

Scholars and Literati at the University of Perugia (1308–1800)

Filippo Manfredini Mara Vitale

IRES/LIDAM, UCLouvain

This note is a summary description of the set of scholars and literati who taught at the University of Perugia from its inception in 1308 to 1800.

1 SOURCES

Our main source for data on the scholars affiliated to the University of Perugia was the online database "Onomasticon" by Frova, Menzenghi, and Zucchini (2024). Another useful source was the database "Maestri e scolari a Siena e Perugia" by Frova, Catoni, and Renzi (2001), although much of that information turned out to be obsolete. Ermini (1971) provided complementary information, including the names of professors and lecturers at the University of Perugia and insights into the historical context. Two other valuable sources were Bini (1816) and Vermiglioli (1973). The work of Zucchini (2008) was a source of evidence on scholars' salaries. For insights on the readers in the field of law, we turned to the commemorative work "Per una festa scientifica dell'università di Perugia" (1891). We consulted the Treccani Biographical Dictionary (1961) to complement the biographical information for some scholars.

2 THE UNIVERSITY

Perugia's legal and medical schools date back to the 13th century, and were funded by the municipality of Perugia. The University of Perugia (*Studium Generale Civitatis Perusii*) was founded on September 8, 1308, through the papal bull *Super Specula* issued by Clement V. In 1355, following the devastating waves of plague of 1348-49, Emperor Charles IV issued an edict to bolster the provision of the papal bull and elevated the university to imperial status. The faculty of theology was established in 1371 by the decree of Gregory XI during his visit to the city. This faculty was abolished in 1811, and its properties were transferred to the university. In 1467, with the advent of Pope Paul II, a period of institutional instability began. The pontiff shifted the power to control the university from the municipality to the pontifical governor. In 1625, Urban VIII intervened with his reform, entrusting the governance of the *Studium* to the bishop and doctoral colleges, thereby establishing a new arrangement that would last until the revolutionary period (Ermini 1971).

3 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 1 displays descriptive statistics. We have information on 1,211 scholars. We know the year of birth for 13.7% of them, the mean age at nomination is 32.5 years. Overall, the birthplace is known for 59.2% of the scholars. The median distance between the University of Perugia and the birthplace is 31 km, confirming the local nature of this university. Most scholars do not have a Wikipedia page (in any language), and only 14.9% appear in the VIAF catalogue. The period 1527-1617 appears to be the best in terms of data coverage: we were able to collect information on 196 scholars, 29.6% of which appear in VIAF.

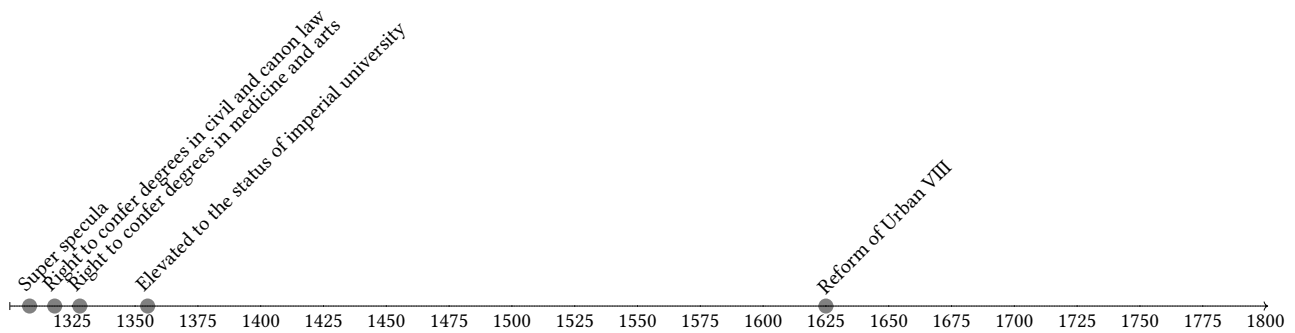


Figure 1: Timeline of the University of Perugia

Period	nb. obs	birth date	known place	mean age at appoint.	mean age at death	med. dist. birth-univ.	with Wiki.	with VIAF
1200–1347	93	10.8%	77.4%	37.9	66.8	135	11.8%	14 %
1348–1449	332	12%	89.5 %	33.6	69.6	35	7.5 %	10.5 %
1450–1526	246	10.6%	72.4%	34.7	66.4	31	5.7%	10.6%
1527–1617	196	24.5%	60.2%	31.2	66	0	9.2%	29.6%
1618–1685	151	10.6%	18.5 %	32.8	67.7	0	2.6 %	12.6 %
1686–1733	115	10.4%	10.4 %	26.7	63.1	0	1.7 %	12.2 %
1734–1800	78	17.9%	15.4 %	29.6	72.2	0	2.6 %	20.5 %
1200–1800	1211	13.7%	59.2%	32.5	67.3	31	6.3%	14.9%

