

## Violence in the Middle Ages History 542 - Spring 2015



### **Course Information:**

History 542-01 (CRN 16467), Spring 2015

Time: MW 2:00-3:15

Place: MHRA 1206

### **Instructor Information:**

Dr. Richard Barton

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**Office hours:** Tuesdays 11:00-12:00, Wednesdays 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. 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: 978-0-14-044769-9. 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 Blackboard. 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. Galbert of Bruges, *The Murder of Charles the Good*, tr. James Bruce Ross (Columbia U.P., 2005). ISBN: 9780231136716
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****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**

Discussion	10%
Paper on Gregory of Tours	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 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. 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. Your bibliography should be extensive, and should include two to three-sentence annotations of each item. The scholarly accounts (books, journal articles, essays in books) that you locate can be about the author, about some aspect of the content of the primary source, or about the region (and general time period) from which the source is derived. 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 attention 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

Discussion	15%
Paper on Gregory of Tours	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 (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 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. 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. Your bibliography should be extensive, and should include two to three-sentence annotations of each item. The scholarly accounts (books, journal articles, essays in books) that you locate can be about the author, about some aspect of the content of the primary source, or about the region (and general time period) from which the source is derived. 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 attention 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.

### 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.

January 12: Course Introduction

January 14: What is Violence? Various Views

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

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

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

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

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

January 19: No Class: MLK Jr. Day

January 21: Gifts and Violence

Miller, *Humiliation*, ix-xii, 1-92

January 26: Emotion

Miller, 93-130

Blackboard: 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.

January 28: Humiliation

Miller, 131-201

February 2: Violence in the world of the Franks

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

Gregory of Tours, Book V (p. 251-324)

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

February 4: Gregory of Tours

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

February 9: Gregory of Tours

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

February 11: Feuding in the Early Middle Ages

Blackboard: Guy Halsall, "Reflections on Early Medieval Violence," *Memoria y civilisacion* 2 (1999), 7-29



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.

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

February 16: Miracles and Violence: Sainte Foy

**Due (UG, GR):** Gregory of Tours Paper

Blackboard: Excerpts from *The Book of Sainte Foy*, tr. Pamela Sheingorn (Philadelphia, 1995)

February 18: Interpreting Sainte Foy's miracles

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

February 23: A Feudal Revolution?

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

Blackboard: Dominique Barthélemy, "Debate: The 'Feudal Revolution,' I." *Past and Present* 152 (1996): 196-205

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

February 25: Violence and States - an inverse Relationship?

Blackboard: Max Weber, "Politics as Vocation," in Catherine Besteman, ed., *Violence: A Reader* (New York University Press, 2002), 13-18.

Blackboard: Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in Catherine Besteman, ed., *Violence: A Reader* (New York University Press, 2002), 35-60. We will only read some pages from this- pages TBA

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

John Gillingham, "Enforcing the Old Law in New Ways: Professional Lawyers and Treason in Early Fourteenth-Century England and France," in Per Anderson, Mia Münster-Swendsen and Helle Vogt, eds., *Law and Power in the Middle Ages: Proceedings of the Fourth Carlsberg Academy Conference on Medieval Legal*

*History 2007* (Copenhagen, 2008), 199-220.

March 2: Murder and Violence: a Case Study - the Murder of Charles the Good  
Galbert of Bruges, *The Murder of Charles the Good*, tr. J.B. Ross (New York, 1959),  
79-119

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

March 4: Murder of Charles the Good  
Galbert of Bruges, 120-192

March 9: No Class: Spring Break

March 11: No Class: Spring Break

March 16: Murder of Charles the Good  
Galbert of Bruges, 192-245

March 18: Murder of Charles the Good  
Galbert of Bruges, 245-312

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

March 23: 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)

March 25: 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 30: 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)

April 1: 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)

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

April 6: 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 8: 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, 7-12<sup>th</sup> Centuries," in *Krieg im Mittelalter*, ed. Hans-Henning Kortüm (Akademie Verlag, 2001), 93-122.

April 13: Can we call the Middle Ages a Feuding Culture?

Paul Hyams, "Was there Really Such a Thing as Feud in the High Middle Ages?" In *Vengeance in the Middle Ages: Emotion, Religion and Feud*, ed. S. Throop and P. Hyams (Ashgate, 2010), 151-176.

Robert Bartlett, "'Mortal Enmities': the Legal Aspect of Hostility in the Middle Ages," (1998), reprinted in Belle Tuten and Tracey Billado, eds., *Feud, Violence and Practice* (Ashgate, 2010), 197-212.

GR Daniel Lord Smail, "Hatred as a Social Institution in Late-Medieval Society," *Speculum* 76 (2001), 90-126.

April 15: The Legacy of 'Medieval' Violence - Have things improved? Is that a good question?

Youtube: clips of vengeance arias, TBA

Other brief texts TBA

Blackboard: excerpts from Steven Pinker

April 20: Debating Modern Violence

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

James Scott, "Crops, Towns, Government," *London Review of Books*, 35 (2013) 13-15  
White, "The Feelings in the Feud: the emotional turn in the study of medieval vengeance," in Kim Esmark et al., eds., *Disputing Strategies in Medieval Scandinavia* (Copenhagen, 2013), 281-312

April 22: What is violence?

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

April 24 (Friday Schedule): no class

April 25: Reading Day

April 27 (Friday)

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