

# **Violence in the Middle Ages**

## **History 542 - Fall 2016**



### **Course Information:**

History 542-01 (CRN 86169), Fall 2016

Time: TR 2:00-3:15

Place: MHRA 1209

### **Instructor Information:**

Dr. Richard Barton

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**Office hours:** Mondays 10:00-11:00, Tuesdays 1:00-2:00, Wednesdays 11:00-12:00 and by appointment

### **Course Description:**

“I’m going to get medieval on them....” We all know this famous phrase from Quentin Tarantino’s *Pulp Fiction*, in which the character of Marcellus promises a nasty end to his former tormentors. We are left to supply, from our own minds, the undoubtedly horrific violence that will ensue. But if this and other modern comments suggest that violence was both common and nasty in the Middle Ages, does the evidence produced by medieval people back up Tarantino’s suggestion?

This course examines the meaning and consequences of violence during the Middle Ages. It is not a course in military history, nor will it focus simply upon a string of violent episodes. Rather, it attempts to get into the medieval mentality of violence. We will move topically through a selection of primary sources (Gregory of Tours, Galbert of Bruges, *Saga of Njall*, *Raoul of Cambrai*, etc) and scholarly analyses of war and peace, feuding, dispute resolution, chivalry, and lordship. As we do so we shall attempt to grapple with some fundamental questions: how did medieval people define ‘violence’, if they did so at all? How did violence differ from ‘force’? Did medieval people consider violent acts to be necessarily bad? If so, under what circumstances? Were certain social orders and/or institutions more or less associated with violence? That is, was violence a component of lordship? To what degree was violence a subjective category imposed by authors, and to what degree was it universal? This course will investigate these and many other questions pertaining to medieval representations of force, violence, and social norms.

### **Required Books**

1. *Njal's Saga*, tr. Robert Cook (Penguin, 2001). ISBN: 9780140447699. I strongly prefer the older Penguin translation, by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Palsson [Penguin, 1960. ISBN: 978-0140441031]. If you can score a used copy of Magnusson/Palsson, I would recommend doing so. I will post provide pdfs of the older version on Canvas. If you promise to print them out, then you needn't buy a hard copy of either edition.
2. Gregory of Tours, *A History of the Franks*, tr. Lewis Thorpe (Penguin, 1978). ISBN: 9780140442953
3. *The Book of Sainte Foy*, tr. Pamela Sheingorn (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995). ISBN: 9780812215120
4. William Miller, *Humiliation and Other Essays on Honor, Social Discomfort and Violence* (Cornell U.P., 1993). ISBN: 9780801481178

### **Teaching Methods**

This course is taught as a seminar. That means that I expect everyone to arrive having read and thought about the readings. I will not lecture, but rather will lead a discussion based on the assigned readings. If I feel that students are not doing their part to prepare for discussion, I will begin to impose pop (or even daily) quizzes. Note that this course places much weight on discussion!

**Note:** two sorts of students are taking this course:

- A. Regular undergraduates (indicated as **UG** on the schedule)
- B. M.A. students (designated as **GR**)

The course goals and requirements differ according to which type of student you are.

## I. Course Goals and Requirements for Undergraduates (**UG**)

### A. Learning Goals

A student who successfully completes this course should be able to:

1. interpret primary sources from the period under study and analyze them orally and in writing
2. evaluate modern scholarship of a variety of genres and methodological orientations, by recognizing arguments and placing them in context of other arguments
3. employ print and electronic resources to locate suitable primary and secondary sources for a research project
4. Formulate a thesis based on primary sources that is contextualized in the secondary scholarship
5. Write clear, argument-driven essays employing standard citation style

### B. Requirements (**UG**)

Discussion	10%
Paper on William Miller's Humiliation	15%
Midterm Exam	15%
Research Project	
1. Primary source summary	10%
2. Secondary source analysis	10%
3. Final Paper	20%
Final Take-Home Essay	20%

### C. Explanation of Requirements

#### 1. Discussion (10%) (Learning Goals 1 and 2)

I am serious about discussion. If you don't speak you will get a C or worse for discussion. I will also, against my usual inclinations, call on students.

#### 2. Paper on William Miller (15%) (Learning Goals 1, 4, 5)

This will be a short (3-4 page) essay analyzing Miller's arguments about violence and related emotions.

