

The World of Gregory of Tours

History 542

Course Information:

History 542-01 (CRN 80844), Fall 2004
Time: TR 2:00-3:15
Place: McIver 222

Instructor Information:

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Office hours: Tuesday 3:30-4:30, Thursday 3:30-5:00

Course Description:

This course explores the social and political history of the Franks between 482 and 750 CE. This was an exciting period of cultural change, cultural fusion, and ethnic formation as the Franks integrated their beliefs and customs with existing Gallo-Roman ones. We will use Gregory of Tours' monumental *History of the Franks* (written in the 580s) as a foundation text for our examination of this period, but will supplement it with other primary sources, including laws, letters, and saints' lives, and with important scholarly interpretations of the Frankish period. Among the topics to be examined in this course are violence and feud, burial practice, material culture, gender relations, Frankish Christianity, and theories and practice of kingship.

Student Learning Outcomes

A student successfully completing this course should be able to:

- synthesize a variety of scholarship concerning the Merovingian period
- criticize constructively a variety of types of medieval text
- communicate ideas concerning primary and secondary sources both in writing and in oral discussion
- understand the utility of a variety of approaches to the past, including class, gender, material culture, and power
- perform some basic research in Jackson Library in locating scholarly articles relevant to our topic

Graduate Student Learning Outcomes

A graduate student completing this course should be able to:

- master all of the skills listed above
- demonstrate a deeper knowledge of historiography and of its utility to the practice of history

-demonstrate deeper understanding of the methodological approaches discussed in class, both in writing and in discussion

-demonstrate more advanced research skills in utilizing Jackson Library

REQUIRED READINGS:

1. J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings and Other Studies in Frankish History* (Univ. Toronto Press, 1982). ISBN: 0802065007 (\$15.95)
2. Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Penguin, 1983). ISBN: 0140442952 (\$15.95, \$11.95 on sale)
3. Patrick Geary, *Before France and Germany: the Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World* (Oxford, 1988). ISBN: 0195044584 (\$23.95)
4. Guy Halsall, *Settlement and Social Organization: the Merovingian Region of Metz* (Cambridge, 2002). ISBN: 0521521890 (Paper: \$32.00)
5. Suzanne Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500-900* (reprint, Univ Penn Press, 1985). ISBN: 0812212096 (\$24.95)

Recommended Purchase:

6. Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751* (Longman, 1995). ISBN: 0582493722 (\$52.00 paper!!)

Note: many other readings will be available in the Reserve Room of Jackson Library

Course Requirements:

Discussion:	25%
Essay on Halsall:	15%
Essay on Sources:	15%
Third Essay:	15%
Historiographic Essay	30%

1. Discussion (25%)

The basic point of this class is the reading and discussion of an admittedly large quantity of material. Discussion is therefore an absolutely essential requirement for successful completion of the class. Discussion means more than mere attendance; it requires that students actively engage with the readings, come to class armed with questions and comments about those readings, and be willing to spar in a friendly manner both with fellow students and with me. Let it be known that I am not grading the answer or question you pose in class; I recognize that some of this material will be foreign and occasionally difficult. You should not be hesitant to speak merely because you are afraid to be wrong. Thus I am looking for a combination of frequent and thoughtful participation, not merely for a recitation of 'correct' facts. Students who attend every class and never open their mouths are considered to be earning a C- for the discussion grade; participation from this point on can only raise your grade.

2. Three Short Essays (15% each, for 45% total)

Over the course of the semester, students will write three short essays. These essays will be 4 full pages in length (you may go over, but not substantially so, please; papers less than four full pages will be penalized). Two of the topics are assigned; the other may be chosen from a number possible topics linked to the various sections of the course.

