

History 300: Early Medieval Historical Writing [rev. 8/16/11]  
Autumn 2011  
M 4:30-7:10  
Innovation 136

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### **Description and goals**

This course serves as an introduction to the methods of historical interpretation through a careful consideration of some of the key narrative histories produced in Western Europe roughly between AD 330 and 850. The course pivots around a detailed examination of the work of Gregory of Tours, with somewhat shorter sections on Eusebius, Augustine, Orosius, Einhard, Nithard, the biographers of Louis the Pious, and the eighth- and ninth-century Frankish annalists. Among the questions we will consider are tradition and innovation in historical writing, methods and genres, the memory of the lost Roman Empire and the imagination of the new political order, the meaning of time, the hand of the divine in historical events, and expectations about the end of historical time. Skills developed in this course include basic research method, analyzing sources, interpreting and contextualizing historical documents, framing productive questions, historical writing and citation, and preparing and delivering an oral presentation.

### **Required books**

Gregory of Tours, History of the Franks, trans. Thorpe (Penguin, 1976), 978-0140442953  
Carolingian Chronicles, trans. Scholz (Michigan UP, 1970), 978-0472061860  
Wickham, Inheritance of Rome (Penguin, 2010), 978-0143117421  
Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations (7<sup>th</sup> ed., Chicago UP, 2007), 978-0226823379

### **Important enrollment information** (all dates as posted at registrar.gmu.edu)

- Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class.
- Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes as available from the Office of the Registrar's Website registrar.gmu.edu.
- Last Day to Add: 9/6
- Last Day to Drop with no tuition penalty: 9/6
- Last Day to Drop with a 33% tuition penalty: 9/19
- Last Day to Drop with a 67% tuition penalty, Final Drop Deadline: 9/30
- After the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons.
- Undergraduate students may choose to exercise a selective withdrawal. See the Schedule of Classes for selective withdrawal procedures.

### **Important information specific to Hist 300**

- Students are required to receive a C or better in Hist 300 in order to register for Hist 499, the required senior seminar.
- Synthesis requirement. This course meets the synthesis requirement of the university's general education program. Full details at: <http://provost.gmu.edu/gened/general-education-requirements/>

### **Assessment and grading**

Participation in discussion: 15%  
Short writing assignments: 15%  
Oral presentation: 20%  
Rough draft of research paper: 20%  
Final draft of research paper: 30%

**Research paper**

Everyone in the class will write a research paper on a topic of your choosing of about 3,500 words in length. The paper is due first as a rough draft and then as a substantially revised final draft. In addition, all students will make short presentations to the class about their research in the closing weeks of the term.

**Blackboard**

All course material not in the required books, major assignments, and study-guides for most of the required reading are available on our blackboard page, [mymason.gmu.edu](http://mymason.gmu.edu).

**Students with disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

**Honor code**

- George Mason University has an Honor Code, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited.
- All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee.
- See [honorcode.gmu.edu](http://honorcode.gmu.edu) for more detailed information.

**Schedule of topics and reading**

NB: all items marked with a star (\*) can be found on our blackboard page: [mymason.gmu.edu](http://mymason.gmu.edu)

**Week 1 (8/29): Time**

read:

\*Herodotus, Histories 1 (selections)

The Book of Daniel; most translations will do.

\*study guide to Herodotus and Daniel

**Week 2 (9/5): Labor day****Week 3 (9/12): A Christian Roman Empire**

read:

\*Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History (selections)

\*Orosius, Seven Books of History Against the Pagans (selections)

\*study guide to Eusebius and Orosius

**Week 4 (9/19): The sack of Rome and the meaning of history**

read:

\*Augustine, City of God (selections)

\*study guide to the City of God

**Week 5 (9/26): no class****Week 6 (10/3): Gregory and Clovis**

read:

Gregory of Tours, Histories 1-3

\*study guide to the Histories

**Week 7 (10/10): Chilperic and Fredegund**

read:

Gregory of Tours, Histories 4-6

**Week 8 (10/17): Gregory and Guntram**

read:

Gregory of Tours, Histories 7-10

**Week 9 (10/24): Gregory of Tours in light of modern scholarship**

read:

\*collected articles on Gregory and his work

\*study guide to scholarship on Gregory

**Week 10 (10/31): Charlemagne in the Royal Frankish Annals**

read:

Royal Frankish Annals (in Scholz) to s.a. 814

***\*\*\*NB: Rough drafts of the research papers due F 11/4 at noon by hardcopy to my mailbox in Robinson B359\*\*\****

**Week 11 (11/7): Einhard's Charlemagne**

read:

\*Einhard, Life of Charlemange

\*Suetonius (selections)

\*study guide to Einhard

**Week 12 (11/14): The emperor's son**

read:

\*Thegan, Deeds of Emperor Louis

\*The Astronomer, Life of the Emperor Louis

**Week 13 (11/21) Writing the civil war**

read:

Nithard, On the Dissensions of the Sons of Louis the Pious (in Scholz)

**Week 14 (11/28) student presentations**

**Week 15 (12/5) student presentations**

***\*\*\*Final drafts of the research papers due F 5/9 at noon by hardcopy to my mailbox in Robinson B359\*\*\****