

University of Wisconsin – Madison  
Department of History

Fall 2023

History 115: Medieval Europe 410-1500

HUMANITIES 1111

Tuesdays and Thursdays

8:00AM - 9:15 AM

in-person



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#### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

We will begin this class with a discussion of the rise of Christianity and the role of Christianity in forging the new medieval civilization. We will continue with the relations between Romans and barbarians and with the fall (or “fall”?) of Rome. We will then move on to three major heirs of the Roman Empire: the Carolingian Empire, the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic Empire. After dealing with the Vikings – and, hopefully, dispelling a myth or two about them – we will move on to the age of castles and cathedrals. Some of the features of this period were

expansion of Latin Europe into the Middle East during the crusades, the appearance of the new chivalric culture, the rise of heresy and the founding of first universities. We will finish with the Black Death and the Hundred Years War!

This 4-credit course meets as a group for 4 hours per week (according to UW-Madison's credit hour policy, each lecture counts as 1.5 hours and each discussion counts as an hour). The course also carries the expectation that you will spend an average of at least 2 hours outside of class for every hour in the classroom. In other words, in addition to class time, plan to allot an average of at least 8 hours per week for reading, writing, preparing for discussions, and/or studying for quizzes and exams for this course.

#### COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- To acquire a broad understanding of the main developments of the medieval period, from the end of the Roman Empire to the beginning of the Renaissance
- To learn to engage critically with a wide variety of primary sources

#### 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.

All reading should be done by Tuesday of the week when it's assigned.

- St. Augustine, *Confessions* (Penguin Classics)
- Jordanes, *History of the Goths*
- Abelard & Heloise, *The Letters and Other Writings* (Hackett Publications)
- *Egil's Saga* (Penguin Classics)
- Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot. The Knight of the Cart*, translated by Burton Raffel (Yale University Press)
- Anne of France, *Lessons for my Daughter*

#### GRADING:

Midterm:	20%
Final Exam:	20 %
Short essay:	20%
Pop-up quizzes:	20% (only top 10 quizzes count for your grade)
Participation in sections:	20%

## ESSAY (for the topic see below)

- should be 5-7 pages (double-spaced) long
- should have an introduction and a conclusion
- should be proof-read before submitting
- should have a clear, but sufficiently complex argument
- should demonstrate an in-depth engagement with the primary source (make sure to back each of your ideas with quotations or paraphrases from the text)

## FINAL AND MIDTERM EXAMS:

Both midterm and final exam will consist of

- (1) quotations from primary sources that you will have to identify and discuss
- (2) short essays

## POP-UP QUIZZES

Pop-up quizzes will consist of a single short answer question. Pop-up quizzes will be based on lectures and / or reading assignments.

## HONORS

Students taking the class for Honors credit need to contact the instructor ASAP.

## 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](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>

## PUBLIC LECTURES

You can get +1% on your final grade for attending one of these two talks (+2% for attending both of these talks) and writing a one-paragraph summary.

[1]

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17: Professor Chris Jones (English, University of Utah)

**5:00 pm, Elvehjem L140: Public lecture:** “The New English Nationalism and Anglo-Saxonism: Far Right Appropriations of Anglo-Saxonism and People Writing in Neo-Old English Online, and Brexit”

[2]

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1: Professor Robert Houghton (School of History and Archaeology, University of Winchester)

**12:00 pm CST, ON ZOOM: Public lecture,** “Historical Accuracy in Games: Impossible and Undesirable” (link TBA)

## SCHEDULE

### WEEK 1

September 7: **Introduction to the Course.**

### WEEK 2

September 12: **Rise of Christianity.**

September 14: **Rise of Christianity.**

Reading Assignment: Augustine, *Confessions* (Book 1 through Book 3)

### WEEK 3

September 19: **Barbarian Conquests.**

September 21: **Barbarian Conquests.**

Reading Assignment: Augustine, *Confessions* (Book 4 through Book 8)

### WEEK 4

September 26: **Monasticism.**

September 28: **Byzantium.**

Reading Assignment: Jordanes, *The Gothic History* (entire, but skip the introduction)

### WEEK 5

October 3: **Islamic World.**

October 5: **Medieval “Renaissances”**

Reading Assignment : Ibn Fadlan, “The Land of Darkness” (on Canvas)

WEEK 6:

October 10: **The Vikings.**

October 12: **The Vikings**

Reading Assignment: *Egil's Saga* (3-94)

WEEK 7:

October 17: **The Vikings.**

October 19: **TAKE-HOME MIDTERM EXAM DUE AT 11:59pm (no class)**

Reading Assignment: *Egil's Saga* (94-205)

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WEEK 8:

October 24: **The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century.**

October 26: **The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century.**

Reading Assignment: Abelard and Heloise, *The Letters and Other Writings* (Abelard, *The Calamities of Peter Abelard*, pages 1-46).

WEEK 9:

October 31: **The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century.**

November 2: **Heresy and Persecution.**

Reading Assignment: Abelard and Heloise, *The Letters and Other Writings* (Heloise to Abelard, First Letter, pages 49-62, and Third Letter, pages 71-84).

WEEK 10:

November 6 **ESSAY DUE AT MIDNIGHT (submit on Canvas)**

With Heloise, we have a rare occasion to study a medieval woman writing about herself, her experiences and her emotions. At first glance, the only emotion that consumes her is her adulation of Abelard. However, is there more to her and her story? Consider the choices Heloise had, the decisions she made, and the way in which she chose to tell her story (she knew that her letters would be widely read). To what extent was she a “prisoner of her time”? To what extent did she succeed, despite unfavorable circumstances, to forge her own destiny? What reputation did Abelard want her to have? What reputation did she want to have? Did she succeed in securing it?

November 7: **Chivalry.**

November 9: **Chivalry.**

Reading Assignment: *Lancelot* (begin; read through page 113 (line 3588))

WEEK 11:

November 14: **The Crusades**

November 16: **The Crusades**

Reading Assignment: *Lancelot* (finish)

WEEK 12:

November 21: **The Crusades**

Reading Assignment: no assignment!

WEEK 13:

November 28: **Hundred Years War and Joan of Arc**

November 30: **Hundred Years War and Joan of Arc**

Reading Assignment: Joan of Arc (reading on Canvas)

Film Assignment: *The Passion of Joan of Arc*.

WEEK 14:

December 5: **The End of the Middle Ages**

December 7: **The End of the Middle Ages**

Reading Assignment: Anne of France, *Lessons for my Daughter*, 25-68

WEEK 15

December 12 (M): **REVIEW**

FINAL EXAM DUE ON 12/15/2023, Friday at 11:59 pm (take-home; submit on Canvas)