#### 3. Midterm Exam (15%) (Learning Goals 1, 2, 5)

The exam will be take-home, and will consist of a set of short, pointed questions directed at the readings for the first part of the semester.

#### 4. Research Project (total of 40% of grade, broken down into 3 assignments)

The basic assignment is to choose a primary source, locate and analyze some episodes of violence in that source, read a few accounts by modern historians to provide context, and write a short research paper analyzing how that text/author interprets and/or defines violence.

a. Primary Source Summary (10% of overall grade) (Learning Goals 1, 3 and 5)

You will select a primary source from a list provided by me and read at least 50 pages of it (this source cannot be one assigned for our course). You must turn in a 2-3 page summary of episodes of violence that you found in that source. The summary will be graded according to general writing, the quantity and quality of episodes you have found, and my perception of how much of the source you read (i.e., at least 50 pp).

b. Secondary Source Analysis (10% of overall grade) (Learning Goals 2, 3 and 5)

Once you've decided on your primary source, you must assemble a bibliography of works that will help you contextualize that source. For this assignment you must turn in an annotated bibliography and a two page analysis of how and why one (article-length) source will be useful to your paper. Secondary sources, that is, scholarly accounts (books, journal articles, essays in books), can be about the author, about some aspect of the content of the primary source, about the region (and general time period) from which the source is derived, or about a theoretical approach to violence that helps you understand the text. They may also include methodological items – that is, works not on your author or text, but on aspects of violence that you plan to employ in your analysis (for example, Miller's book).

c. Research Paper (20% of overall grade) (Learning Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)

You will eventually write a 9-12 page paper related to your source and the way it employs, represents, and/or defines 'violence'. This mini-research paper should be focused on the primary source, and should pay special intention to the interpretive issues we will have studied in class (author, genre, the issue of 'representation', etc.). It should also take into account relevant secondary scholarship (such as those you've assembled for your bibliography) and should make some effort to address some of the methodological or philosophical questions we have posed about violence. I will provide a handout with suggestions for general approaches to take on this final essay.

**5. Final Take-Home Essay (20%) (Learning Goals 1, 2, 4 and 5)**

The exam will cover the main readings we have studied this semester. I'll ask a couple of short, pointed questions (1-2 pp each) and then a longer, more philosophical question about violence as a category of analysis (4-5 pages). It will be due in exam week.

## **II. Course Goals and Requirements for M.A. Students**

### **A. Learning Goals**

A student who successfully completes this course should be able to:

1. interpret primary sources from the period under study and analyze them orally and in writing
2. evaluate modern scholarship of a variety of genres and methodological orientations, by recognizing arguments and placing them in context of other arguments
3. employ print and electronic resources to locate suitable primary and secondary sources for a research project
4. Formulate a thesis based on primary sources that is contextualized in the secondary scholarship
5. Write clear, argument-driven essays employing standard citation style
6. Demonstrate deeper insight into the relationships linking different works of secondary scholarship, as well as those relationships between secondary and primary sources

### **B. Requirements (GR)**

Discussion	15%
Essay on Miller	10%
Midterm Exam	15%
Research Project	
1. Primary source summary	10%
2. Secondary source analysis	10%
3. Final Paper	20%
Final Take-Home Essay	20%

### **C. Explanation of Course requirements for M.A. students**

#### **1. Discussion (15%) (Learning Goals 1 and 2)**

I am serious about discussion. If you don't speak you will get a C or worse for discussion. I will also, against my usual inclinations, call on students.

#### **2. Paper on Miller's *Humiliation* (10%) (Learning Goals 1, 4, 5, 6)**

This will be a short (4-6 page) essay analyzing Miller's arguments about violence and their utility to the study of history.

#### **3. Midterm Exam (15%) (Learning Goals 1, 2, 5)**

The exam will be take-home, and will consist of a set of short, pointed questions directed at the readings for the first part of the semester.

#### **4. Research Project (total of 40% of grade, broken down into 3 assignments)**

The basic assignment is to choose a primary source, locate and analyze some episodes of violence in that source, read a few accounts by modern historians to provide context, and write a short research paper analyzing how that text/author interprets and/or defines violence.

