

Hist 304
Western Europe in the Middle Ages, 300-1400
Spring 2012

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Office hours M 2-3 and by appointment

Description and goals

This course considers the main developments in western European history roughly between the conversion of Constantine and the Hundred Years' War. We will concentrate our efforts on close readings of a series of significant primary sources, and use these readings to expose and develop a sense of significant moments and themes in the history of the period.

By the end of the course students will be familiar with a range of representative events and trends in western medieval history; and more importantly, students will have developed a familiarity with the main literary, documentary, and material sources for that history and will have begun to confront the difficulties of interpretation this source-base presents.

Important enrollment information

- Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class.
- Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes. (Deadlines each semester are published in the Schedule of Classes available from the Registrar's Website registrar.gmu.edu.)
- Last Day to Add: 1/31
- Last Day to Drop: 2/24
- 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.

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 for more detailed information.

Required books

Beowulf, trans. Heaney (Norton, 2001) 978-0393320978

Deeds of Louis the Fat, trans. Moorhead (CUA UP, 1992) 978-0813207582

Song of Roland, trans. Burgess (Penguin, 1990) 978-0140445329

Froissart, Chronicles (Penguin, 1978), 978-0140442007

recommended:

Rosenwein, Short History of the Middle Ages, 3rd ed. (Toronto UP, 2009), 978-1442601048

Blackboard

For better or for worse blackboard plays an important role in this course as a repository for many of our readings. Please ensure that you have access to our blackboard page: mymason.gmu.edu

Email

Please ensure that you have access to your GMU email account. I will occasionally communicate with the class via email, and the course email lists

depend on your GMU mail account. NB: it is not uncommon for student mailboxes to fill up after a few terms on campus; please be sure there is plenty of free space in your inbox so my mail can get through to you.

Grading:

Source assignments: 15%
Participation in discussion 10%
Three essays: 25% each

Important dates:

F 2/17: Essay 1 due at noon
F 3/10: Essay 2 due at noon
F 3/10: Extra credit assignment due no later than 3/10 at noon
F 3/30: Essay 3 due at noon
F 4/20: Essay 4 due at noon
W 5/9: Essay 5 due at noon

Source assignments

During most weeks of the term you will write short responses to one or more parts of the primary sources under discussion for the week. In an effort to save paper, we will handle this aspect of the course via blackboard (mymason.gmu.edu). These assignments are graded only for completion; they're designed as a way for you to start thinking in some detail about the primary sources, but to do so in such a way that encourages and rewards experimentation. The source assignments are designed as testing grounds for ideas you will develop more thoroughly in the graded essays. Full guide in the "assignments" folder on blackboard.

Essays

All students in the class will write three (3) essays, and these essays constitute the core of the graded material for the course. Each of the essays asks you to consider two or more primary sources on a theme relevant to our main lines of inquiry, and further instructions can be found on the individual essay assignments located in the assignments folder of our blackboard page. NB: 1) There are five assigned essays, but you must complete only three. 2) **All students must write the first essay**, and thereafter you may pick and choose which essays you write as your tastes and schedule allow, so long as you finish the course having written three. 3) If you write more than three essays I will only count your top three grades. 4) Please note that all essays have a fairly strict late policy as described in the instructions for each essay.

The Staffordshire Hoard and extra credit

It's our great fortune to have a major early medieval exhibit open locally (for at least the first portion of our course). The Staffordshire Hoard is the most important archaeological discovery for our period in over a generation, and the best bits of it are on display at the National Geographic Museum through March 4. You should all go and see this exhibit as it's both important and wonderful in equal measures, but I'm prepared to offer as well a reward to you for doing so. Located in the assignments folder of our blackboard page is a short written assignment about the exhibition. Any student who completes the assignment as per its instructions will receive an additional 10% to the final calculation of his or her grade. Thus an 80% becomes a 90%, etc. To take advantage of this offer of extra credit, you must see the exhibit before it closes on March 4th, and turn in the assignment by its due date of March 10th. Details of the assignment on blackboard, and of the exhibit at: events.nationalgeographic.com

Schedule of topics and reading

NB: items marked with a star (*) are available on our blackboard page, mymason.gmu.edu

Week 1

textbook (=Rosenwein, Short History):

1. Prelude: The Roman World Transformed (c.300-c.600)

M 1/23 Introduction: Christianity and the state at the end of the third century
no reading

→Source assignment 1, Eusebius, Due W 1/25 at 10am

W 1/25 The conversion of Constantine

read:

*Eusebius, Tricennial Oration

*Backman, "The Roman World at its Height"

Week 2

→Source assignment 2, Ambrose, Due M 1/30 at 10am

M 1/30 Church and state in the later fourth century

read:

*Ambrose, letter on the massacre at Thessaloniki

W 2/1 Images of barbarian kingship

read:

*Sidonius Apollinaris, Letter 1.2 (to Agricola on the court at Toulouse)

