

Topics in History: Medieval Civilization

3 Credits

Counts towards a History minor, an upper division course in a History BA major and as a 'S' course (social sciences).

Type: Lecture-Discussion

Location: UAF

Meeting times: Monday-Saturday, January 2-12

12:45-5:45 pm (including the break)

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Course description:

This course offers an unforgettable journey into the past where we will try, together, to get in touch with medieval civilization and its main achievements. Rather than stuffing students with enormous amount of data, my intention is to invite them to reflect on the medieval period as still highly relevant to many aspects of modern life, including their own. Why medieval themes and attributes remain so attractive and popular? Why medieval themes inspired more books (J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, J. K. Rowling, to name just a few), films (Lord of the Ring trilogy, Excalibur, Hurry Potter etc.), and followers (Society of Creative Anachronism, Medieval Academy of America etc.) than any other historical period? Why, on the other hand, everything backward and dark is often referred to as 'medieval'? The course is structured thematically with each day centered on 2 interrelated topics such as medieval university and scholasticism, theology and the role of the Church and so forth. By integrating

the most current historical research, the course integrates a wide variety of disciplines while offering visual/audio support to selected readings from the time period.

Course readings/materials:

Miri Rubin, *The Middle Ages; A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press & Class-pack containing additional dossiers with reading selections. Selections come from publications by the most celebrated medievalists such as Jacques Le Goff, Patrick Geary, Miri Rubin, Aron Gurevich and others. Each dossier is accompanied by guiding questions. Guiding questions have two objectives: helping students with the reading at home and channeling the discussion in class. Each class period will begin with the discussion of the homework reading and the guiding questions.

Homework consists in reading assigned pages following the guiding questions provided for each dossier, and making personal notes that students are expected to share with the class during the discussion. The first dossier is assigned for the first day of classes, January 4th and must be prepared in advance.

Quizzes, very brief and clearly defined, are based on homework and the guiding questions.

Presentations: Presentations will be discussed on the first day of classes. Students can choose a presentation according to their interests, and later present it to the class. The length of the presentation is no longer than 10 minutes. Visual support is encouraged.

Assessment of Required Elements: The course is interdisciplinary, and based on the analysis of primary and secondary historical sources.

Additional/suggested sources:

Miri Rubin, *The Middle Ages: A Very Short Introduction*, 144 pages (the book will be available at the UAF bookstore).

<http://www.medievaleuropeonline.com/general.html>

<http://www.netserf.org/History/>

<http://www.timeref.org/>

medieval music: <http://www.netserf.org/Music/>

medieval universities: <http://www.bede.org.uk/university.htm>

medieval architecture:

<http://www.pitt.edu/~medart/menufrance/mainfran.html>

Course Goals and Student Learning Outcomes:

- ❖ To provide students with the opportunity to link disciplines within the liberal arts in the context of medieval and early modern periods.
- ❖ Assessment: Studies of medieval and early modern culture, probably the most naturally cross-disciplinary among humanities, offers the best opportunity to see the interconnected nature of liberal arts.
- ❖ Introduce students into disciplines otherwise absent or underrepresented in the UAF curriculum: religious studies, theology, historical anthropology and medieval studies.
- ❖ Assessment: The instructor will use her background in medieval studies, Catholic and Protestant theology, Church history, medieval philosophy and comparative literature, as well as relevant historical sources.
- ❖ Address causes of both popularity and prejudices attached to medieval period.
- ❖ Assessment: Explain the gap between scholarly research and outdated perceptions recurring in college textbooks, and familiarize students with contemporary trends in recent scholarly research on medieval & early modern periods.
- ❖ Help students think independently making their own judgment based on primary sources and critical literature.
- ❖ Assessment: By introducing various, sometimes contradictory, perspectives on the subject and encouraging free discussion both in the classroom and in written essays.

• Policies:

- Because it is a compressed course this class has a zero absence policy. Only in case of documented illness may a student be excused.
- Students are expected to read all texts on time.
- No make-up for classes or quizzes due to the course's compressed nature.
- Students are expected to read all texts on time. Short quizzes in the beginning of each class will serve to check whether the texts have been read. No make-up for quizzes is possible.

- **No chewing gum, food, or beverages! No pagers, cell phones are allowed.**

A special break will be provided between two parts of the class daily.

Evaluation:

Grade will be calculated as following:

Homework (personal notes)	20%
Participation in discussions	15%
Quizzes:	15%
Presentations	15%
Final exam	15%
Final paper:	20%

Final paper is due: January 16th

Grading Scale:

97-100%	A+
93-96%	A
90-92%	A-
87-89%	B+
83-86%	B
80-82%	B-
77-79%	C+
73-76%	C
70-72%	C-
67-69%	D+
63-66%	D
60-62%	D-
less than 60	F

I will work with the Office of Disabilities Services (203 WHIT, 474-7043) to provide reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities.

About the instructor: I have published extensively on the late medieval period, including two books (2004 & 2010), and over thirty articles. I am currently pursuing my second doctorate in history (habilitation) at the University of Paris, Sorbonne, France.