- A. Fixed Essays: All students are required to write the essays connected to Sections 3 (source criticism) and 5 (Halsall's *Settlement and Social Organization*). The former will be due on September 21, while the latter will be due on October 19.
- B. Third Essay: each student may choose to write the third essay on either Section 6 (Queens), Section 7 (Christian Lives), or Section 8 (Archaeology and material culture). I will distribute a pair of questions for each section far in advance (probably in week 1 or 2), and thus each of you may decide which section (and topic) you will write about. This, I hope, gives you leeway to write on a topic that interests you

and allows you to juggle your schedules a bit. Note, however, that merely because you choose not to write an essay for a section does not mean that you can skip the assigned material for that section; remember, discussion counts! The third essay will be due at the completion of that section of the course (i.e., either on October 28, November 16 or December 2)

3. Historiographic Essay (30%)

Historiography, as you will soon come to know (if you don't already), is the 'history of history,' or, to be more helpful, the analysis of what scholars have to say on a subject. In lieu of a final exam or research paper, students will write a 6-8 page essay on one of the broad topics covered in the course; those topics could be the Section topics, or, perhaps, a more specific aspect of one of them (i.e., the role of bishops, or nuns, or many other possibilities). I will also entertain other suggestions for papers if you can make a plausible case for one. To write your essay you must: 1) be familiar with the assigned course readings for that topic; and 2) locate, read, and assimilate at least two other scholarly, article-length studies of that topic. In your essay you will integrate the assigned readings with the extra material to produce a well-argued analysis of some aspect of that topic. Note well, however, that this does not mean a summary of authors' points nor does it mean a treatment of a specific event/person; it is the response to an analytical question concerning the ways in which historians have treated that subject. A more detailed handout on this assignment will be forthcoming later in the semester. This essay will be due in Finals Week.

Graduate Student Requirements

Graduate students will complete the regular assignments for the course, with the following additions and nuances:

Discussion: while I expect valuable discussion, I also expect graduate students to not dominate discussion; please try to encourage undergraduate participation.

Short Essays (3): Graduate students will write a minimum of 6 pages for each of the three essays. They will also be required to locate and incorporate one additional scholarly article into each of these essays.

Historiographical Essay: Graduate students will write 8-10 pages, and will be required to locate and incorporate three additional sources into their final essay.

HELPFUL HINTS:

1. Frankish Names

Frankish naming patterns are quite different from our own. For one, they used no last names. Second, their names were formed through the combination of short phonemes or radicals (hence Hrothgar is formed from the radicals "Hrot" and "gar", and "Chlodomer" is formed from "chlod" and "mer"). This means, unfortunately, that Frankish names tend to look and sound very much alike. DONT WORRY! Most of the names you will encounter are not particularly significant. Look for the main characters (kings, queens, saints, and the objects of particular stories). There are also some ways to help you keep track of these things. For one, the index to Thorpe's translation of Gregory of Tours is quite useful - this will allow you to check if the Sigibert you've read about is really the King Sigibert or just some other fellow. I'd also recommend making a glossary or name-index for the course; as you encounter (important) names, jot the name down, along with a few tidbits of information: title (esp. king), function, and perhaps some kinship relations. Third, make good use of the genealogies, maps, and other tables appended to our various readings (Wemple has a nice genealogy, as does Wood; Wood also has a 'prosopographical table', which is a fancy name for a name-index - you might do well to copy it and use it for reference when reading; Murray [on reserve in the Library] also has excellent maps and genealogies between pp. 657-677). Note that I will never expect you to memorize the incredibly convoluted genealogies of the Frankish world (since I am always tripped up as well!). Still, you ought to be able to distinguish Childeric from Chilperic (eventually).

2. Maps

See above comments, as well as relevant maps in Wood, Halsall, and Murray.

3. Readings Tips:

This is a reading-intensive course. My goal is for us to gain a detailed knowledge of one of the first complex medieval civilizations. As a result we will have to read a variety of works by authors medieval and modern. I have tried pretty hard to limit each week's reading to 100 pages or so. On a few weeks, however, there is more than this. Again, you should try not to feel overwhelmed by the reading. Read strategically. When reading a secondary source, the primary object of the reading has to be the argument of the author: what point is the author trying to make? How does he/she make it? What couple of examples does he/she use to make his point? In most cases it is not necessary to try to remember everything the author says: focus on the argument, his/her evidence for that argument, and whatever points you find worthy of discussion. With primary sources, I have generally chosen the selection to fit in with some thematic point (save for a few occasions when we are reading chunks of Gregory); thus your goal in reading the selection is to decide what theme that example illustrates. For example, you read a story

about Fredegund and Chilperic (a queen and her husband); you might ask what this tells us about kingship, or about queenship, or about women's roles, or about power, or lots of other things.

