

University of Wisconsin – Madison
Department of History

History 115: Medieval Europe 410-1500

HUMANITIES 1641

Mondays and Wednesdays
8:00 AM - 9:15 AM



Prof. Elizabeth Lapina

lapina@wisc.edu

TA: Neal Davidson

ndavidson@wisc.edu

Office: Mosse Humanities 4114

Office hours: 9:30-10:30 on Mondays and Wednesday (and by appointment)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

We will begin this class with a discussion of the relations between Romans and barbarians, the rise of Christianity and the role of Christianity in forging the new medieval civilization. We will then move on to three heirs of the Roman Empire: the Carolingian Empire, the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic Empire. After dealing with the last major invasion of Western Europe, that of the Vikings, we will move on to the age of castles and cathedrals, also known as the Twelfth-Century Renaissance. One of the features of this medieval Renaissance was the expansion of Latin Europe into the Middle East during the crusades. Another feature had to do with the self-affirmation of the laity. This self-affirmation resulted in the appearance of the new chivalric culture and in the rise of heresy. The last few weeks of class will be dedicated to the Italian Renaissance and a Reacting to the Past game (for more information on Reacting to the Past (RTTP) games see <https://reacting.barnard.edu/>)

READING ASSIGNMENTS:

Please bring all of the primary sources assigned for that week to your discussion sections. When it comes to sources available on-line, you can bring them to sections in either paper or electronic format. The following primary sources are available at the University of Wisconsin bookstore and on reserve at the College Library (Helen C. White Hall, 600 North Park Street). If you wish, you can use different editions (including those available on the Web) as long as you are aware of and accept the inconveniences this might cause you.

- St. Augustine, *Confessions* (Penguin Classics)
- Jordanes, *History of the Goths*
- Abelard & Heloise, *The Letters and Other Writings* (Hackett Publications)
- *Egil's Saga* (Penguin Classics)
- *Beowulf* (translated by Seamus Heaney)
- *Robert the Monk's History of the First Crusade* (Ashgate / Routledge)

THE TEXTBOOK:

The textbook, Clifford R. Backman, *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*, is available at the University Book Store and on reserve at the College Library. You are not responsible for the information that it contains.

GRADING:

5 short papers:	10% each, 50 % total
1 RTTP paper:	15 %
Final Exam:	20 %
Participation:	15 %

FINAL EXAM:

Final Exam will consist exclusively of quotations from primary sources that you will have to identify and discuss. The exam will take place on December 18, 2017 7:45 AM – 9:45 AM

SHORT PAPERS:

You have to write five short responses to questions based on the assigned readings. Each response should be about 700 words. It is entirely up to you to choose the questions that you want to answer. The papers are due in sections where the assigned readings are to be discussed. No late papers will be accepted. No electronic submissions will be accepted. You cannot write an extra paper to compensate for a poor grade. You do not have to use the textbook or do any outside research for any of the short responses. Even if you decide to use the textbook, your answers should be based primarily on the assigned readings. While grading, we will be asking the following questions:

- (a) Are spelling and grammar adequate?
- (b) Are there both an introduction and a conclusion?

- (c) Is the essay well-structured? Does each paragraph develop one theme / idea? Are there effective transitions between paragraphs?
- (d) Are there two brief (sentence-length) quotations from the assigned text(s)?
- (e) Are these quotations well integrated into the essay? Are they relevant? Do they come from different parts of the assigned text(s)?
- (f) Does the essay reflect a careful reading of the assigned text(s) or does it discuss the topic very generally?
- (g) Does the essay answer the question asked?

When quoting the assigned text(s) or referring to specific passages, you should identify the page numbers either in parenthesis or in a footnote. Please do not forget to do the readings, even if you are not writing a response (otherwise, you will not get a good grade for participation AND will have a lot of catching up to do before the final exam!).

TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM:

As a courtesy to your fellow students, I ask that you not to go on the internet during lectures.

