

A History of Medieval Europe

Overview

Welcome to the Middle Ages, a period which will cover for our purposes some ten or more centuries in lands as far apart (and yet connected) as Baghdad and the British Isles, Spain and Scandinavia. Although it often appears quite alien to the twenty-first century, the medieval period was the incubator for much in our own contemporary society—not least of which is the very idea of getting a university education. Throughout this entire period, trial and error produced a cultural synthesis of three rather divergent streams: Roman, Christian, and Germanic. Nor were these elements mixing together in a vacuum; cultures distant in both time and geography influenced European affairs—at a minimum as some Other that Europe shied away from but more often as an intriguing option to explore or exploit as it suited Europeans. Thus Christendom, for better or worse, was forged. Although much of contemporary culture endeavors to distance itself from Christian antecedents, it was the cultivation and rejection of medieval forms and values that generated the succeeding cultures. We (and I emphasize *your* part here) are going to look at both of these, the survivors and the losers, in all arenas: cultural, political, artistic, theological, economic, military, and not least at all, the personal. This class is going to ask you to read some, write a bit, and think a great deal. As the breakdown further below indicates, you will have a variety of *fora* in which to showcase your understanding of the Middle Ages.

One basic goal of this course, an in-depth analysis of c.1000 years of history in fifteen weeks, is a rather obviously impossibility. Our solution to this problem will be, in the first portion of the course, to set up the foundational elements of the Middle Ages, to appreciate the structures and mentalities that informed a great many medieval persons and phenomena. In the latter part of the course, we will rely on this foundational material to then dive deeply into several different aspects of the High Middle Ages, especially what some have called “the Long Twelfth Century”. We will do this via several first-class monographs by leading scholars and via the very words of medieval folk themselves in some exemplary primary sources.

Course Goals

The goals (or should we say fruits?) of a history course are as numerous as the books which historians produce. Some have already been hinted at above. At the broadest level, though, historical study encourages and hones critical analysis of the questions which most concern us. And these issues are themselves countless, but in the most generic terms, they mostly center on the relations of people with one another, with themselves, and possibly with the supernatural. We will be asking “why?” rather a lot: Why did they think that? Why did they assume such a thing? Why does the past appear simultaneously alien and similar? Even as we ask these questions, others lie implicitly underneath: why do I think what I think? What are my prejudices and assumptions? How does my heritage sway my conclusions?

Grading & Assignments

Exams: The exact format has yet to be determined, but you can be sure they'll kick like a mule. The first will be worth 14% of the course grade; the second, 16%; and the final, 20%. (Sounds of cheering...)

Quizzes: There will be an indeterminate number of pop quizzes throughout the semester so as to confirm that students are staying on track with the reading assignments. You can expect an indeterminate number of five-minute quizzes, chock-full of multiple-choice / true-false / fill in the blank types of questions. (Overall: 10% of course grade)

Paper: Ten pages, double-spaced, in the Chicago/Turabian style of citation, based heavily on primary sources, and full of original analysis. The preliminary assignments (i.e., the proposal, the bibliography, etc.) are not optional, and they will be graded. (Piece of cake...and a mere 25% of the course grade!)

Participation: Students must be ready to participate in classroom discussions, especially during the latter portions of each class period when we will be bringing our readings under close scrutiny. Students should assume, for purposes of assessment, that they start with nothing in this category and are working their way to some cumulative grade. In addition, the performance on quizzes will influence this grade as well, since they indicate your commitment to doing the necessary readings. (15%)

Lecture & Reading Schedule

Reading assignments are to be done **before** you come to class. The plan is that each class will proceed in two discrete parts: roughly 2/3 as presentation of material by the professor, sometimes linked/sometimes not to the day's assigned readings. The remaining third will focus directly via discussion on the day's reading. Yes, there is **a lot** of reading to do. Give yourself plenty of time to do the reading, not just pass your eyes over the pages. Among your professor's persistent delusions is his expectation that you will consider **and** comprehend what you're reading.

• Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
25 Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to course• Opening Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Become familiar with this syllabus & the course's general policies• Read <u>Excerpt</u> from Cantor
27 Aug	Late Antiquity / Forms of History	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brown: 6-20• Rosenthal <u>excerpt</u>, 1-8
29 Aug	Christianizing Rome	Brown: 54-80
3 Sept	Christianizing the Rest / The Specter of Heresy	Brown: 81-101, 115-122

5 Sept	Political/Military Breakdowns	Abels, " Armies, War, and Society in the West, c.300-600 ," sections I-II.
8 Sept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heirs of Rome: Western Kingdoms I • Paper Topic Proposal Due 	Brown:121-138
10 Sept	Heirs of Rome: Western Kingdoms II	Brown:145-165
12 Sept	Heirs of Rome: Byzantium	Brown:166-185
15 Sept	Asceticism: Martyrs, Saints, and Monasticism	Brown: 219-246
17 Sept	Heirs of Rome: Islam I	Brown: 285-310
19 Sept	Medieval Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ho, "The Legitimacy of Medieval Proof" • Brown, 255-265
22 Sept	The Carolingian Moment	Brown: 383-393, 408-414, 428-446
24 Sept	The Fury of the Northmen?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brown, 464-479 • Abels, "Alfred, the Vikings, and Francia"
26 Sept	First Exam	
29 Sept	New Networks	Bisson, " The 'Feudal Revolution' "
1 Oct	Feudal Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feudal Agreement: at the Internet Medieval Sourcebook or alternately at Paul Hyam's pages at Cornell • Stephen Lane's review of <i>Fiefs and Vassals</i> • Charter of Homage & Fealty
3 Oct	Cluniac Monasticism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excerpt : "The Age of Cluny" • Foundation Charter of Cluny
6 Oct	<i>Al-Andalus</i>	• Novikoff, " Between Tolerance and Intolerance in Medieval Spain "
8 Oct	Ottonian Recovery	• Timothy Reuter on the Reichskirchensystem
10 Oct	Normans in the Mediterranean	• Graham Loud on Norman Italy
15 Oct	Gregorian Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A biographical article on Gregory VII • Housley, 1-23
17 Oct	Crusades (I)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housley, 24-47 • Accounts of the Fall of Jerusalem at Sourcebook: #s 3-6
20 Oct	Crusades (II) Paper Bibliography Due	Housley, 75-98

22 Oct	Crusades (III)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housley, 48-74 • Saladin's <u>Capture of Jerusalem</u>
24 Oct	Crusades (IV)	The Sack of Constantinople (I.M.S. <u>sections IV and V</u>)
27 Oct	Twilight of the Anglo-Saxons	Henry of Huntingdon: 3-24
29 Oct	Capetians & Anglo-Normans (I)	H of H: 24-39, 47-64
31 Oct	Second Exam	
3 Nov		Galbert: Intro
5 Nov	Intro: the Renaissance of the Twelfth Century	Galbert: 2-45
7 Nov	(Haskins Society Conference)	Galbert: 45-93
10 Nov	The Growing Role of Towns	Galbert: 93-158
12 Nov	A Divine Plan?	Galbert: 158-190
14 Nov	Capetians & Anglo-Normans (II)	H of H: 65-96
17 Nov	Marriage and Chivalry: Politics as Usual?	Diggelmann: <u>"Marriage as Tactical Response"</u>
19 Nov	Cistercian Ideals vs. Scholasticism's <i>Nouvelle Vague</i>	Abelard & Heloise: <i>The Calamities</i> , 1–46
21 Nov	Capetians & Plantagenets (I)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abelard & Heloise: 49–70 •
24 Nov	Capetians & Plantagenets (II)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abelard & Heloise: 71–105 • <u>The Magna Carta</u>
1 Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heresies / Divergences • Research Paper Due by 5pm 	Housley, 115–121
3 Dec	The Papal Monarchy	
5 Dec	Thirteenth Century Synthesis	
	Final Exam	TBA

Required Textbooks

We have six textbooks for this course. They are all required, and yes, I actually expect students to read them. And of course, there are all the online readings above...

- Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*
- Galbert of Bruges, *The Murder of Charles the Good*

- Henry of Huntingdon, *The History of the English People, 1000–1154*
- Norman Housley, *Contesting the Crusades*
- *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, trans. by Betty Radice

Web Resources

No list of websites can ever be exhaustive, but here at least are some worth a visit:

- [A Medieval Chronology](#), by Dr. Richard Abels
- The Internet Medieval [Sourcebook](#)
- The [Labyrinth](#)
- [ORB](#)