##### **a. Primary Source Summary (10% of overall grade) (Learning Goals 1, 3 and 5)**

You will select a primary source from a list provided by me and read at least 50 pages of it (this source cannot be one assigned for our course). You must turn in a 2-3 page summary of episodes

of violence that you found in that source. The summary will be graded according to general writing, the quantity and quality of episodes you have found, and my perception of how much of the source you read (i.e., at least 50 pp).

b. Bibliography (10% of overall grade) (Learning Goals 2, 3 and 5)

Once you've decided on your primary source, you must assemble a bibliography of works that will help you contextualize that source. For this assignment you must turn in an annotated bibliography and a two page analysis of how and why two (article-length) sources will be useful to your paper. Secondary sources, that is, scholarly accounts (books, journal articles, essays in books), can be about the author, about some aspect of the content of the primary source, about the region (and general time period) from which the source is derived, or about a theoretical approach to violence that helps you understand the text. They may also include methodological items – that is, works not on your author or text, but on aspects of violence that you plan to employ in your analysis (for example, Miller's book).

c. Research Paper (20% of overall grade) (Learning Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6)

You will eventually write a 15-20 page paper related to your source and the way it employs, represents, and/or defines 'violence'. This research paper should be focused on the primary source, and should pay special intention to the interpretive issues we will have studied in class (author, genre, the issue of 'representation', etc.). It should also take into account relevant secondary scholarship (such as those you've assembled for your bibliography) and should make some effort to address some of the methodological or philosophical questions we have posed about violence. I will provide a handout with suggestions for general approaches to take on this final essay. Graduate students are permitted, moreover, to employ several linked primary sources in their research projects (i.e., several chronicles from 11<sup>th</sup>- and 12<sup>th</sup> century Normandy, or several sagas, etc.)

**5. Final Take-Home Essay (20%) (Learning Goals 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6)**

In place of an exam I will require that you write a 8-10 page synthesis essay on violence in the Middle Ages (to be detailed on a separate handout). This essay should allow you to demonstrate your familiarity with multiple readings from the entire semester, and will be due during exam week.

**6. Additional reading:** (Learning Goal 6)

On the schedule of readings you will occasionally find additional readings marked "GR". These are required readings for M.A. students.

## **Important Rules and Regulations for all Students!**

### **Attendance Policy**

Attendance is mandatory. You are allowed to miss 2 classes without explanation; for every subsequent absence, I will deduct 1 point from your final cumulative course grade.

### **Academic Honor Code**

Each student is required to sign the Academic Integrity Policy on all major work submitted for the course. Refer to this address on the UNCG website for more details:  
<http://studentconduct.uncg.edu/policy/academicintegrity/complete/>.

### **Additional Requirements and Advice**

1. In case later consultation should prove necessary, students are asked to keep copies of all graded assignments until at least the end of the semester.
2. All course requirements must be completed to receive a grade for the class.
3. **Late work** will be penalized by 1/3 of a letter grade (ie., A to A-) per day it is late unless previous arrangements have been made with the instructor.
4. **Plagiarism** is a serious academic offense that occurs when someone - whether knowingly or not - uses the words or ideas of someone else without giving that person credit for those words or ideas with a formal citation. I therefore expect that all written (and oral) work will be your own. Should I find evidence to the contrary, I will consider any and/or all of the punitive sanctions made available to me by the university. When in doubt, cite your source. If you are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me in private - I'm happy to discuss it. In my experience, the most common forms of plagiarism are 1) cutting material from the web and pasting it into your paper without attribution, and 2) failing to cite adequately. You should familiarize yourself with the University policy on Academic Integrity:  
<http://studentconduct.uncg.edu/policy/academicintegrity/complete/>
5. **Note-Taking:** This course emphasizes the reading, analysis, and discussion of written texts. To get the most out of the course, you must come to class prepared to discuss the readings that were assigned for that class meeting. You are strongly encouraged to take written notes on the readings. With primary sources, this might involve noting significant passages or events (with the appropriate page number so you can find them again if necessary). With secondary sources, you should try to jot down the main interpretive points of the reading; none of our secondary sources (e.g. Miller, White, Bisson, etc.) is a neutral purveyor of fact - you ought to be able to write down 4-10 sentences describing any of their points for each chapter. You also might then include a couple of examples from that reading which illustrate the reading's larger points. With all secondary sources, it is essential that you know the argument of the article/chapter. You should also try to be alert to differences of opinion between authors; sometimes this will be obvious, other times more subtle.
6. **PDFs:** it is your responsibility to print out the pdfs for the class. Consider that I could have assigned books instead of pdfs, which would have increased the cost of books enormously. It is impossible to take notes on your phone or even on a laptop pdf. Please print them out.

