact us via [Live Chat](#). Librarians are always happy to help you!

Schedule and Readings

Note: I will post all course materials on Canvas or provide links to free online sources.

8/26 – Introduction: Europe, the West, and the World

I – Antiquity

8/28, 9/4 – Prehistory

- *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, tablet XI; Genesis 6-9



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- Hesiod, *Works and Days*, ll. 1-385; Genesis 1-2

9/9, 9/11 – Early Greece

- Homer, *The Iliad*, bk. III; Herodotus, *The Histories*, I.1-5, II.112-120
- **Optional:** Herodotus, *The Histories*, I.95-130, III.88-89; Ezra 1, 4-6

9/16, 9/18 – Classical and Hellenistic Greece

- **Optional:** Euripides, *Iphigenia at Aulis*; Judges 11
- H St. J. Thackeray, ed., *The Letter of Aristeeas, Translated with an Appendix of Ancient Evidence of the Origin of the Septuagint*, II, X-XII, Appendix A

9/23, 9/25 – The Roman Monarchy and Republic

- Ovid, *Fasti* [selections]
- *Mishnah Avodah Zarah* 1:1-3, 1:7, 3:4; *Mishnah Sanhedrin* 7:6-7

9/30 – The Early Roman Empire

- Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars*, “Vespasian,” “Titus”
- *Bavli Gittin* 56b-57a

10/28 – Late Antiquity

- Augustine of Hippo, *Concerning Adulterous Marriages*, bk. II
- *Mishnah Gittin* 9:10, *Mishnah Sotah* 1:1-5, 5:1

II – Medieval Europe

10/30, 11/4 – The Early Middle Ages

- *Beowulf*, ll. 1-836
- *Old English Judith*

11/6, 11/11 – The High Middle Ages

- **Field trip - YC section only:** The Met Cloisters (99 Margaret Corbin Dr)
- *The Vinland Sagas*, “The Saga of the Greenlanders”
- *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela* [selections]
- Marco Polo, *The Travels*, “Prologue”

11/13, 11/18 – The Late Middle Ages

- Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, I.1-11
- Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, “Prioress’s Tale,” “Wife of Bath’s Tale”
- R. Elazar of Worms’ elegy to his wife Dolce



III – Early Modern Europe

11/20, 11/25 – Politics and Power

- Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1532) [selections]
- Abarbanel on Deuteronomy 17:14 and I Samuel 8

11/27, 12/2 – Religious Reform

- Martin Luther, *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543) [selections]
- William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* (1598), 1.3, 3.1, 3.3, 4.1
- William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation* (1630-1651), bk. I, ch. 1

12/4, 12/9 – Atlantic Exploration

- Michel de Montaigne, “Of Cannibals” (1580); Bradford, *Plymouth Plantation*, chs. 4, 9; Menasseh ben Israel, *The Hope of Israel* (1650), “The Relation of Antonio Montezinos”
- **Field trip - Stern section only:** Map Division, New York Public Library (476 5th Ave)

12/11, 12/16 – A Continent in Crisis

- Anne Bradstreet, “A Dialogue between Old England and New” (1642)
- John Milton, *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649); *Devarim Rabbah* 5:8-11

12/18 - Conclusion: Hebraism, Hellenism, and Western Civilization