HISTORY LAB and WRITING CENTER:

The History Lab and Writing Center are both very useful resource if you want help with your papers. Information can be found here:

<https://history.wisc.edu/thehistorylab.htm>

<http://www.writing.wisc.edu/>

ACADEMIC HONESTY

The University of Wisconsin considers academic honesty to be a very serious issue. I will always enforce the university policies on academic honesty. I suggest that you read carefully the following website dealing with the rules about plagiarism:

http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html

If you have questions about plagiarism, please contact me or your TA. Further information about student codes of conduct is found here:

<http://students.wisc.edu/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html#points>

DISABILITY

Disability guidelines for course accommodations are found at the UW McBurney Disability Resource Center site: <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu>

SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

September 6 (W): **Introduction to the Course.**

WEEK 2

September 11 (M): **Rise of Christianity.**

September 13 (W): **Rise of Christianity.**

NO SECTIONS THIS WEEK

WEEK 3

September 18 (M): **Barbarian Conquests.**

September 20 (W): **Barbarian Conquests.**

Reading Assignment: St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Books 1-8 (pages 21-179).

Short paper [1]: Answer one of the following questions.

[a] Why did Augustine consider it worthwhile to write about such apparently minute episodes of his life as stealing some pears from a garden as an adolescent?

[b] Why did Augustine choose to convert to Christianity and what alternatives did he consider?

WEEK 4

September 25 (M): **Monasticism.**

September 27 (W): **Byzantium.**

Reading Assignment: Jordanes, *History of the Goths* (entire)

Short paper [2]: According to Jordanes, was the relationship between the Romans and the Goths defined by animosity or cooperation?

WEEK 5

October 2 (M): **Islam.**

October 4 (W): **Northern Europe and the Carolingian Empire.**

Reading Assignment: Hrotswitha of Gandersheim (three files available for download on Learn@UW)

Short paper [3]: Hrotswitha's plays are, to a large extent, about power. What are some of the different types of power that Hrotswitha depicts? Who has power and who does not?

WEEK 6:

October 9 (M): **Northern Europe and the Carolingian Empire.**

October 11 (W): **Northern Europe and the Carolingian Empire.**

Reading Assignment: Ibn Fadlan (Learn@ UW – I recommend that you read the introduction, but you can skip it if you are pressed for time)

Short paper [4]: What do you learn about Ibn Fadlan from his text? What are his interests? Which foreign customs does he seem to admire and which does he hold in abhorrence?

WEEK 7:

October 16 (M): **The Vikings.**

October 18 (W): **The Vikings.**

Reading Assignment: *Beowulf* (entire)

Short Paper [5]: Comment on the following quotation: "For it is now to us itself ancient; and yet its [*Beowulf*'s] maker was telling of things already old and weighted with regret, and he expended his art in making keen that touch upon the heart which sorrows have that are both poignant and remote." (J. R. R. Tolkien).

WEEK 8:

October 23 (M): **The Investiture Controversy.**

October 25 (W): **The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century.**

Reading Assignment: *Egil's Saga*, 54-205

Short paper [6]: "Interview" Egil. Think of questions to ask him and imagine how he would answer them. You do not have to follow the guidelines above for this assignment.

WEEK 9:

October 30 (M): **The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century.**

November 1 (W): **Crusades.**

Reading Assignment: Investiture Controversy (on Learn @ UW)

Short paper [7]: What positions would Pope Gregory VII and Emperor Henry IV have to give up before some sort of mutually acceptable reconciliation could be possible?

WEEK 10:

November 6 (M): **Crusades**

November 8 (W): **Persecutions**

Reading Assignment: Abelard & Heloise, *The Letters and Other Writings* (Abelard, *The Calamities of Peter Abelard*, pages 1-46 and First Letter, Heloise to Abelard, pages 49-62).

Short paper [8]: Answer one of the following questions:

[a] What choices did Heloise have in life? What do the choices that she made tell us about her?

[b] "Nothing can be believed if it is not first understood." Discuss this statement in the context of Abelard's career.

WEEK 11:

November 13 (M): **Persecutions.**

ROLES FOR RTTP WILL BE DISTRIBUTED BEFORE LECTURE

November 15 (W): **Chivalry**

Reading Assignment: *Robert the Monk's History of the First Crusade* (pages 75-214).

