

University of Wisconsin – Madison
Department of History

Fall 2025

History 115: Medieval Europe 410-1500

HUMANITIES 1131

Mondays and Wednesdays

8:00 – 9:15

in-person



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Office: 4131 Mosse Humanities
Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 9:15-10:15

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 major heirs of the Roman Empire, both in Western Europe and in the Middle East. After dealing with the Vikings – and, hopefully, dispelling a myth or two about them – we will move on to a major episode in the history of relations between Church and State, the Investiture Controversy. In the last few weeks of class, we will discuss what is known as the age of castles and cathedrals.

Some of the features of this period were the founding of first universities, the appearance of the new chivalric culture, the expansion of Latin Europe into the Middle East during the crusades, and the rise of what one historian called a “persecuting society.” We will finish with the discussion of the Hundred Years War and its main heroine, Joan of Arc.

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:

At the end of this course, students will KNOW or be able TO...

1. Demonstrate a broad understanding of the main developments of the medieval period, from the end of the Roman Empire to the beginning of the Renaissance
2. Analyze critically a wide variety of primary sources from the medieval period, both orally and in writing

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). All reading should be done by Wednesday of the week when they are assigned. Please note that you have to use these specific editions.

- Augustine, *Confessions*
- *Egil's Saga*
- Chretien de Troyes, *Lancelot: the Knight of the Cart*
- *A Monk's Confession. The Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent*
- Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*
- *Poems of Arab Andalusia*

GRADING:

Final Exam (in class):	25%
A midterm (in class):	25%
In-class short responses:	25% (only 10/12 will count for your grade)

Participation in sections: 25%

SHORT RESPONSES (IN CLASS)

Short responses will consist of a single question based on a text that I will make available to the class. There will be no opportunity to make-up short responses. However, only 10 / 12 short responses will count for your grade (this means that you can miss two short responses and still get 100% on this portion of your grade).

BOTH THE MIDTERM AND THE FINAL EXAM will consist of a combination of the following:

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

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

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>

All work submitted in this course must be your own. Any outside contributions (including AI sources) must be properly quoted and cited every time they are used. Failure to do so constitutes an academic integrity violation.

DISABILITY AND LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES

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

In general, I take health and life circumstances, whatever they are, very seriously. If you begin to suspect that any such circumstances might prevent you from succeeding in the class, please, talk to the instructor and we will brainstorm a solution.

GRADING:

92-100% A
87-91.9% AB
82-86.9% B
77-81.9% BC
72-76.9% C
67-71.9% D
0-66.9% F

SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

September 3 (W): Introduction to the Course

WEEK 2

September 8: Rise of Christianity

September 10: Rise of Christianity

Reading Assignment: Augustine, *Confessions*

p. 22: chapters 3.5 and 3.6

p. 23: 3.8

p. 24: 4.9

p. 25: 5.11 and 6.12

p. 27: 6.14

p. 28: 8.16 and 9.17

p. 30: 1.1

p. 33: 4.7

p. 44: 1.1

p. 45: 2.2

WEEK 3

September 15: Barbarian Conquests and the “Dark” Ages

September 17: Barbarian Conquests and the “Dark” Ages

Reading Assignment: Augustine, *Confessions* (selections)

p. 62: 3.3

p. 63: 3.4

p. 65: 5.9

p. 66: 6.10

p. 67: 6.11, 7.12

69: 8.14

p. 84: 6.9

p. 85: 6.10

p. 86: 7.11, 7.12

p. 87: 8.13

p. 93: 12.22
p. 94: 13.23
p. 95: 15.25
p. 118: 1.2 and 2.3
p. 119: 2.4
p. 120: 2.5
p. 134: 11.27
p. 135: 12.29
p. 136: 12.30

WEEK 4

September 22: Barbarian Conquests and the “Dark” Ages

September 24: Empire in the East: Byzantium

Reading Assignment: Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*
(chapters I.35, 36, 39, 40, 41, 42, 47, 48)

WEEK 5

September 29: Rise of Islam

October 1: Empire in the West: Charlemagne

Reading Assignment: Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*
(chapters II: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 12, 17, 27, 29, 30, 37, 38, 43)

WEEK 6:

October 6: The Vikings

October 8: The Vikings

Reading Assignment: *Egil's Saga*

p. 67 (chapter 40)

p. 73-82 (chapters 43-46)

pp. 88 – 120 (chapters 50-59) [*start reading these chapters*]

WEEK 7:

October 13: The Vikings

October 15: The Vikings

Reading Assignment: *Egil's Saga* (file “Egil’s Saga” on Canvas)

pp. 88 – 120 (chapters 50-59) [*finish reading these chapters*]

p. 153 – 159 (chapters 72, 73)

p. 157 (chapter 73)

p. 186 (chapter 82)

p. 201-205 (chapter 88, 89)

WEEK 8:

October 20: MIDTERM EXAM (in class)

October 22: The Investiture Controversy.

Reading Assignment (folder “Investiture Controversy” on Canvas):

- Pope Gregory VII. “A Letter to Supporters in Lombardy”
- Pope Gregory VII. The *Dictatus Papae*
- Pope Gregory VII. Admonition to Henry
- Henry IV to Gregory (1075)
- Henry IV to Gregory (1076)
- Synod of Worms (1076)

WEEK 9:

October 27: The Investiture Controversy.

October 29: The Investiture Controversy: Henry IV versus Gregory VI. In-class debate. Come to class prepared to engage in a role-playing activity and to explain why you, as a medieval person, support (a) Henry IV or (b) Gregory VII. Assemble a list of suitable quotations from the primary sources.

Reading Assignment: no reading assignment, prepare for the debate!

WEEK 10:

November 3: Medieval Iberia

November 5: Medieval Iberia

Reading Assignment:

- Poems of Arab Andalusia (selections)

WEEK 11:

November 10: The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century

November 12: The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century

Reading Assignment:

- Guibert of Nogent, *A Monk's Confession*, 3-43

WEEK 12:

November 17: The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century

November 19: Chivalry

Reading Assignment:

- Guibert of Nogent, *A Monk's Confession*, 43-91.

WEEK 13:

November 24: Chivalry

November 26: HAPPY THANKSGIVING!!!

Reading Assignment (folder “Lancelot” on Canvas):

- Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot. The Knight of the Cart*; Pages 1-15; 116-119; 124-127; 144-149.

WEEK 14:

December 1: The Crusades

December 3: Hundred Years War. Joan of Arc

Reading Assignment: Joan of Arc. *La Pucelle*, “The Trial of Condemnation,” 137-224 (the book is available on-line via UW libraries system).

WEEK 15

December 8: Hundred Years War. Joan of Arc

December 10: Hundred Years War. Joan of Arc

No reading assignment. **Watch** *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (available for rent on Amazon)

FINAL EXAM:

12/17/2025, Wednesday 5:05PM - 7:05PM