SEQUENCE OF CLASSES

Section I: The Rise of the Franks

August 17: Course Introduction and Mechanics

August 19: From Roman to Frankish Gaul

Readings: Geary, 3-75

August 24: The Early Franks

Readings:

Wood, 33-41

Geary, 77-82

Wallace-Hadrill, 148-163

Gregory of Tours, 120-139

August 26: A Barbarian(?) King: Clovis

Readings:

Wood, 41-54

Geary, 82-88

Wallace-Hadrill, 163-185

Gregory of Tours, 139-158

Reserve Room: Alexander Murray, ed., *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul:*

A Reader (Broadview, 2000), 259-271

Reserve Room: Murray, 615-619, and 621-24

Section 2: Political Narrative

August 31: Politics of the Frankish Kingdoms

Readings:

Geary, 117-123, 151-165

Wood, 54-70, 88-101, 140-158

September 2: Excursus: Gregory of Tours, Book 3

Readings: Gregory of Tours, 159-193

Section 3: Source Criticism

September 7: Chronicle Sources: Gregory of Tours

Readings:

Wood, 28-32

Wallace-Hadrill, 49-70

Gregory of Tours, pp. 7-16, 23-36, 38-49, 63, 67-69, 601-604, 316-322

September 9: Chronicle Sources: Fredegar

Readings:

Wallace-Hadrill, 71-94

Reserve Room, Murray, 447-473

September 14: Legal Sources: Salic Law

Readings:

Wood, 102-119

Reserve Room: Murray, 533-556

Reserve Room: Mayke de Jong, "An Unresolved Riddle: Early Medieval Incest Legislation," in Ian Wood, ed., *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period* (Boydell, 1998), 107-125.

September 16: Legal Sources: Other Laws and Legal Documents

Readings:

Reserve Room: Murray, 557-587

Reserve Room: Edward James, "Beati Pacifici: Bishops and the Law in Sixth-Century Gaul," in John Bossy, ed., *Disputes and Settlements: Law and Human Relations in the West* (Cambridge, 1983): 25-46.

Section 4: Power and Violence

September 21: Frankish Kingship

Readings:

Wallace-Hadrill, 185-206

Gregory of Tours, Book 4, chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16-18,
20-23, 29-30, 49-51

Book 5, chapters 1-4, 13-14, 17-18, 23, 28, 47

September 23: Frankish Kingship

Readings:

Gregory of Tours, Book 6, chapters 1-4, 17-20, 23-24, 26-27, 31-32, 34-35,
41-42, 46

Book 7, chapters 5-8, 10, 13-14, 18, 24-28, 30-39

September 28: Administration

Readings:

Reserve Room: Ian Wood, "Administration, Law and Culture in Merovingian Gaul," in Rosamond McKitterick, ed., *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1990): 63-81.

Reserve Room: Paul Fouracre, "The Nature of Frankish Political Institutions in the Seventh Century," in Ian Wood, ed., *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period* (Boydell, 1998), 285-301.

September 30: Feuding

Readings:

Wallace-Hadrill, 121-147

Feuds from Gregory of Tours:

1. Chlodomer's Feud: Book 3, chap. 6

2. Theuderic's feud with the Thuringians: Book 3, chaps. 7-8

3. Frankish feuds with the Visigoths: Book 3, chaps. 10, 31,

4. A Feud in Gregory's family: Book 5, chapter 5

5. Feuds of Sichar, Book 7, Chapter 47, and Book 9, Chapter 19

6. Fredegund Feuds: Book 10, Chapter 27

7. Guntram's feuds: Book 8, chap. 28; Book 9, chaps. 16, 20; book
10, chap. 4

8. Asteriolus and Secondinus, Book 3, chap. 33

9. Another Feud, Book 5, chap. 32

10. Honor Killing: Book 6, chap. 36 (first paragraph)
A Feud From Fredegar:
11. Flaochad and Willibad, in Reserve Room, Murray, 488-490.