## Schedule of Class Meetings and Readings:

Important note: some readings are marked with the letters 'GR' before the reading. These are only required for M.A. students. While undergraduates are, of course, welcome to read them, they are not required to do so.

### Week 1

August 23: Course Introduction

August 25: What is Violence? Various Views

Online: Oxford English Dictionary (OED): look up 'violence'

Canvas: Warren Brown, *Violence in Medieval Europe* (London, 2011), 1-30.

Canvas: Isidore of Seville, references to 'violentia' in the *Etymologies* (early 7th century)

Canvas: David Crouch, excerpt from *Tournament* (2005), pp. 149-156.

Canvas: Glen Bowman, first pages from "The Violence in Identity," in Bettina E. Schmidt and Ingo W. Schröder, eds., *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict* (Routledge, 2001), 25-28.

GR: Canvas: Susan Amussen, "Punishment, Discipline and Power: the Social Meaning of Violence in Early Modern England," *Journal of British Studies* 34 (1995), 1-34

### Week 2

August 30: Gifts and Reciprocity

Miller, *Humiliation*, ix-xii, 1-52

September 1: Getting a Fix on Violence

Miller, 53-92

### Week 3

September 6: Emotions

Miller, 93-130, 203-207

Canvas: A dispute between Juhel of Mayenne and Guarinus Probus, trans. Richard Barton from *Cartulaire Manceau de Marmoutier*, 2 vols, ed. E. Laurain (Laval, 1945), 2:15-17.

September 8: Violence in the world of the Franks

Canvas: Brown, Violence in Medieval Europe, 33-67

Gregory of Tours (assorted comments about his intentions and methods as a 'historian'), in Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, tr. L. Thorpe (Penguin, 1974), pp. 63, 67 (first paragraph), 103, 161-162, 253-254, 601-604

GR: Wolf Liebeschutz, "Violence in the Barbarian Successor Kingdoms," in H.A. Drake, ed., *Violence In Late Antiquity* (Ashgate, 2006), 37-46.

### Week 4

September 13: Gregory of Tours

Gregory of Tours, Book II, chaps 25-43 (138-158), Book V (p. 251-324)

**DUE (UG, GR): short essay on Miller**

September 15: Gregory of Tours

Gregory of Tours, books VI and VII (pp. 325-430)

## Week 5

September 20: Gregory of Tours

Gregory of Tours, books VIII and IX (pp. 431-540)

September 22: Gregory of Tours

Gregory of Tours, Book X (p. 541-603)

Gregory of Tours, other feuds:

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. Asteriolus and Secondinus, Book 3, chap. 33

Feuds we have already read (review these if they are not familiar)

1. A Feud in Gregory's family: Book 5, chapter 5
2. Another Feud, Book 5, chap. 32
3. An honor Killing: Book 6, chap. 36 (first paragraph)
4. Feuds of Sichar, Book 7, Chapter 47, and Book 9, Chapter 19
5. Guntram's feuds: Book 8, chap. 28; Book 9, chaps. 16, 20; book 10, chap. 4
6. Fredegund Feuds: Book 10, Chapter 27

## Week 6

October 4: Debate: Feud

Canvas: Guy Halsall, "Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West: an Introductory Survey," in *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West*, ed. G. Halsall (Boydell, 1998), 1-45

GR: L.A. Garcia Moreno, "Legitimate and Illegitimate Violence in Visigothic Law," in Guy Halsall, ed., *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West* (Boydell, 1998), 46-59.

October 6: Debate: A Feudal Revolution?

Canvas: Thomas Bisson, "The 'Feudal Revolution'." *Past and Present* 142 (1994): 6-42.

