

Hist 304
Spring 2023

Western Europe in the Middle Ages, c. 300-1400

Description and goals

This course considers the main developments in western European history roughly between the conversion of Constantine (312) and the first phases of the Hundred Years' War (to c. 1400). Topics to be addressed include: the failure of the Roman Empire in the fifth century and the rise of its successor states; the lasting impact of the Carolingian empire; Vikings and other forms of political reorganization in the tenth century; investiture controversy and reform; the idea and practice of the First Crusade; expansion of high medieval kingships and economies; high medieval intellectual and political culture; the Black Death and the 'autumn' of the Middle Ages. 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 conversant with the main lines of development and significant events in western medieval history; and, more importantly, students will have developed a familiarity with the main types of literary, documentary, and material sources of that history, and will have begun to confront the difficulties of interpretation this source-base presents.

Required books:

Bennett, *Medieval Europe: A Short History* (Oxford UP), 978-019006461

Froissart, *Chronicles*, trans. Brereton (Penguin), 9780140442007

Song of Roland, trans. Burgess (Penguin), 9780140445329

Abelard and Heloise, *Letters*, trans. Clanchy & Radice (Penguin), 978-0140448993

Beowulf, trans. Heaney, 978-0393320978

Students with disabilities

If you are a student with a disability for which you need academic accommodation, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703.993.2474, ds.gmu.edu. All academic accommodations must be arranged through ODS.

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 <http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/masons-honor-code/> for more detailed information.

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. Reminder: in order to comply with student privacy laws, faculty and students must use their GMU email accounts when corresponding with each other.



Student services

I want to remind you that George Mason University has put in place a number of academic support services and other resources to facilitate student success. You have already paid for these; they are your tuition dollars at work; take full advantage of them. In particular:

The Writing Center: writingcenter.gmu.edu

Counseling and Psychological Services: caps.gmu.edu

University Career Service: careers.gmu.edu

Important dates:

Last day to add: 1/30

Last day to drop with 100% tuition refund: 2/6

Last day to drop with 50% tuition refund: 2/13

Unrestricted drop period (no tuition refund): 2/14-27

Selective withdrawal period: 2/28-4/3

Assignments and grading

Your grade in this class is made of four categories of assignment as follows. See the course calendar on Blackboard (and weekly module pages) for a full rundown of due dates for each component.

1. **Three essays (20%).** These formal writing assignments (5-7 pages) ask you to think comparatively across two or more of the sources we have read together as a class on topics set by me. The rules: 1) There are five assigned essays, but you must complete only three. 2) Choose which essays you write as taste and schedule allow, but **ALL students MUST WRITE THE FIRST ESSAY**. 3) If you write more than three essays, I will only count your top three grades. 4) Please note that all essays have a strict late policy as described in the instructions for each essay.
2. **Hypothesis assignments (20%).** The class is divided into two discussion groups, and each week you and your group will complete one or two (depending on the week) annotation assignments using the Hypothesis (hypothes.is) tool built into Blackboard. These assignments ask you to follow a prompt and collaboratively annotate a pdf copy of the source in question. These are exercises in close reading with your colleagues of medieval texts and serve as the building blocks for successful work in the interpretative essays above as well as jumping off points for class discussion.
3. **Textbook quizzes (10%):** For each textbook assignment there will be a short quiz on blackboard. These quizzes are designed to help you gauge the degree to which you are learning the material and as a reward for reading the textbook. Ten quizzes are assigned, and you must complete at least 9 in order to get full credit.
4. **Participation (10%):** This class runs on the discussion of primary sources. All must do their part. There will be three periodic self-assessments for class participation.

The following conversion of percentage scores to university letter grades will be used:

A = 93-100	A- = 90-92	B+ = 87-89
B = 83-86	B- = 80-82	C+ = 77-79
C = 73-76	C- = 70-72	D = 60-69
F = all grades 59 and lower		

Religious holidays and observances

Please refer to George Mason University's calendar of religious holidays and observations (<http://ulife.gmu.edu/calendar/religious-holiday-calendar/>). It is the student's responsibility to speak to the instructor in advance should their religious observances impact their participation in class activities and assignments.