Course Calendar (subject to change!!!)

Day 1: The first reading is in the textbook by Miri Rubin, "The Middle Ages; A Very Short Introduction": Pages 9-22.

Guiding questions for the first quiz:

1. *Which tradition/ cultural heritage was explored by medieval civilization?*
2. *Which two large entities constituted Roman empire since the 3rd century?*
3. *Which judicial system was practiced in medieval society?*
4. *Which new force in world history emerged in the 7th century?*
5. *What was the sole source of imperial majesty in the early middle ages?*
6. *What was the contribution of Charlemagne?*

Part 1: Middle Ages in Images and Concepts.

1. Syllabus and distribution of presentations.
2. Brainstorming/free discussion: what do you already know? What are your ideas/conceptions concerning the Middle Ages? What do you associate with Middle Ages? Let's make an approximate list as our point of departure on rediscovering the medieval mentality and civilization.
3. Quiz on homework.
4. Discussion of the guiding questions in the class-pack.
5. Lecture "Main Chronology of the Middle Ages."

BREAK

Part 2: Two Sources of Medieval Civilization. Or, maybe, three?

6. Brainstorming: what do you already know?
7. Lecture "Sources of Western Civilization."
8. Medieval Cosmology and Worldview. Summery together.

Homework: Miri Rubin, "The Middle Ages; A Very Short Introduction": pp. 59-61; 64-68; 71-80.

Guiding questions for the second quiz:

1. *Which Rule became the foundation for religious houses all over Europe?*
2. *What is the basic principle of monastic life?*

3. *Which new religious order developed in the 11th century?*
4. *What is Church liberty and which conflicts this concept provoked?*
5. *Name some of the functions of the medieval parish churches.*

Day 2

Part 1: Man and His God.

1. Discussion of the homework and personal notes.
2. Impressions of the assigned text.
3. Quiz on homework.
4. Brainstorming. Introduction to theology. What do you already know? What are your ideas/conceptions concerning theology? What is sacred in our society? Is there anything sacred to you? Is our sacred collective or individual or both?
5. Lecture "Introduction to Medieval Theology."

BREAK

Part Two: Medieval Church and religious orders.

6. Read and discuss together of short samples of theological texts. Your first reactions, questions, clarifications. Discussion.
7. Lecture "Misconceptions about Medieval Church."

Homework: Miri Rubin, "The Middle Ages; A Very Short Introduction": pp. 44-47; 88-98 +dossier # 3 (dossier will be discussed in class)

Guiding questions for the third quiz:

1. *What relations framed the lives of most Europeans?*
2. *Why every parcel of land was owned by several people?*
3. *The blending of which two traditions resulted in the emergence of sacred kingship?*
4. *Which dignities and responsibilities are associated with Christian rule?*
5. *Which specialized literature reminded rulers of their obligations?*
6. *The traditions of which law formed the basis of legal studies everywhere in Europe?*
7. *Which institution played the major role in transforming warriors into knights? Give examples of this institution's influence. (the dossier)*
8. *Which three orders emerged in the 10th century?*

Day 3

Part One: Economics and Society

1. Quiz on the homework.
2. Presentation of favorite passages from the homework reading.
Discussion of personal notes and guiding questions.
3. Brainstorming: what do you already know or imagine about medieval social structure?
4. Lecture “Medieval Social Body.”

BREAK

Part 2: Kings, warriors and kingdoms.

1. Reading from original sources. Discussion.
2. Knights of the Round Table: a potent legend with a secret message.
Discussion.
3. Lecture “Peasantry: the silent majority.”

Homework: Chapter 7 in Miri Rubin, pp. 116-123 & dossier # 4

Guiding Questions for the forth quiz:

1. *What is the main difference between Italian universities' origin and that of French universities?*
2. *How did colleges began?*
3. *Which subjects were studied in medieval universities?*
4. *Why book came to represent Christianity?*
5. *Name some of medieval thinkers (dossier #4)*
6. *Can you formulate the main dilemma of medieval theology?*

Day 4

Part 1: Medieval Learning

1. Quiz on the homework.
2. Presentation of favorite passages from the homework reading.
Discussion of personal notes and guiding questions.
3. Lecture “Carolingian Legacy.”
4. Book culture in the Middle Ages. Intellectual exchanges and monastic schools.

BREAK

Part 2: The University.

5. What is a university? How do you understand this concept? Discussion.
6. Lecture: "Medieval university: library, lecture, chair, cap and gown, degrees, ceremonies, departments, colleges and diplomas etc."

Homework: Miri Rubin, "The Middle Ages; A Very Short Introduction" In Miri Rubin: pp. 49-51; 54-58 + dossier #5.

Guiding questions for the fifth quiz:

1. *When did the economic activity intensified?*
2. *What other tradition developed alongside the social hierarchy?*
3. *Which corporate bodies for central to urban life?*
4. *What is Hansa?*
5. *What was the decisive frontier between that separated cities and the countryside (dossier #5)?*

Day 5

Part 1: Medieval City.

