Violence in the Middle Ages
History 542 - Spring 2012

Course Information:
History 542-01 (CRN 10783), Spring 2012
Time: TR 2:00-3:15
Place: MHRA 1207

Instructor Information:
Dr. Richard Barton
Office: 2115 MHRA
Office phone: 334-3998
Home phone: 852-1837, no calls after 9 PM
Mailbox: 2118A MHRA
Email: rebarton@uncg.edu

Office hours: Tuesdays 11-12, Thursdays 3:30-4:30, 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, to understand how, why, and under what circumstances medieval men (and sometimes medieval women) resorted to violence in their interaction with their fellows. 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
978-0140441031]; if you can score a used copy of Magnusson/Palsson, I would recommend doing so. I can also provide pdfs of the older version for those who don’t mind reading on screens.


**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 start assigning responsibility for preparation to groups of 1-2 students. Note that this course places much weight on discussion!

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

A. Regular undergraduates (indicated as UG on the schedule)

B. Undergraduates doing a Contract Honors course (designated as Honors)

C. M.A. students (not taking this course for His 709 credit) (designated as MA)

D. M.A. students (using this course to fulfill His 709) (designated as MA 709)

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

**I. Course Goals and Requirements for Regular Undergraduates**

**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**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discussion</strong></td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Paper on Gregory of Tours</strong></td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research Project</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Primary source summary</td>
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<td>2. Secondary source analysis</td>
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<td>3. Final Paper</td>
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C. Explanation of Requirements

1. Discussion (20%) (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 Gregory of Tours (15%) (Learning Goals 1, 4, 5)
This will be a short (3-5 page) essay analyzing some aspect of violence as seen in Gregory of Tours. I will distribute a handout with several possible questions to answer.

3. 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 (5-6) page analysis about 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 locate 2-3 article-length scholarly accounts that relate to that source in some way. I will provide some assistance on how to do so (i.e., by using online bibliographic tools). These scholarly accounts can be about the author, some aspect of the content of the primary source, or about the region (and general time) from which the source is derived. You will then write a 3-4 page analysis of one of these secondary sources.
   c. Final Analysis (20% of overall grade) (Learning Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)
   You will eventually write up a 5-6 page analysis of your primary source that also employs some insight/context from the secondary sources. I will provide a handout with suggestions for general approaches to take on this final essay.

4. Final Take-Home Essay (25%) (Learning Goals 1, 2, 4 and 5)
In place of an exam I will require that you write a 6-8 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.

II. Course Goals and Requirements for M.A. Students and Contract Honors Undergraduates

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

Discussion 25%
Paper on Gregory of Tours 10%
Research Project
  1. Primary source summary 10%
  2. Secondary source analysis 10%
  3. Final Paper 20%
Final Take-Home Essay 25%

C. Explanation of Course requirements for M.A. students and Contract Honors Students

1. Discussion (20%) (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 Gregory of Tours (15%) (Learning Goals 1, 4, 5, 6)
This will be a short (5-8 page) essay analyzing some aspect of violence as seen in Gregory of Tours. I will distribute a handout with several possible questions to answer.

3. 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 6-10 page analysis about 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, 5 and 6)
   Once you’ve decided on your primary source, you must locate 2-3 article-length scholarly accounts that relate to that source in some way. I will provide some assistance on how to do so (i.e., by using online bibliographic tools). These scholarly accounts can be about the author, some aspect of the content of the primary source, or about the region (and general time) from which the source is derived. You will write a 3-4 page analysis of one of these secondary sources.

   c. Final Analysis (20% of overall grade) (Learning Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6)
You will eventually write up a 6-10 page analysis of your primary source that also employs some insight/context from the secondary sources. I will provide a handout with suggestions for general approaches to take on this final essay.

4. Final Take-Home Essay (25%) (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.

5. Additional reading: (Learning Goal 6)
On the schedule of readings you will find additional readings marked “GR”. These are required readings for M.A. students and Contract Honors Undergraduates.

III. Course Goals and Requirements for M.A. Students (History 709, or Research Paper, Credit)

A. Learning Goals
A student who successfully completes this course should be able to:
1. Communicate oral analysis of a wide variety of texts
2. Develop a research question that is relevant and feasible
3. Construct simple and advanced bibliographies using print and electronic resources
4. Locate and evaluate relevant primary source materials
5. Identify and critique arguments of secondary sources
6. Conduct independent research and present the findings of their research orally as well as in writing
7. Constructively criticize the work of their peers while also utilizing feedback from others to revise their own projects.

B. Requirements
Discussion 15%
Topic Choice 5%
Bibliographies, preliminary and annotated 5%
Primary Source Analysis 5%
Secondary Source Analysis 5%
Peer Review 5%
Oral Presentation 10%
Research Paper 50%

C. Explanation of Requirements for M.A. Students taking the course for History 709 credit
1. Discussion: (15%) (Learning Goals 1, 5, 7)
You are expected to read the normal course readings and participate in discussion.
2. Preliminary Assignments to prepare for Writing the Research Paper
a. Topic Choice (5%) (Learning Goals 2 and 6)
Submit the following: tentative title for paper; a one-paragraph description of your imagined topic and argument, with justification for why this is a good project; a one-paragraph discussion
of possible primary sources; and a one-paragraph description of 2-3 secondary sources with justification for how your work will fit into the existing historiography.

b. Bibliographies (Learning Goals 3 and 4)
I will ask for a preliminary bibliography, and then, later, a more developed annotated bibliography.