Section 5: Settlement and Social Organization

October 5: Halsall, 1-74
October 7: Halsall, 75-163

October 12: No class (Fall Break)
October 14: Halsall, 167-282

Section 6: Queens and Power

October 19: Secular Women,

Readings:

Wemple, 1-50

Wood, 120-139

October 21: Secular Women, pt 2

Readings:

Wemple, 51-123

Reserve Room: Janet Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels: Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian History," in Nelson, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London, 1986)

October 26: Discussion: Fredegund and Brunhild

Readings:

Online Readings: Frankish Women (<http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton>)

Reserve Room: Murray, 465-467 (Fredegar on death of Brunhild)

Section 7: the Christian Life (or Lives?)

October 28: Bishops and Relics

Readings:

Wood, 71-84

Peter Brown, "Relics and Social Status in the Age of Gregory of Tours," in Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Univ. of California Press, 1982), 222-250.

Gregory of Tours: Book 1, Chapter 48; Book 2, Chap. 14; Book 10, Chap. 31 (to page 602); Book 4, chaps 4, 5, 6, 11 and 15.

November 2: Monasteries

Readings:

Wood, 181-202

Wemple, 127-175

November 4: No Class (Instructor at conference)

November 9: Saints' Lives

Readings:

J-Stor: Paul Fouracre, "Merovingian History and Merovingian Hagiography," *Past and Present* 127 (1990): 3-38.

Reserve Room: Murray, 509-526 (Passion of Leudegar)

November 11: An Extended Example: St. Radegund

Readings:

Reserve Room: *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, 60-105

Reserve Room: Simon Coates, "Regendering Radegund? Fortunatus, Baudonivia and the Problem of Female Sanctity in Merovingian Gaul," in *Gender and Christian Religion*, Studies in Church History 34 (Boydell, 1998), 37-50.

Section 8: Archaeology and Material Culture

November 16: The Uses of Archaeology: Studying Burials

Readings:

Reserve Room: Patrick Geary, "The Use of Archaeological Sources for Religious and Cultural History," in *Living With the Dead*, 30-45.

Reserve Room: Edward James, "Burial and Status in the Early Medieval West," *TRHS*, 5th ser., 39 (1989): 23-40.

J-Stor: Heinrich Härke, "Warrior Graves? The background of the Anglo-Saxon Weapons Burial Rite," *Past and Present* 126 (1990): 22-43.

November 18: Burial and Gender

Readings:

Reserve Room: S.J. Lucy, "Housewives, Warriors, and Slaves? Sex and Gender in Anglo-Saxon Burials," in *Invisible People and Processes: Writing Gender and Sexuality into European Archaeology*, ed. J. Moore and E. Scott (London: Leicester UP, 1997), 150-168.

Reserve Room: Roberta Gilchrist, "Ambivalent Bodies: Gender and Medieval Archaeology," in *Invisible People and Processes: Writing Gender and Childhood into European Archaeology*, ed. Jenny Moore and Eleanor Scott (Leicester UP, 1997), 42-58.

November 23: Gifts, Treasure and Burial Objects

Readings:

Reserve Room: Dominic Janes, "Treasure Bequest: Death and Gift in the Early Middle Ages," in *The Community, the Family and the Saint: Patterns of Power in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Joyce Hill and Mary Swan (Brepols, 1998), 363-377.

Reserve Room: Frans Theuws and Monica Alkemade, "A Kind of Mirror for Men: Sword Depositions in Late Antique Northern Gaul," in *Rituals of Power from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, ed. F. Theuws and J. Nelson, TRW 8 (Brill, 2000), 401-476.

