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Studying Medieval History

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This course will introduce students to the study of medieval European history as a dynamic exercise in crafting and evaluating theories and narratives in conversation with the primary sources. We will consider why the Middle Ages have played the role that they do in modern historiography; ways in which the Middle Ages underpin major theoretical movements in the social sciences; and how medieval historians have challenged these theorizations. We will begin with an overview of the periodization of the Middle Ages from Late Antiquity to the Later Middle Ages, visit Special Collections to meet some of the primary sources, and test what we have learned against some of the main arguments about what happened to transform ancient Rome into early modern Europe.

BOOKS TO BUY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO BOOKSTORE

Beowulf, trans. R.M. Liuzza, 2nd ed. (Peterborough: Broadview, 2012) ISBN 9781554810642
Marshall and Eric McLuhan, *Laws of Media: The New Science* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) ISBN 9780802077158
Christopher De Hamel, *Meetings with Remarkable Manuscripts* (London: Penguin, 2016) ISBN 9781594206115
Raymond Clemens and Timothy Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007) ISBN 9780801487088

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the study of medieval history as both an exercise in framing questions and a critical engagement with the primary sources. By the end of the quarter, you should be able to articulate your own questions about the study of the medieval past and suggest ways of addressing them through the surviving evidence. You should appreciate

how previous questions have framed our ongoing study and how new tools and methods of study have changed what we are able to ask. To accomplish these goals, it is vital that you allow yourself to be challenged by **the reading and exercises**. They are intended to help you rethink how you think about history both as a subject and as a practice. Your grade for the quarter will depend on how well you integrate these exercises in your **final paper** (10-12 pages, 12-point font, double-spaced, not including bibliography). Over the course of our class meetings, you will be reporting regularly to your fellow students on readings you are doing, as well as practicing evaluating the materials and sources. Your final paper should clearly demonstrate how your interest in the topic has been shaped by your new understanding of the field.

Grading (roughly): class participation, including reading and exercises (45%); final paper (55%).

READING AND DISCUSSION ASSIGNMENTS

October 2 Imagining the Middle Ages

Walter Scott, "Dedicatory Epistle to the Rev. Dr. Dryasdust, F.A.S.," in *Ivanhoe: A Romance*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Co., 1820), vol. 1, pp. iii-xxxiii [Canvas: Files]

Victor Hugo, *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, trans. Frederic Schoberl, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Blanchard, 1834), Book III: chapters 1-2 [Notre-Dame, Bird's-Eye View of Paris], vol. 1, pp. 93-122 [Canvas: Files]

Mark Twain [Samuel L. Clemens], *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1889), Preface and "A Word of Explanation," pp. ix-x, 1-8 [Canvas: Files]

T. H. White, *The Once and Future King*, bk. 4 ("The Candle in the Wind"), chap. 3 (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1958), pp. 521-30 [Canvas: Files]

Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 12 vols. (Basil: J. J. Tourneisen, 1789), chap. LXXI, vol. 12, pp. 178-206 [Canvas: Files]

Charles Homer Haskins, "European History and American Scholarship," paper read before the American Historical Association's annual meeting at New Haven, December 27, 1922; published in the *American Historical Review* 28.2 (January 1923): 215-27 [Canvas: Files]

October 9 Monsters and Heroes

Beowulf, trans. R.M. Liuzza, with supporting documents, including previous translations

J.R.R. Tolkien, "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), pp. 162-97 [Library e-reserves]

Tom Shippey, *Beowulf and the North Before the Vikings* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2022) [Library e-reserves]

October 16 Symbols and Artifacts

Johan Huizinga, *Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996): pp. ix-xxii, 1-29, 234-48 (Translator's

Introduction, Preface to the Dutch Edition, Preface to the German Translation, Chapter One: The Passionate Intensity of Life, and Chapter Nine: The Decline of Symbolism)
[eBook on EBSCOhost]

Marshall and Eric McLuhan, *Laws of Media: The New Science*, especially chapters 2, 3, and 5, pp. 67-128, 215-39