1. Quiz on the homework.
2. Presentation of favorite passages from the homework. Discussion.
3. Size, population, organization of medieval cities. The phenomenon of the Hansa League and free cities.
4. Paris: the city of all cities: video presentation.

BREAK

Part 2: Medieval professionals.

5. Lecture: Guilds, masterpieces and artisans.
6. Film fragment.

Homework: Dossier #6.

Guiding questions for the sixth quiz:

1. *Why figurative art became so important in the Middle Ages?*

2. *Which attitude marked artists' status for centuries?*
3. *Which art was particularly esteemed in the Middle Ages?*
4. *Which profession, although relatively common, enjoyed particular esteem?*
5. *What makes the art of the past practically incomprehensible for us, according to Malraux? (dossier 6)*
6. *What special form of intercourse is expressed by art, according to Malraux? (d. 6)*
7. *What our age understands best in the Romanesque and Gothic epochs? Why? Why is it a problem, according to Malraux? (dossier 6)*
8. *What is the quintessence of medieval Christianity, according to Malraux? (dossier 6)*
9. *Why Malraux calls the cathedral a mirror of the world? (dossier 6)*

Day 6

Part 1: Medieval Art

1. Quiz on the homework.
2. Presentation of favorite passages from the homework. Discussion.
3. Can you formulate, without recurring to the received ideas, what is the main feature of medieval art forms? What is the place of art in our society? Is it more or less prominent than in medieval society or less? Discussion.
4. Introduction to Medieval Music.

BREAK

Part 2: Expressions of the Sacred.

5. Discussion: Romanesque art. What are the main characteristics of the Romanesque art? What does it tell us about medieval man, man in general and ourselves? What do you find attractive and/or incomprehensible in this art?
6. Lecture: Gothic art.

Homework: Miri Rubin, "The Middle Ages; A Very Short Introduction," Chapter 2 in pp. 29-43+ packet 7

Guiding questions for the seventh quiz:

1. *What three legal statuses existed in the middle ages?*
2. *Which three understandings of marriage clashed in the middle ages?*
3. *What is the Christian idea of marriage?*
4. *Which institution was the main promoter of marriage?*

5. *Which factors could make a marriage void?*
6. *Who was an ideal heir to family's name and land?*

Day 7

Part 1 Women and Family in the Middle Ages.

1. Quiz on the homework.
2. Presentation of favorite passages from the homework. Discussion.
3. What do you think you know about women's life in the middle ages? Discussion.
4. Lecture: women and the ambiguity of their status in the middle ages.
5. Famous and powerful medieval women: presentation of original texts and discussion.

BREAK

Part 2: Witches and Witch-hunt.

1. Brainstorming/free discussion: what is a witch? How do you imagine a witch: age, occupation, and social status?
2. Lecture-presentation: the latest findings about the realities of witch-hunts.
3. Film fragment.

Homework: Miri Rubin, "The Middle Ages; A Very Short Introduction," Ch. 6, pp. 110-115 & video

Guiding questions for the eighth quiz:

1. *Which encounters produced the strong sense of "otherness" in Europe?*
2. *Which group represented the main internal 'other' in Europe? Why?*
3. *How the idea of marginality was connected to the concept of soil? (the packet)*
4. *Name several categories of outcastes (the packet)*
5. *Which professions fell into the category of marginal?*
6. *Why medieval attitude toward disease is ambiguous?*

Day 8

Part 1: Minorities in the Middle Ages.

1. Quiz on the homework.

2. Presentation of favorite passages from the homework. Discussion.
3. The age of intolerance? Going beyond the simple blame: causes and consequences. Discussion.
4. Lecture "Medieval community, calendar, holidays and theater."

BREAK

Part 2: Attitudes toward nature, disease and animals. Discussion.

5. Black Plague: Video presentation.
6. Sample of medieval poetry.

Homework: Miri Rubin, "The Middle Ages; A Very Short Introduction," pp. 123-125 & packet #9

Guiding questions for the ninth quiz:

1. *Which traditions intermingled in medieval poetry?*
2. *What is the legacy of troubadours?*
3. Who were Cathars? (dossier 9)
4. Why Christianity predisposes to love mysticism? (dossier 9)
5. *What is St. Francis' relationship to God and to others?* (dossier 9)
6. *How is the concept of personal responsibility related to the Christian doctrine?* (dossier 9)
7. *What made knight a knight according to Malraux?* (dossier 9) *How the tradition of courtly love expresses itself today?* (discussion)

Day 9

Part 1: Medieval Ideal

1. Quiz on the homework.
2. Presentation of favorite passages from the homework. Discussion.
3. Medieval cultural ideal: discussion of original texts.
4. Courtly Love and the Code of Honor: are they still relevant?

Part 2: Medieval Legacy.

5. Discussion: What remains of the Christian medieval world-view now? Which spheres of culture or everyday life still bear traces of medieval

mentality? How this class changes your ideas about the middle ages?
Concluding discussion.

6. Final paper discussion.
7. Final Exam.