



INTRODUCTION TO MEDIEVAL EUROPE



Proposed syllabus by

Alexandra Guerson

Description

Excessive violence, ignorance, oppression and stagnation are a few of many negative ideas associated to the Middle Ages in the popular imagination. Based on a combination of lectures and discussions of primary sources, this survey course will introduce students to a period marked by cultural and intellectual flourishing, religious and social change, and political and economic innovations. Some of the main themes explored in this course include contact between cultures, relations between centres and peripheries, and the effects of growth as well as crises in shaping European society. Special attention will be paid to comparing the experiences of medieval Europeans according to class (elite/middling/poor), gender, religion, and geography (north vs south). Students will have opportunity to engage with a variety of primary and secondary sources; written assignments will allow students to both analyze primary sources and to examine the arguments made by historians as well as the ways in which history is used in the present.

Goals

- To understand the medieval foundation of European society
- To become familiar with the social, cultural, and legal mechanisms that shaped the lives of medieval people
- To consider/explore ideas contrary to one's own beliefs
- To write effective historical essays
- To analyze both primary and secondary sources
- To communicate one's ideas effectively in both written and oral form

Required texts

- Rosenwein, Barbara H. *A Short History of the Middle Ages*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.
- Geary, Patrick, ed. *Readings in Medieval History*. UTP Higher Education, 2003.
- Coursepack of selected sources

Assignments

Three document studies (3-4 pages each)

3x5% = 15%

- Chronicles on the conversion of Europe
- Saints' Lives (Hagiography)
- Law & legal records

Film Essay (5-7 pages)	20%
Research Essay (8-10 pages)	25%
- Proposal/Bibliography	
Final Exam	20%
Participation	20%
- Weekly contributions to course wiki	
- Informed in-class participation	

LECTURE TOPICS AND READINGS

N. B. Readings preceded by an asterisk (*) are available through the course website

Becoming Christendom: Romans, pagans, and Christians

1. **Course introduction & the idea of the Middle Ages**

No readings

Pagan Europe and the collapse of the Roman Empire

Rosenwein, ch. 1

2. **The Birth of the Middle Ages**

The social background: Barbarians and Romans

Geary, 1, Theodosian *Code*; ch. 4, Tacitus *Germania*

The Cultural background: Pagans and Christians

Geary, 3, St. Perpetua *The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas*; Letters of St Boniface

3. **The Carolingians**

Charlemagne & his successors: early medieval Kingship

Geary, ch. 8. *Salic Law*; ch. 18. Einhard *Life of Charles the Great*

The Carolingian Renaissance: scribes and archives

Geary, 19 - Selected Capitularies

4. **Vikings and all that**

Medieval Scandinavia

Rosenwein, ch 2 & 3, ch. 4, pp 152-155

Invasions and Disintegration around the Year 1000

* Three Sources on the Ravages of the Northmen in Frankland, c. 843 – 912

*******First document study due*******

The Age of Confidence: the High Middle Ages

5. **The Commercial Revolution**

Europe and the World: The Thirteenth-century World System

Rosenwein, pp. 182-187, ch. 5

- * Bishop of Speyer: [Grant of Lands & Privileges to the Jews](#), 1084
- * Henry I, King of England: [Grant of Tax Liberties to London](#), 1133
- * Emperor Conrad III: [Grant of Mining Rights to Abbey of Corvey](#), 1150
- * Jaume I of Aragon and Catalonia and the Regulation of Sea Trade: [The Barcelona Navigation Act](#), 1227; [Grant of Trade Privileges to Barcelona](#), 1232; [Improvement of Harbor Facilities in Barcelona](#), 1243; [The Barcelona Maritime Code](#), 1258

Preparing first assignment: the Middle Ages in the Cinema

* Vivian Sobchack, "The Insistent fringe: moving images and the palimpsest of historical consciousness," *Screening the Past*, 16 April 1999

6. The Papal Revolution

The Gregorian Reform

- * Henry IV and Gregory VII: Letters and Depositions

The Crusades: Western & Eastern Views

- * The First Crusade: Urban II's Speech at Clermont, 1095
Geary, ch. 28. Four Accounts on the First Crusade: *Fulcher of Chartres; Solomon Bar Simson; Ibn Al-Athir; Anna Comnena*

7. Twelfth-Century Renaissance

Literature, Art, and Architecture

Rosenwein, Ch. 6

- * Ramon Llull, *Blanquerna*

The Rise of Universities & and the Birth of Scholasticism

- * Peter Abelard, *Sic et Non* and *The History of My Calamities* (excerpts); and Heloise, First Letter to Abelard

*******Second document study due*******

8. Twelfth-century Monarchy and the Move towards Centralization

The Spanish "reconquista"

Geary, ch. 54. *Las Siete Partidas*

- * Extracts of the Poem of the Cid

England and France

Geary, 50. *Magna Carta*

9. Twelfth-century Monarchy and the Move towards Centralization II

The Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy

Geary, 43, Emperor Charles IV *The Golden Bull*; 29. Canons of the Fourth Lateran Council

Preparing the research essay: research and writing

Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Write about History*

**** **Film essay due** ****

10. Towns & Countryside in the Thirteenth Century

Towns, Cities, and Urban Life

Geary, 55. Giovanni Scriba *Notary Book*; 57. Florence: *Catasto* of 1427;

Peasants & Rural Life

Geary, 52. A Medieval English Village: Plans of *Wharram Percy*; 48. *Domesday Book*

******Essay proposal due******

The Later Middle Ages

11. Jews and Muslims in Medieval Europe

Jews in Northern Europe

* Thomas of Monmouth: [The Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich](#), 1144, excerpts.

* [The Fourth Lateran Council: Canon - on Jews](#).

Muslims and Jews in Medieval Iberia

* *Las Siete Partidas*, Laws on Jews and Muslims

12. Heresy and the Inquisition

Heresies of the High and Later Middle Ages

The Inquisition

Rosenwein, ch. 7

Geary, 35. Jacques Fournier *Inquisition Records*

13. Plague, Population, and Death

New Perspectives on the Black Death

Rosenwein, ch. 8

Peasants' and Workers' Revolts: 'Class War' in post-plague Europe?

Geary, 46. Jean Froissart *Chronicles*

******Final document study due******

14. Religion and Society in the Late Middle Ages

Poverty and Piety

Geary, 30. St. Francis *Rule*; 31. Clare of Assisi *Testament*

Marriage and Relations between the Sexes

* Testimony from 15th-century marriage cases before London church courts

15. The Papacy at the End of the Middle Ages

From Innocent III to Avignon; The Schism and Conciliarism

Geary, 36. Marsilius of Padua *Discourses*

Conclusions

******Final essay due******