Table 1: Summary statistics by period

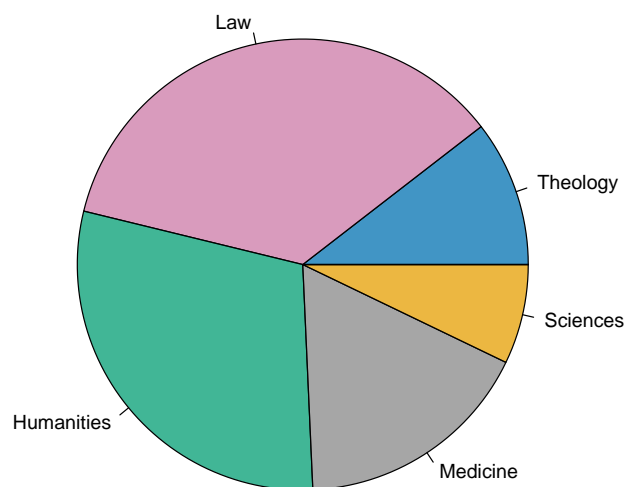


Figure 2: Broad fields at the University of Perugia (published scholars only)

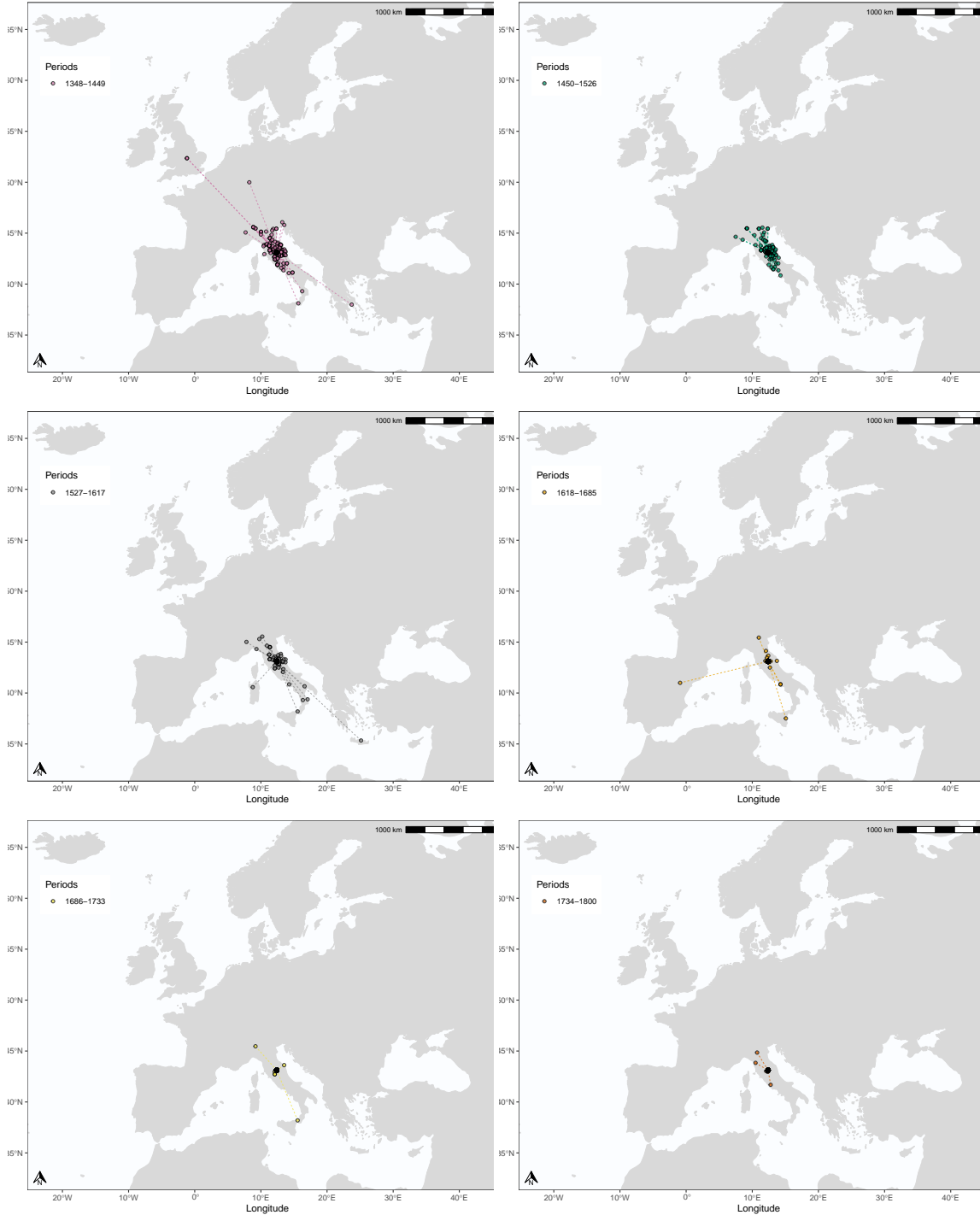


Figure 3: Places of birth of the scholars and literati at the University of Perugia

4 FIELDS

Figure 2 shows the balance between the different fields. Perugia's *Studium* favoured the study of law. The detachment of legal scholars from practice and the rise of legal humanism constituted, according to Ermini (1971), one of the main causes of the university's decline. Humanities and medicine also represent a large share of Perugia's scholarly output. Albeit modest in size, the mathematical school (headed by Luca Pacioli) proved to be highly influential.

5 PLACES OF BIRTH

Figure 3 displays the documented birthplaces for the scholars and literati who were active at the University of Perugia by period. The *Studium* benefitted from the influence of scholars born outside the city of Perugia. It is the case of the famous Byzantine scholar Demetrius Chalcocondyles, although his affiliation to the university is disputed (Ermini 1971). As early as the 16th century, there were very few scholars who were born outside the Italian Peninsula. This trend consolidated in the ensuing periods, condemning the university to a steady decline. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the university attracted almost exclusively scholars who were born in Perugia and its surroundings.

6 HUMAN CAPITAL OF SCHOLARS AND LITERATI

For each person in the database, we compute a heuristic human capital index, identified by combining information from VIAF and Wikipedia, using principal component analysis. We also compute the notability of the university at each date by averaging the human capital of the best five scholars active in Perugia 25 years before that date. The details are given in Curtis and De la Croix (2023). Figure 4 shows the names of all the scholars with a positive human capital index. The orange line displays the notability of the university, based on how well published its top scholars were. In the period between 1400 and 1600, notability was rather high. After 1600, we observe a general decline, that seems to be partially offset by a weak recovery around 1800.

7 TOP 5 PROFESSORS