Student Privacy Policy

George Mason University strives to fully comply with FERPA by protecting the privacy of student records and judiciously evaluating requests for release of information from those records. Please see George Mason University's student privacy policy <https://registrar.gmu.edu/students/privacy/>

Minor in Medieval Studies

GMU has a brand-new minor in Medieval Studies. From the catalog: "The field of Medieval Studies covers the period c. 400-1600, and thus encompasses such cultural touchstones as the survival of the eastern Roman empire in Byzantium, the establishment of the Tang dynasty in China, the spread of Islam in the Middle East, the diffusion of Scandinavian peoples across Europe and western Asia, the growth of the papacy's political power in Europe, the rise of the Mongol influence in Asia and Europe, and the development of the Mali empire in west Africa—just to name a few. The Middle Ages has had a powerful, long-lasting effect on cultures worldwide. A medieval studies curriculum enables students to discover just how much of our modern world can be traced back to the Middle Ages. The Minor Program in Medieval Studies has been designed as an interdisciplinary minor, to reflect the inherently interdisciplinary nature of the field of Medieval Studies and to best prepare students to develop a complex understanding of the period."

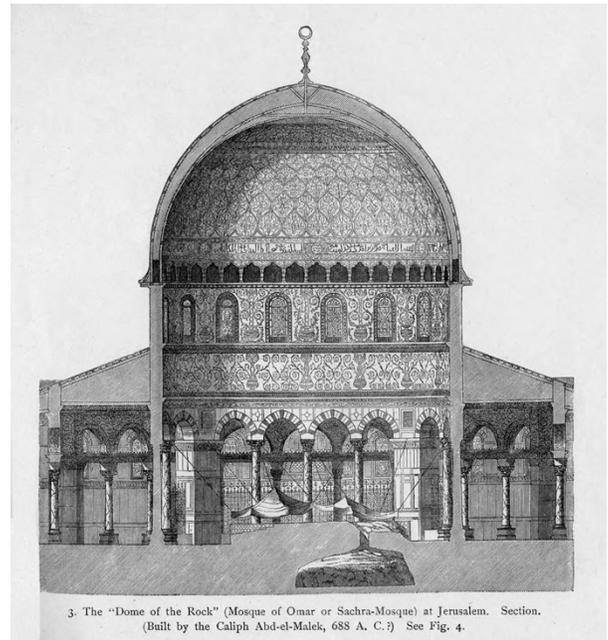
18 credits in medieval coursework (this class absolutely included) across several departments: History, Art History, English, Modern & Classical Languages

For more information:

<https://english.gmu.edu/programs/mest>

The Mason Diversity Statement

This course adheres in all respects to the Mason Diversity Statement: "George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth. An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected. The reflection of Mason's commitment to diversity and inclusion goes beyond policies and procedures to focus on behavior at the individual, group and organizational level. The implementation of this commitment to diversity and inclusion is found in all



3. The "Dome of the Rock" (Mosque of Omar or Sachra-Mosque) at Jerusalem. Section. (Built by the Caliph Abd-el-Malek, 688 A. C.?) See Fig. 4.

settings, including individual work units and groups, student organizations and groups, and classroom settings; it is also found with the delivery of services and activities, including, but not limited to, curriculum, teaching, events, advising, research, service, and community outreach. Acknowledging that the attainment of diversity and inclusion are dynamic and continuous processes, and that the larger societal setting has an evolving socio-cultural understanding of diversity and inclusion, Mason seeks to continuously improve its environment. To this end, the University promotes continuous monitoring and self-assessment regarding diversity. The aim is to incorporate diversity and inclusion within the philosophies and actions of the individual, group and organization, and to make improvements as needed.”

Schedule of topics and readings

Please refer to our blackboard page (mymason.gmu.edu) for full details about each day's assignment, including where to find the readings under consideration, study questions, optional resources, and all graded and non-graded quizzes and writing assignments.

Module One: The late Roman Empire and its successor kingdoms

Week 1