

University of Wisconsin – Madison
Department of History

History 115: Medieval Europe 410-1500

HUMANITIES 1641

Tuesdays and Thursdays
8:00 AM - 9:15 AM



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Office hours: 1:30-2:15 on Tuesdays and Thursdays (and by appointment)

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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 three weeks of class will be dedicated to 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 or secondary 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)
- *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in English* (Liturgical Press)
- Abelard & Heloise, *The Letters and Other Writings* (Hackett Publications)
- *Poems of Arab Andalusia* (City Lights Publisher)
- Chretien de Troy, *Lancelot: The Knight of the Cart* (Yale University Press)
- *Egil's Saga* (Penguin Classics)
- *Beowulf* (translated by Seamus Heaney)
- Dante, *The Divine Comedy. Volume 1: Inferno* (translated by Mark Musa) (Penguin Classics)
- *Robert the Monk's History of the First Crusade* (Ashgate / Routledge)
- *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich* (Penguin Classics)

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. The purpose of the textbook is to complement the lectures. 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 5/9/2017, Tuesday, 10:05AM - 12:05PM

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

January 17 (T): **Introduction to the Course.**

January 19 (R): **Rise of Christianity.**

NO SECTIONS THIS WEEK

WEEK 2

January 24 (T): **Rise of Christianity.**

January 26 (R): **Barbarian Conquest.**

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 3

January 31 (T): **Barbarian Conquest.**

February 2 (R): **Byzantium.**

Reading Assignment: *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in English* (entire).

Short paper [1]: Why was *The Rule of St. Benedict* so effective?

WEEK 4

February 7 (T): **Islam.**

February 9 (R): **NO CLASS: FIELD TRIP TO THE ISLAMIC CENTER.**

Walter Goffart, "Rome's Final Conquest: The Barbarians," *History Compass* 6:3 (2008) 855–883 [locating the article is part of your assignment]

Short Paper [3]: Pretend that Walter Goffart's article has not been published yet and that the editor of *History Compass* wants to know your opinion about it. Write a short review, discussing both strengths and weaknesses of the article, and defend your claim that the article should be "accepted," "rejected" or "accepted with major revisions."

WEEK 5:

February 14 (T): **Northern Europe.**

February 16 (R): **The Carolingian Empire.**

Reading Assignment: *Poems of Arab Andalusia*, pages 2, 3-4, 21-22, 26, 54, 57-59, 81, 83-91.

Short paper [3]: Locate and discuss five themes found in the Poems of Arab Andalusia.

WEEK 6:

February 21 (T): **The Vikings.**

February 23 (R): **The Vikings (continued).**

Reading Assignment: *Beowulf* (entire)

Short Paper [4]: Comment on the following quotation: "For it is now to us itself ancient; and yet its 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 7:

February 28 (T): **The Investiture Controversy.**

March 2 (R): **The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century 1.**

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

Short paper [5]: Answer one of the following questions:

[a] Discuss the role of women in Viking society as revealed by *Egil's Saga*.

[b] Interview Egil. Think of questions to ask him and imagine how he would answer them.

WEEK 8:

March 7 (T): **The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century 2.**

March 9 (R): **NO CLASS: FIELD TRIP**

Instead of class, please attend one of the talks of the symposium “Mount Athos in Context: Art, History, Ritual and Spirituality of Eastern Orthodox Monasticism” on March 10. Details to be announced later.

Reading Assignment: Investiture Controversy (documents on Learn @ UW)

Short paper [6]: 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 9:

March 14 (T): **Crusades.**

March 16 (R): **Crusades.**

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 [7]: 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 10: **SPRING BREAK**

March 21 (T): **NO CLASS**

March 23 (R): **NO CLASS**

WEEK 11:

March 28 (T): **Persecution of the Jews**

March 30 (R): **NO CLASS (to be replaced by a panel discussion on Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: from the Middle Ages to Today, details TBD)**

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

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

[a] In his chronicle, how does Robert the Monk convey his belief that the First Crusade was a holy war?

[b] As far as we can tell from the chronicle, what was the impact of the First Crusade on non-combatants among the inhabitants of the region? What was Robert the Monk's opinion about this?

WEEK 12:

April 4 (T): **Chivalry.**

April 6 (R): **Heresy**

Reading Assignment: *The Life and Passion of William of Norwich* ("Introduction" and pages 10-73)

Short paper [9]: Find clues within the text that the story told by Thomas of Monmouth is a fabrication.

WEEK 13:

April 11 (T): **Franciscans**

April 13 (R): **Medieval Women**

Reading Assignment: Chretien de Troyes, *Lancelot: The Knight of the Cart*, pages 1-125.

Short paper [10]: Would it be correct to call Lancelot a "perfect knight"?

WEEK 14:

April 18 (T): **The Renaissance**

April 20 (R): RTTP – more information will be given at a later date

Reading Assignment: Dante, *The Divine Comedy. Volume 1: Inferno*. Canto III (89-96); Canto IV (97-108); Canto V (109-120); Canto XIX (239-250); Canto XXVI (305-314).

Short paper [11]: Examine the diagram on Inferno on p. 172. Draw up your own diagram and explain where and why it diverges from Dante's.

WEEK 15: RTTP

April 25 (T): RTTP

April 27 (R): RTTP

WEEK 16:

May 2 (T): RTTP

May 4 (R): Review

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.