Francesco della Rovere (Celle Ligure 1414 – Rome 1484) also known as Sixtus IV, was a theologian and Catholic pope. He was elected pope in 1471 and before then he taught at several universities on the Italian Peninsula (De la Croix and Vitale 2021a, 2021b; Gualandris and Vitale 2023; Zanardello 2022). In Perugia he taught from 1451 to 1455 (Bugatti 1943). He played a crucial role in shaping the European political scene and had a well-established network of political figures. He was firmly opposed to the Turkish invasion of Anatolia and mandated two ruinous crusades (1472 and 1480). He was an advocate of the dogma of Immaculate Conception and declared the 8th December as its celebration day. He also ordered the construction of the Sistine Chapel. He is the author of several important masterpieces of the theological thought of his century, e.g. *De Sanguine Christi* (1474).

Luca Pacioli (Sansepolcro 1447 – Sansepolcro 1517) was a mathematician and priest. He is considered to be the father of modern double-entry accounting. He contributed significantly to the field of mathematics. Among his numerous works, the most famous is *Summa de arithmetica, geometria, de proportioni et de proportionalità* (1494). Ermini (1971) regards him as the father of the mathematical school of the University of Perugia.

Bartolus de Saxoferrato (Sassoferrato 1313 – Perugia 1356) was a jurist. He is remembered as one of the most influential legal scholars in European history. He was the initiator of so-called Bartolism, a practical approach to jurisprudence, which will then be contested by legal humanists. He taught in Perugia from 1343 to 1356 and his presence favored the rise of the university. The fall of Bartolism, together with the rise of legal humanism, is considered to be a main cause of the decline of the university after the Middle Ages.

Baldus de Ubaldis (Perugia 1327 – Pavia 1400) was a jurist. He studied in Perugia under Bartolus de Saxoferrato, who was a significant influence in his career. He contributed extensively to many strands of the legal literature. He was well-regarded by his peers and served as a consultant for several local authorities. The municipality of Perugia considered his contribution to be beyond value: when Florence sought to attract Baldus de Ubaldis to its studium in 1385, the Government of Perugia wrote that his departure would have meant “annichilare et destruere Studium Perusinum” (i.e. the elimination and dismantling of the University of Perugia).