Canvas: Stephen D. White, "Debate: The 'Feudal Revolution,' II." *Past and Present* 152 (1996): 205-223

## Week 7

October 11: Miracles and Violence: Sainte Foy

*The Book of Sainte Foy*, tr. Pamela Sheingorn (Philadelphia, 1995), 1-70

**Due (UG, GR):** Take-Home Midterm Exam

October 13: Sainte Foy

*The Book of Sainte Foy*, 70-142

## Week 8

October 18: NO CLASS (Fall Break)

October 20: Sainte Foy

*The Book of Sainte Foy*, 142-221

**Week 9**

October 25: Interpreting Sainte Foy's miracles

Review: *The Book of Sainte Foy*, 73-77 [N.B.: Grassende=Garsinde]

Canvas: Warren Brown, *Violence in Medieval Europe*, 99-115

Canvas: Stephen D. White, "Garsinde v. Sainte Foy: Argument, Threat and Vengeance in Eleventh-Century Monastic Litigation," in Janet Burton and Emilia Jamroziak, eds., *Religious and Laity in Northern Europe, 1000-1400* (Turnhout, 2007), 169-181.

**Due (UG, GR): Primary Source Summary**

October 27: Twelfth-Century Disorder – was it Violence?

Canvas: Bisson

Canvas: Wm of Malmesbury

Canvas: Henry of Huntingdon

Canvas: Murder of Thomas Becket

**Week 10**

November 1: Murder of Charles the Good

Canvas: Galbert of Bruges, the Murder of Charles the Good, excerpts

November 3: NO CLASS (Instructor at Conference)

**Week 11**

November 8: Njal's Saga

*Njal's Saga*, tr. Robert Cook (2001), chaps. 1-45 (p. 3-78)

Or *Njal's Saga*, tr. Magnus Magnusson and Herman Palsson (1960), chaps 1-45

(p. 39-119). This version will be available in pdf form on Canvas.

Be sure to consult the maps, genealogies, and glossaries as needed (Cook, 354-367; Magnusson and Palsson, 359-378)

November 10: Njal's Saga

*Njal's Saga*, tr. Robert Cook (2001), chaps. 46-90 (p. 78-153)

Or *Njal's Saga*, tr. Magnus Magnusson and Herman Palsson (1960), chaps. 46-90  
(p. 119-197)

**Due (UG, GR): Secondary Source Analysis for Research Project**

**Week 12**

November 15: Njal's Saga

*Njal's Saga*, tr. Robert Cook (2001), chaps. 91-134 (p. 153-237)

Or *Njal's Saga*, tr. Magnus Magnusson and Herman Palsson (1960), chaps. 91-134  
(p. 197-283)

November 17: Debate?

*Njal's Saga*, tr. Robert Cook (2001), chaps. 135-159 (p. 237-310)

Or *Njal's Saga*, tr. Magnus Magnusson and Herman Palsson (1960), chaps. 135-159  
(283-355)

**Week 13**

November 22: Raoul of Cambrai

Canvas: Raoul of Cambrai, in *Heroes of the French Epic*, tr. Michael Newth

(Woodbridge, 2005), 179-279

GR: Daniel L. Smail, "Emotions and Somatic Gestures in Medieval Narratives," *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 138 (2005), 34-47.

GR: Matthew Strickland, "Killing or Clemency? Ransom, Chivalry and Changing Attitudes to Defeated Opponents in Britain and Northern France, 7-12<sup>th</sup> Centuries," in *Krieg im Mittelalter*, ed. Hans-Henning Kortüm (Akademie Verlag, 2001), 93-122

November 24: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

## **Week 14**

November 29: Violence, States and Progress

Robert Bartlett, "The impact of royal government in the French Ardennes: the evidence of the 1247 *enquête*," *Journal of Medieval History* 7 (1981), 83-96

Youtube: clips of vengeance arias, TBA

Selections from Steven Pinker

Canvas: Gregory Hanlon, "Review Article. The Decline of Violence in the West: From Cultural to Post-Cultural History," *English Historical Review* 128 (2013): 367-400.

Canvas: James Scott, "Crops, Towns, Government," *London Review of Books*, 35 (2013) 13-15

December 1: What is Violence? Definitions and Interpretations

Canvas: William Ian Miller, "In Defense of Revenge," in *Medieval Crime and Social Control*, ed. B. Hanawalt and D. Wallace (Minneapolis, 1999), 70-89.

Review: Brown, 1-30 (see August 25)

**Due (UG, GR): Research Project**

December 6: Reading Day

Saturday, 10 December, at 3:30 PM

**Due (UG, GR): Final Take-Home Exam**