November 25: No class (Thanksgiving)

November 30: Material Culture: Food and Drink

Readings:

Reserve Room: Bonnie Effros, *Creating Community with Food and Drink in Merovingian Gaul* (Palgrave, 2002), first half

December 2: Material Culture: Food and Drink

Readings:

Reserve Room: Effros, *Creating Community*, second half

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Paul Fouracre and Richard Gerberding, *Late Merovingian France: History and Hagiography, 640-720* (Manchester UP, 1996) [DC64.7. L38 1996]

Katherine Fischer Drew, *The Laws of the Salian Franks* (Univ Penn Press, 1991). [KJ336.E5 1991]

Venantius Fortunatus, *Personal and Political Poems*, trans. Judith George (Liverpool UP, 1995) [PA8310.F7 A220 1995]

Thomas F.X. Noble and Thomas Head, eds., *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saint' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1995) [BX4659.E85 S65 1995]

Ruricus of Limoges and Friends: A Collection of Letters from Visigothic Gaul, trans. Ralph W. Mathisen (Liverpool UP, 1999) [BR1720.R870 A4 1999]

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Jo Ann McNamara, John Halborg, and E. Gordon Whatley, eds. and trans., *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Duke Univ. Press, 1992) [BX 4656. S28 1992]

II. SECONDARY SOURCES

Patrick Amory, "Names, Ethnic Identity and Community in Fifth- and Sixth-Century Burgundy," *Viator* 25 (1994): 1-30.

Bernard Bachrach, *Merovingian Military Organization, 481-751* (Minneapolis, 1972) [DC46. B3]

Bernard Bischoff, "Benedictine Monasteries and the Survival of Classical Literature," in Bischoff, *Manuscripts and Libraries in the Age of Charlemagne*, trans. and ed. Michael Gorman (Cambridge UP, 1994), 134-160. [Z8.F8 F5713 1994]

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Peter Brown, "Relics and Social Status in the Age of Gregory of Tours," in Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Univ. of California Press, 1982), 222-250. [BL805.B74 1982]

Donald Bullough, "Burial, Community and Belief in the early Medieval West," in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society (Studies Presented to J.M. Wallace-Hadrill)*, ed. Patrick Wormald (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 177-201. [DC65.I34 1983]

Simon Coates, "Regendering Radegund? Fortunatus, Baudonivia and the Problem of Female Sanctity in Merovingian Gaul," in *Gender and Christian Religion*, Studies in Church History 34 (Boydell, 1998), 37-50. [Ill 4/20/04]

Simon Coates, "Venantius Fortunatus and the Image of Episcopal Authority in Late Antique and Early Merovingian Gaul," *EHR*115 (2000): 109-37.

Kate Cooper and Conrad Leyser, "The Gender of Grace: Impotence, Servitude and Manliness in the Fifth-Century West," *Gender & History* 12 (2000): 536-551. [HQ1101.G46]

J. Drinkwater and H. Elton, eds., *Fifth-Century Gaul: a Crisis of identity* (Cambridge, 1992) [DC62.F54 1992]

Bonnie Effros, "Images of Sanctity: Contrasting Descriptions of Radegund by Venantius Fortunatus and Gregory of Tours," *UCLA Historical Journal* 10 (1990): 38-58. [Ill 4/20/04]

Bonnie Effros, "Symbolic Expressions of Sanctity: Gertrude of Nivelles in the Context of Merovingian Mortuary Custom," *Viator* 27 (1996), 1-10.

Bonnie Effros, "Monuments and Memory: Repossessing Ancient Remains in Early Medieval Gaul," in *Topographies of Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Mayke de Jong and Frans Theuws, TRW 6 (Brill, 2001), 93-118

Bonnie Effros, "Beyond Cemetery Walls: Early Medieval Funerary Topography and Christian Salvation," *Early Medieval Europe* 6 (1997): 1-23.

Bonnie Effros, "Dressing Conservatively: A Critique of Recent Archaeological Discussions of Women's Brooches as Markers of Ethnic Identity," in *Gender and the Transformation of the Roman World: Women, Men and Eunuchs in Late Antiquity and After, 300-900 CE*, ed. Julia Smith and Leslie Brubaker (Cambridge UP, forthcoming)

Bonnie Effros, *Creating Community with Food and Drink in Merovingian Gaul* (Palgrave, 2002). [GT2853.F7 E34 2002]

Bonnie Effros, *Caring for Body and Soul: Burial and the Afterlife in Merovingian Gaul* (Penn. State Univ. Press, 2002). [GT3170.E34 2002]

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Paul Fouracre, "Merovingian History and Merovingian Hagiography," *Past and Present* 127 (1990): 3-38. [D1.P37]

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