Cinus de Pistoia (Pistoia 1265 – Pistoia 1336) was a jurist and poet. He taught to Bartolus de Saxoferrato. He is regarded as the founder of the school of Commentators, *i.e.* a group of legal scholars that was pushing for a practical approach to Roman law and, more specifically, to the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*.

8 RELATED SCHOLARS

Demetrius Chalcocondyles (Athens 1423 – Milano 1511) was a Greek humanist. He arrived in Italy in 1449. Presumably, he taught students privately in Perugia before being appointed to the chair of ancient Greek in Padua and later in Florence. His main work is *Erotemata*, a Greek grammar presented in a question-and-answer format, published in 1494. Erasmus of Rotterdam praised him as “probus” and “eruditus”, but also acknowledged a fundamental intellectual “mediocritas” (Erasmus of Rotterdam 1906).

Cosimo de’ Migliorati (Sulmona 1336 – Roma 1406), also known as Innocent VII, was a Catholic pope. He hailed from a noble family in the town of Sulmona. He reigned during the Western Schism, while the rival pope (antipope) Benedict XIII was ruling in Avignon. It is uncertain whether he taught at the universities of Perugia and Padua; however, it is certain that he held the position of Rector at the College in Perugia (Ermini 1971; Bini 1816).

9 UNIVERSITY NETWORK

Our assumption is that a professors’ involvement in multiple universities throughout their career establishes a connection between those institutions. We present the universities that were linked to the University of Perugia during each period in Figure 5. The university is mainly characterised its local nature. Most scholars held positions in other institutions located, at most, in the Italian Peninsula and very few were active at the European level. The decline in the level of internationalization experienced by the University of Perugia following the 16th century mirrors the plunge in the human capital index, as shown in Figure 4.

10 WHO’S WHO ON THE MOON

Another way to measure the notability of individuals is to look for signs of recognition such as street names, names of schools, research institutes, prizes, and lunar crater names. The mathematician Luigi Giglio (1510 – 1574) is the only scholar from this university to whom a crater has been dedicated. Giglio was a physician, astronomer and mathematician. He was the originator of the Gregorian calendar reform.

11 FAMILIES OF SCHOLARS

Figure 6 represents a branch of the Ubaldi/Baldeschi family that was a true *alvearium litteratorum* (i.e. nest of scholars) (Mazzucchelli 1758). Various sources have allowed us to reconstruct this (incomplete) family tree, in which we find 10 professors from the University of Perugia (Vermiglioli 1973; Mazzucchelli 1758; Istituto dell’Enciclopedia Italiana 1961).

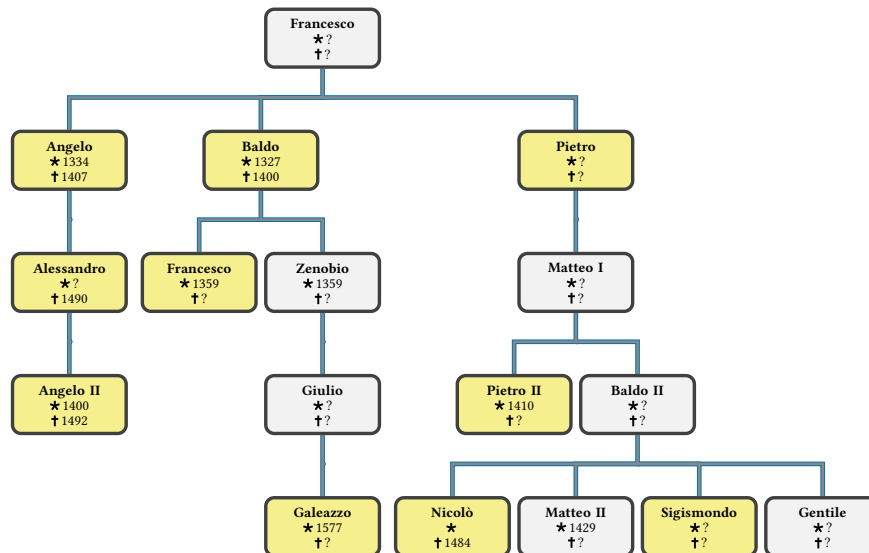


Figure 6: The Ubaldi/Baldeschi family. Scholars of the University of Perugia in yellow squares.

