

Instructor: Dr. Yasir Yilmaz

Course title

Who ruled Europe? Second women and men in early modern European courts
(1500-1700)

Content

We often assume that kings and queens, emperors and empresses, tsars and tsarinas, and sultans have ruled in pre-modern Europe, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire. In reality, no monarch was able to oversee alone the affairs of a kingdom. There were always influential favorites or chief ministers in European courts while in the Ottoman Empire, a grand vizier fulfilled the same role. Besides, there were times when regent mothers have exerted authority in kingdoms. In short, early modern monarchs always possessed the rule in theory, but the actual executive power was often in the hands of an all-powerful second man or woman.

In light of this observation, this course looks into the careers of numerous influential chief ministers and regents in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Special attention will be paid to the period between the 1590s and 1660s in Spain, France, and the Habsburg Monarchy, while the years between 1656 and 1683 will be at the center of analysis in the case of the Ottoman Empire.

Students who are willing to read and research about the career of any statesman or court woman will be encouraged to do so.

Objective

Through a discussion of the careers and biographies of the most powerful ministers in Europe and the Ottoman Empire, this course will introduce students to the nature of rule and the structure of courts in early modern era. The synchronous study of European and Ottoman courts will help students gain and improve comparative skills.

Teaching methods and grading

This course is designed as a seminar mainly for upper-level undergraduates and master's students. If you are a lower-level undergraduate and you would like to enroll in the course, as a rule, you are allowed to do so but I recommend you to contact me before you do.

There will be no examinations. Instead, there are two requirements:

1. **(75% of final grade)** Every week, each student enrolled in the course will read an article, book chapter, or a primary source of similar-length and will verbally present the reading in class. I will provide further guidelines in class. Depending on the size of enrollment in the course, multiple students may be assigned the same reading. If there are students who can read in languages other than English, I will encourage them to use their linguistic skills (Czech, Spanish, French, Italian, German, Dutch etc.).
2. **(75% of final grade)** During the semester, each student will read one monograph-length study and prepare a two-page outline of the reading. This book can be in English or an academic study in your native language.

Please note that the structure of the course requires regular attendance each week.