John Van Engen, ed., *The Past and Future of Medieval Studies* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994): read one chapter of your choice [Library reserves]

October 23 The Middle Ages in Print

David Knowles, *Great Historical Enterprises: Problems in Monastic History* (London: Nelson, 1963), chaps. 1-4 (The Bollandists, The Maurists, The Monumenta Germaniae Historica, The Rolls Series) [Library reserves; Archive.org]

- also available in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 8 (1958): 147-66 (Bollandists); 9 (1959): 169-87 (Maurists); 10 (1960): 129-50 (MGH); 11 (1961): 137-59 (Rolls Series) [JSTOR]

R. Howard Bloch, *God's Plagiarist: Being an Account of the Fabulous Industry and Irregular Commerce of the Abbé Migne* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) [Library reserves]

Go to the library, and study at least one of these collections both *in print* and *online*:

1. *Acta Sanctorum* (AAS)

- print: fBX4655.A2 1965 [Regenstein, 4th floor Religion and Near East Reference Collection]
- database: <https://www.proquest.com/actasanctorum?accountid=14657?rd=Y>

2. *Histoire littéraire de la France* (HLF)

- print: PQ101.H67 [Mansueto]
- online: HathiTrust <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000046036>

3. Monumenta Germaniae Historica (MGH)

- print: DD3.M8 S5 (Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum, Nova Series); DD3.M8 S7 (Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum); DD3.M8 L44 (Constitutiones); DD3.M8 P6 (Poetae), et al.
- database: <http://clt.brepolis.net/eMGH/pages/QuickSearch.aspx>

4. Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores (Rolls Series)

- print: DA25.B8
- online: HathiTrust <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000541181>

5. Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina (PL)

- print: BR60.M6 [Regenstein, 4th floor Religion and Near East Reference Collection]
- database: <https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/PLD/>

October 30 Theorizing the Middle Ages

Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, trans. L.A. Manyon, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 1:v-viii (Table of Contents), plus one chapter of your choice [Library e-reserves: HeinOnline]

R.W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), pp. 11-14 (Introduction), plus one chapter of your choice [Library e-reserves: ACLS Humanities e-book]

Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 203-47 (chapter 6: Medieval History and the Social Sciences, ca. 1800-ca. 1970) [Library e-reserves]

Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), pp. 15-36 (Introduction: Change in the Middle Ages) [Library e-reserves]

November 6 The Middle Ages in Manuscript—meet in Special Collections

Raymond Clemens and Timothy Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), Preface, chapters 1-2, 5-6, plus one chapter of your choice from Part Three

Christopher de Hamel, *Meetings with Remarkable Manuscripts* (London: Allen Lane, 2016), pp. 1-9 (Introduction), plus one chapter of your choice

November 13 The Digital Middle Ages—online

Explore one of these sites and report back:

- Internet Medieval Sourcebook: <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/sbook.asp>
- Mapping Past Societies: <https://darmc.harvard.edu>
- DigiVatLib: <https://digi.vatlib.it>
- Franciscan Authors: <https://franciscanauthors.rich.ru.nl/index.html>
- CANTUS: <https://cantusdatabase.org>
- Digital Middle Ages: <https://guides.lib.uchicago.edu/c.php?g=813534&p=5805319>

Further resources: Medieval & Byzantine Studies: <https://guides.lib.uchicago.edu/medieval>

November 20 Re-imagining the Middle Ages

Friedrich Ohly, “The Cathedral as Temporal Space: On the Duomo of Siena,” in *Sensus Spiritualis: Studies in Medieval Significs and the Philology of Culture*, trans. Kenneth J. Northcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 136-233 [Library e-reserves]

Spike Bucklow, *The Riddle of the Image: The Secret Science of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 2014), pp. 141-99 (chapter 5: The Westminster Retable: Heaven on Earth, Part I) [Library e-reserves]

November 27 THANKSGIVING—NO CLASS

December 4 Research Reports

- Bibliography—at least 10 items
- Description of source(s)
- Questions for further research

FINAL PAPER due December 12