12 FINAL THOUGHTS

From the Middle Ages until the start of the 16th century, the university experienced a period of glory. This is mirrored by the degree of openness to foreign scholars, which is somewhat high relative to subsequent periods. The 17th century marked the beginning of the decline in academic quality and scholarly output.

13 ANECDOTES

In 1607, Italy experienced a significant drought, while 1608 saw heavy snowfall across the entire peninsula (Società medica chirurgica di Bologna 1892). The population attributed the blame for these and other disastrous events to the passage of a comet, later named after the astrologist Edmond Halley, who first outlined its characteristics. In 1608, the physician and mathematician Marco Antonio Grisaldi from the University of Perugia wrote a pamphlet attempting to demonstrate that the passage of comets has no negative influence on events (Vermiglioli 1973).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank Professors Regina Lupi and Stefania Zucchini from the University of Perugia for their valuable bibliographic recommendations. This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 883033 “Did elite human capital trigger the rise of the West? Insights from a new database of European scholars.”

Homepage: <https://perso.uclouvain.be/david.delacroix/uthc.html>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/UTHCerc>

Database: <https://shiny-lidam.sipr.ucl.ac.be/scholars/>

First version April 4, 2024

REFERENCES

- Bini, Vincenzo. 1816. *Memorie istoriche della perugina università degli studi e dei suoi professori*. Vol. 1. Santucci e Garbenesi.
- Bugatti, Benvenuto. 1943. Francesco della Rovere da Savona, Ord. Min., lettore di filosofia, min. generale, cardinale e papa Sisto iv., nelle sue relazioni con Perugia. *Archivum franciscanum historicum* 36:200–226.
- Curtis, Matthew, and David De la Croix. 2023. Measuring Human Capital: from WorldCat Identities to VIAF. *Repertorium Eruditorum Totius Europae* 10:17–22. <https://doi.org/10.14428/rete.v10i0/hc>.
- De la Croix, David, and Mara Vitale. 2021a. Scholars and Literati at the University of Bologna (1088–1800). *Repertorium Eruditorum Totius Europae* 1:1–10. <https://doi.org/10.14428/rete.v1i0/Bologna>.
- . 2021b. Scholars and Literati at the University of Padua (1222–1800). *Repertorium Eruditorum Totius Europae* 3:33–42. <https://doi.org/10.14428/rete.v3i0/padua>.
- Erasmus of Rotterdam, Desiderius. 1906. *Opus epistolarum Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami/Ed. P.S. Allen, H.M. Allen, H.W. Garrod. 12 vols.*
- Ermini, Giuseppe. 1971. *Storia della università di Perugia*. Vol. 1. L. S. Olschki.
- Frova, Carla, Giuliano Catoni, and Paolo Renzi. 2001. Maestri e scolari a Siena e Perugia 1250-1500. <http://www3.unisi.it/docentes/index.html>.
- Frova, Carla, Marco Menzenghi, and Stefania Zucchini. 2024. Onomasticon. Prosopografia dell'Università degli Studi di Perugia. <https://onomasticon.unipg.it/onomasticon/home.do>.
- Gualandris, Tifenn, and Mara Vitale. 2023. Scholars and literati at the University of Pisa (1343–1800). *Repertorium Eruditorum Totius Europae* 11:25–33. <https://doi.org/10.14428/rete.v11i0/Pisa>.
- Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana. 1961. *Treccani. Dizionario biografico degli italiani*. Roma: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana. <https://www.treccani.it/>.
- Mazzucchelli, Giovanni Maria. 1758. *Gli scrittori d' Italia, cioè notizie storiche e critiche intorno alle vite, e agli scritti dei letterati Italiani*. Gianbattista Bossini, Brescia.
- Società medica chirurgica di Bologna. 1892. *Memorie della società medico-chirurgica di Bologna*. Tipografia Gamberini e Parmeggiani, Bologna.
- Università di Perugia. 1891. *Per una festa scientifica nell'Università di Perugia il 18 Settembre 1890*. Tipografia di Vincenzo Santucci. <https://books.google.be/books?id=vzcBAAAAYAAJ>.
- Vermiglioli, Giovanni Battista. 1973. *Biografia degli scrittori perugini e notizie delle opere loro*. Bologna: Forni.
- Zanardello, Chiara. 2022. Scholars and Literati at the University of Turin (1404–1800). *Repertorium Eruditorum Totius Europae* 7:31–38. <https://doi.org/10.14428/rete.v7i0/uturin>.
- Zucchini, Stefania. 2008. *Università e dottori nell'economia del comune di Perugia: i registri dei conservatori della moneta (secoli 14.-15.)* Deputazione di storia patria per l'Umbria.