c. Primary Source Analysis (Learning Goals 4 and 6)
You will submit to me and to your fellow(s) a photocopy of a paragraph or so from a primary source that will be central to your project, along with a 1-page explanation/analysis of that passage with regard to your possible argument.

d. Secondary Source Analysis (Learning Goal 5 and 6)
You will write a 2-3 page essay discussing the secondary literature for your project as a whole, with an eye to explaining how and why your proposed essay is necessary given that literature. In other words, you need to show that you know what the main authorities have said about your project, and to justify the work you are going to do.

e. Peer Review (Learning Goal 7)
You each will read the first draft of another student and write a 2-page critique of its strengths and weaknesses; you will turn that critique in to me and to the student in question.

f. Oral Presentation (Learning Goal 6)
During the last two weeks of the semester I will schedule (with your approval) a slot during class in which you will make a 10-minute oral presentation about your project and its argument.

3. Final Research Paper (Learning Goals 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7)
The final research paper should be a 20-25 page piece of scholarship that closely analyzes one or more primary sources; that makes a clear argument; and that demonstrates familiarity with the secondary scholarship and makes a clear case for how your essay fits into that body of scholarship.

4. Additional Readings (Learning Goal 1)
You are expected to read the sources marked (GR) in the syllabus and integrate them into class discussion.

**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 (i.e., 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, Wallace-Hadrill, 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.

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 and for Contract Honors Undergraduates. ‘Regular’ undergraduates are, of course, welcome to read them; they are not required to do so, however.

January 10: Course Introduction

January 12: What is Violence? One subjective view

January 17: Violence and the Medieval Historian: another view

January 19: Violence in the world of the Franks
   Brown, Violence, 33-67

January 24: Gregory of Tours
   Gregory of Tours, book IV, 197-249
   GR: Guy Halsall, “Reflections on Early Medieval Violence,” Memoria y civilizacion 2
January 26: Gregory of Tours
Gregory of Tours, book V, 251-323
GR: R.F. Newbold, “Interpersonal Violence in Gregory of Tours’ ‘Libri Historiarum’,”
Nottingham Medieval Studies 38 (1994), 3-17

January 31: Feuding in the Early Middle Ages
Gregory of Tours, selected 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. 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)

February 2: Carolingian Warfare
Brown, Violence, 69-96

February 7: Violence and States - an inverse Relationship?
Brown, Violence, 99-132
Due (UG, Honors, MA): Gregory of Tours Paper
Due (M.A. 709): Topic Choice
February 9: Miracles and Violence: the Case of Ste Foy
GR: Dominique Barthélemy, “Feudal War in Tenth-Century France,” in Vengeance in the Middle Ages: Emotion, Religion and Feud, ed. S. Throop and P. Hyams (Ashgate,
2010), 105-114.

February 14: A Feudal Revolution?

February 16: Two approaches to Peacemaking

February 21: Murder and Violence: a Case Study
Brown, *Violence*, 167-192

**Due (Grad 709):** Preliminary Bibliography

February 23: Murder of Charles the Good
Galbert of Bruges, 120-192

February 28: Murder of Charles the Good
Galbert of Bruges, 192-245

**Due (UG, Honors, MA):** Primary Source Summary

**Due (MA 709):** Primary Source Analysis

March 1: Murder of Charles the Good
Galbert of Bruges, 245-312

March 6: Spring Break
March 8: Spring Break

March 13: Law and Violence in the 12th and 13th centuries
Brown, Violence, 195-220
Law texts: TBA

March 15: Anger and Violence
Readings TBA
GR: readings

March 20: 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 Blackboard.
Be sure to consult the maps, genealogies, and glossaries as needed (Cook, 354-367; Magnusson and Palsson, 359-378)
Due (UG, Honors, MA): Secondary Source Analysis
Due (MA 709): Annotated Bibliography

March 22: 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)

March 27: 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)
Due (MA 709): Secondary Source Analysis

March 29: 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)

April 3: Raoul of Cambrai
Blackboard: Raoul of Cambrai, in Heroes of the French Epic, tr. Michael Newth (Woodbridge, 2005), 179-222
GR: Daniel L. Smail, “Emotions and Somatic Gestures in Medieval Narratives,” 
Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik 138 (2005), 34-47.

April 5: Raoul of Cambrai
Raoul of Cambrai, 222-279
GR: Matthew Strickland, “Killing or Clemency? Ransom, Chivalry and Changing 
Attitudes to Defeated Opponents in Britain and Northern France, 7-12th 
Centuries,” in Krieg im Mittelalter, ed. Hans-Henning Kortüm (Akademie Verlag, 
2001), 93-122.

Due (UG, Honors, MA): Final Research Project

April 10: Gifts and Violence
Miller, Humiliation, ix-xii, 1-92
Due (MA 709): First Completed Draft of Research Paper (20-25 pp)

April 12: Emotion
Miller, 93-130
GR: Paul Hyams, “Nastiness and Wrong, Rancor and Reconciliation,” in Conflict in 

April 17: Humiliation
Miller, 131-201
April 19: What is violence?
Brown, Violence, 288-297
GR: Paul Hyams, “Neither Natural nor Wholly Negative: the Future of Medieval 
Vengeance,” in Vengeance in the Middle Ages: Emotion, Religion and Feud, 
ed. S. Throop and P. Hyams (Ashgate, 2010), 203-220.

April 24 (Friday Schedule): no class
April 25: Reading Day

April 27 (Friday)
Due (UG, Honors, MA): Final Take-Home Essay

April 30 (Monday)