*Gregory of Tours, Histories, (on Clovis)

Week 3

→Source assignment 3, Beowulf, due M 2/6 at 10am

M 2/6 Kings beyond the frontier

read:

Beowulf, first half

W 2/8 Beowulf and Sutton Hoo

read:

Beowulf, to the end

Week 4

textbook:

2. The Emergence of Sibling Cultures (c.600-c.750)

M 2/13 Popes, monks, and relic shrines: patterns of early medieval devotion

read:

*Sources on the early medieval religious intuitions

W 2/15 From Justinian to the fall of Alexandria: the ruin of the Roman Empire

read:

*History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria (selections)

→ **Essay 1 due F 2/17 at noon by hardcopy to my mailbox, Robinson B359; NB: all students must write the first essay**

Week 5

textbook:

3. Creating New Identities (c.750-c.900)

M 2/20 A new dynasty ascendant

read:

*Royal Frankish Annals, to s.a. 800

→ Source assignment 4, Royal Frankish Annals, due W 2/22 at 10am

W 2/22 Theory and practice in Carolingian kingship

read:

*Royal Frankish Annals, to s.a. 814

*selections from the Carolingian capitularies

Week 6

textbook:

4. Political Communities Reordered (c.900-c.1050)

M 2/27 After the Carolingians: the west in the tenth century

→ Source assignment 5, Song of Roland, due W 2/29 at 10am

W 2/29 A warrior society in a new key

read:

Song of Roland, through c. 150 (the death of Olivier, line 2023)

Week 7

M 3/5 The Song of Roland and the idea of Crusade

read:

Song of Roland, to the end

W 3/7 Looking back: art and architecture in the early Middle Ages

no reading

→ **extra credit assignment on the Staffordshire Hoard due no later than F 3/10 at noon**

→ **Essay 2 due F 3/10 at noon by hardcopy to my mailbox, Robinson B359**

Week 8

M 3/12, W 3/14: spring break

Week 9

textbook:

5. The Expansion of Europe (c.1050-c.1150)

M 3/19 The idea of a purified church

→ Source assignment 6, Gregory VII and Henry IV due W 3/21 at 10am

W 3/21 Gregory VII and Henry IV

read:

*Letters of Gregory VII and Henry VI

Week 10

→Source assignment 7, Urban II, due M 3/26 at 10am

M 3/26 Urban II's call to crusade

read:

*Urban II's call to crusade (in four different versions: that of the Gesta Francorum, Robert of Rheims, Baldric of Dol, and Guibert of Nogent)

W 3/28 The fall of Jerusalem, 1099

read:

*The fall of Jerusalem in the accounts of Peter Tudebode, Raymond d'Aguiliers, and the Gesta Francorum

→**Essay 3 due F 3/30 at noon by hardcopy to my mailbox, Robinson B359**

Week 11

M 4/2 Images of crusade

read:

*Bernard of Clairvaux, In Praise of the New Knighthood
*Usamah ibn-Munqidh, Book of Instructive Example (selections)

→Source assignment 8, Suger, due W 4/4 at 10am

W 4/4 The return of royal power in west Francia: Louis VI

read:

Suger, The Deeds of Louis the Fat
*Coronation rite of Rheims

Week 12

textbook:

6. Institutionalizing Aspirations (c.1150-c.1250)

M 4/9 Suger, St. Denis, and Gothic

read:

Suger, The Deeds of Louis the Fat
*Suger on St-Denis

W 4/11 New directions in western intellectual culture

read:

*Abelard, *Historia calamitatem*

Week 13

→Source assignment 9, Abelard and Heloise, due M 4/16 at 10am

M 4/16 Abelard and Heloise

read:

*Letters of Abelard and Heloise

W 4/18 Francis, the cities, and the new poverty

read:

*Scripta Leonis (selections)

→**Essay 4 due F 4/20 at noon by hardcopy to my mailbox, Robinson B359**

Week 14

textbook:

7. Discordant Harmonies (c.1250-c.1350)

→ Source assignment 10, *Lancelot*, due M 4/23 at 10am

M 4/23 Romance in a new key

read:

*Chretien de Troyes, Lancelot (selections)

W 4/25 Religious deviance and ecclesiastical authority

read:

*The Chronicle of Laon on Peter Waldo; *Jacques Fournier, Episcopal Register (selections)

Week 15

textbook:

8. Catastrophe and Creativity (c.1350-c.1500)

→ Source assignment 11, Froissart, due M 4/30 at 10am

M 4/30 Froissart at war

read:

Froissart, Chronicles I, pp. 39-112

W 5/2 Wat Tyler, the madness of Charles VI, and the autumn of the middle ages

read:

Froissart, Chronicles II, pp. 201-230; IV, pp. 351-401

→ **Essay 5 due W 5/9 at noon by hardcopy to my mailbox, Robinson B359**