Short paper [9]: One of Robert the Monk's major goals in writing his chronicle seems to have been to demonstrate that the First Crusade was a holy war. What choices did he make when writing the chronicle in order to achieve this goal?

WEEK 12:

November 20 (M): **Franciscans**

November 22 (W): **The Renaissance**

Reading Assignment: Troubadours (six files on Learn@UW).

Short paper [10]: Pick three themes that feature prominently in the selection of poems of troubadours and trouvères that you have read. What conclusions can you draw about chivalric culture from an examination of these themes?

WEEK 13:

November 27 (M): **The Renaissance**

November 29 (W): RTTP

Reading Assignment: Read three texts:

- Leonardo Bruno's *Panegyric of Florence* in your RTTP package (on Learn@UW)
- *Contract of Pinturicchio with Cardinal Francesco de 'Todeschini-Piccolomini* (on Learn@UW)
- *Instructions of Isabella d'Este to Perugino* (on Learn@UW).

Short paper [10]: Answer one of the following questions:

- [1] According to Leonardo Bruni, how did Florence become a great city?
- [2] Study the *Contract of Pituricchio* and *Instructions of Isabella d'Este* carefully. What problems could arise, for the artist and the patron, when one executed or commissioned a work of art?

WEEK 14:

December 5 (M): RTTP

December 7 (W) RTTP

Reading Assignment: Read Leon Battista Alberti's "The Family in Renaissance Florence" and "The Children of Gregorio Dati" on Learn@UW.

Short paper [11]: If the family life that Alberti describes corresponded to reality, what was it like to be a (well-off) woman in Renaissance Florence?

WEEK 15: RTTP

December 11 (T): RTTP

December 13 (R): Review for the final exam

RTTP paper due in discussion sections

Goals of the History Major

(approved by the department, March 23, 2011; revised by the department, February 27, 2013)

The goal of the history major is to offer students the knowledge and skills they need to gain a critical perspective on the past. Students will learn to define important historical questions, analyze relevant evidence with rigor and creativity, and present convincing arguments and conclusions based on original research in a manner that contributes to academic and public discussions. In History, as in other humanistic disciplines, students will practice resourceful inquiry and careful reading. They will advance their writing and public speaking skills to engage historical and contemporary issues.

To insure that students gain exposure to some of the great diversity of topics, methodologies, and philosophical concerns that inform the study of history, the department requires a combination of courses that offers breadth, depth, and variety of exposition. Through those courses, students should develop:

1. Broad acquaintance with several geographic areas of the world and with both the pre-modern and modern eras.
2. Familiarity with the range of sources and modes through which historical information can be found and expressed. Sources may include textual, oral, physical, and visual materials. The data within them may be qualitative or quantitative, and they may be available in printed, digital, or other formats. Modes of expression may include textbooks, monographs, scholarly articles, essays, literary works, or digital presentations.
3. In-depth understanding of a topic of their choice through original or creative research.
4. The ability to identify the skills developed in the history major and to articulate the applicability of those skills to a variety of endeavors and career paths beyond the professional practice of history.

Skills Developed in the Major

Define Important Historical Questions

1. Pose a historical question and explain its academic and public implications.
2. Using appropriate research procedures and aids, find the secondary resources in history and other disciplines available to answer a historical question.
3. Evaluate the evidentiary and theoretical bases of pertinent historical conversations in order to highlight opportunities for further investigation.

Collect and Analyze Evidence

1. Identify the range and limitations of primary sources available to engage the historical problem under investigation.
2. Examine the context in which sources were created, search for chronological and other relationships among them, and assess the sources in light of that knowledge.

3. Employ and, if necessary, modify appropriate theoretical frameworks to examine sources and develop arguments.

Present Original Conclusions

1. Present original and coherent findings through clearly written, persuasive arguments and narratives.
2. Orally convey persuasive arguments, whether in formal presentations or informal discussions.
3. Use appropriate presentation formats and platforms to share information with academic and public audiences.

Contribute to Ongoing Discussions

1. Extend insights from research to analysis of other historical problems.
2. Demonstrate the relevance of a historical perspective to contemporary issues.
3. Recognize, challenge, and avoid false analogies, overgeneralizations, anachronisms, and other logical fallacies.