

ESSAY QUESTIONS, RS200/RS300

- 1) Was the humanistic revival of classical antiquity faithful to the cultures of Greece and Rome? Why or why not? Take into consideration either a specific primary source (and the related critical literature) or focus on the critical discussion of this issue.
- 2) To what extent did the classical and Christian traditions intermingle or exclude each other in the Renaissance? Respond, taking into consideration at least two Renaissance figures (not necessarily both humanists) and the relevant critical literature. You may draw your sources from different domains, such as literature, art, philosophy, or science.
- 3) What was Renaissance humanism, and how did it stand in relationship to other movements? In your answer, describe and take a critical view of the positions of at least TWO of the following: (i) Jacob Burckhardt, (ii) Paul Oskar Kristeller, (iii) Eugenio Garin, and (iv) Hans Baron.
- 4) What do artistic representations of classical themes in 15th- and 16th-century Europe tell us about the Renaissance perception of Antiquity? Discuss the topic by relying on three or four images as case studies. In choosing your images, you may wish to browse through online databases like [The Getty](#), [The Met](#), [gallica](#), [e-codices](#).
- 5) Discuss the influence of humanism on the development of ONE of these domains: (i) ideas of statecraft; (ii) religious beliefs; (iii) education; (iv) art. Illustrate your answer with concrete references to primary sources and the critical literature.
- 6) What were the advantages and disadvantages of hereditary and elective systems of government in Renaissance Europe?
- 7) Public collections and galleries are where most of us come across Renaissance paintings today, but in their time artworks were first encountered in other settings (churches, private study rooms, *etc.*). Did the original settings have an impact on the techniques, subjects, and survival of some paintings? What of their original viewing experience can we reconstruct, and does it help us understand these paintings better?
- 8) What was the role of print in Renaissance festivals? Choose ONE or TWO related festivals and discuss them in more detail. Make sure you refer to the primary sources, i.e. the print that was used during the festival of your choice.
- 9) The art of what we call 'the Northern Renaissance' is marked by distinctive features in style, iconography and technique which set it apart from the visual imagery that developed in 15th and 16th-century Italy. Discuss these peculiarities as exemplified by three artworks of your choosing, produced either in Germany or the Low Countries, including at least one artefact

belonging to the so-called 'decorative' or 'minor' arts (e.g., tapestry, metalwork, wooden sculpture, book illumination).

10) 'To what extent did ancient precedents provide the template for Renaissance discussions of *either* medicine *or* natural history? What were their limitations?

11) Taking into consideration one (or two) of the figures encountered in this module, explain to what extent they straddled disciplinary subjects (such as art, literature, philosophy, religion, science) usually considered separate today. Motivate their approach within the context of the period, making reference to the relevant primary and secondary literature.

12) Analyse an aspect of Petrarch's contribution to the European Renaissance, taking into account both the primary and the critical literature examined in this module, using (if you can) the database <https://petrarch.mml.ox.ac.uk/about/database>. Possible topics include (but are not limited to): To what extent can Petrarch be considered 'the father of humanism'? What is distinctive about Petrarch's lyric poetry, and how does the sonnet form evolve? Why did people write commentaries on Petrarch's poems long into (and after) the sixteenth century, and what does this tell us about cultural trends? How important is Petrarchism for understanding women's writing in the period?

Finalists may also devise their own essay question, but this *must* be done in consultation with a module tutor, and the question *must* be approved beforehand by the module convenor.