History of Wine
June 28 – August 13, Flex online

Course Aims

Wine has often been called the divine beverage and the elixir of joy and may be one of the first steps in agriculture into plant domestication as an early cultivar. The history of wine is closely connected to the history of civilization and overall spread of highest culture and the arts. Archaeological evidence shows that wine became a social force in the Celtic world when chiefs gained greater status by offering imported wine to their warriors. We also know that viticulture has been traditionally bound up with the development of Western thought. Plato’s Symposium connected wine to philosophizing, and the cultural work of bards, poets, dancers, and musicians was often accompanied by wine rituals. In this course, we take a deep historical look at the development of winemaking and its relationship to Western culture. According to archeological findings, viticulture began in the Neolithic period more than six millennia ago in the Caucasus region. Carbonized grape seeds have been found in sites and wine chemical residues remain in some of the oldest pottery known to man. Ancient literature confirms the gradual spread of viticulture from the Near East to Egypt, Crete, and the broader Mediterranean world, including France and other regions of Europe. While even Sumerian hymns from the Early Bronze Age (ca. 2500 BCE) mention excessive wine celebration of gods, the Western literary tradition started with the Greeks and Romans and continued down through the Medieval and Renaissance periods and into modern times.

This seven-week course will draw strongly on science, history, literature, and art. Students will leave the course knowing more about the locales and differences of major global wine varietals from antiquity to the modern viticultural world.

Course Requirements

There are three grade options:

NGR (no grade requested) is the default option and no work will be required; no credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.

CR/NC (Credit/No Credit): Attendance at five live Zoom sessions (or watch the recordings if you can’t attend live).
Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, F) Attend all Zoom sessions or watch the recordings. Written work is also required: a 10 page paper - topic approved by instructor - or answer the weekly discussion questions in Canvas for a total of 1,000 quality words posted.

Required Course Text

*Patrick Hunt, Wine Journeys: Myth & History* 2013 (plus supplementary online articles)

**Course Outline**

**Week 1** Introduction, Neolithic & Early Viticultural History, Egypt, Mesopotamia  
*Reading:* Hunt, chs. 1-2 (Prehistory, Egypt, Mesopotamia)  
J. Owen, “Earliest Known Winery Found in Armenian Cave” *National Geographic News* 1/11  

**Week 2** Greek Wine and the god Dionysus  
*Reading:* Hunt, ch. 3 (Greece)  
Mark Cartwright, “Wine in the Ancient Mediterranean” *Ancient History*, 8/26/16  
([https://www.worldhistory.org/article/944/wine-in-the-ancient-mediterranean/](

**Week 3** Etruscan and Roman Wine and the god Bacchus  
*Reading:* Hunt chs. 4-5 (Etruscan and Romans)  
([http://www.electrummagazine.com/2020/05/lake-como-sorsasso-domasino-wines-in-domaso/](

**Week 4** Medieval to Modern Europe: Italy and Sicily, Germany, Tyrol, Switzerland  
*Reading:* Hunt, chs. 6-10 (Campania, Sicily, Alto Adige, Alsace, Switzerland)  
([http://www.electrummagazine.com/2014/04/the-maienfeld-wine-of-schloss-salenegg/](

**Week 5** Medieval to Modern Europe: Bordeaux, Rhone  
*Reading:* Hunt, ch. 11 (Bordeaux, Rhone)  
Emma Balter, “The ABC's of Bordeaux”, *Wine Spectator*, March 2019  
([https://www.winespectator.com/articles/modern-abc-of-bordeaux-3490/](
https://www.winespectator.com/articles/modern-abc-of-bordeaux-3490/))

**Week 6** Medieval to Modern Europe: Burgundy and Champagne  
*Reading:* Hunt, ch. 12 (Burgundy, Champagne)  
Patrick Hunt, “Champagne Legacy : Château Boursault” *Electrum Magazine*, June, 2020  
([http://www.electrummagazine.com/2020/06/champagne-legacy-chateau-de-boursault/](
http://www.electrummagazine.com/2020/06/champagne-legacy-chateau-de-boursault/))

**Week 7** California and Beyond: The Judgment of Paris  
*Slate Magazine* 5/24/2006  
([http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/wines_world/2006/05/the_judgment_of_paris.html](
http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/wines_world/2006/05/the_judgment_of_paris.html))

**Tentative Zoom Schedule**

Live Zoom sessions will be held on Wednesdays at 1pm (PT). These sessions are recorded for students unable to attend live.