

HISTORY 705:
COLLOQUIUM IN EUROPEAN HISTORY BEFORE 1800



Course Information:

History 705-01, Spring 2016 (CRN: 16088). Time: Tuesday, 6:30-9:20 PM. Room: MHRA 3204

Instructor Information:

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Description:

This course comprises the first half of the Graduate Colloquium in European History. Our imagined task is a huge, even impossible one: we are supposed to make sense of the historiography produced by historians concerning the 1500 years (or so) leading up to the French Revolution. Obviously we cannot do justice to every period and/or every topic, and our approach must inevitably be somewhat fragmentary. Each week is thus devoted to a 'large theme' in European history (crusade, saints, lordship, reformation, etc.), with an emphasis on subjects which have proven to be of recent scholarly interest. For each of these themes, we will examine a main historiographical reading, typically a fairly recent book by an important modern historian, alongside one or two shorter

readings designed to provide context. Whenever possible I have tried to arrange the readings to show either a debate/dispute or at least a set of alternate approaches to the same theme.

Our goals will be several. First, we are interested in identifying the theme or problem for the week. We will then wish to identify and evaluate the arguments of the main readings insofar as they pertain to that topic. Finally, we will also – when appropriate – consider how the readings reflect broader historiographical trends and methods.

As a graduate reading seminar, you will be tasked to read a lot of pages each week. You must be concerned first and foremost with identifying the author's stated (or unstated) purpose and/or agenda in writing. Close behind this will fall the argument of the author's work. As our task will be to evaluate the success of this argument, you need to try to avoid getting bogged down in the minutiae of the details offered by each author. Of course it's important to pay attention to some of the evidence, both for its inherent interest and for its contribution(s) to the argument, but we cannot hope to become expert in the local historiographies of such a vast field. So, on the whole, you should pay close attention to the argument, the evidence offered to support that argument, and the assumptions around which the argument (and the choice of evidence) is based. In essence, you will be learning to "gut" or "fillet" a book for its 'meat' or significance. This may sound inelegant, and it is, but learning to do so is an important skill to develop during your graduate education. You should thus practice reading rapidly (but carefully), skimming the details but keeping your eyes open for the argument, holes in reasoning, blatant (or not-so-blatant) assumptions, and so on.

Required Books

The following are all available at the UNCG Bookstore. You may also be able to find used copies online. I have placed all the books on 1-day reserve in Jackson Library; you can thus read in the library or even photocopy sections as you like.

1. Robin Fleming, *Britain after Rome: the Fall and Rise* (Penguin, 2011). ISBN: 9780140148237. (\$15)
2. *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, ed. Joanna Story (Manchester UP, 2005). 9780719070891 (\$35)
3. Thomas Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century* (Princeton UP, 2009). ISBN: 9780691169767 (\$29)
4. Jay Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven: the First Crusade and the Quest for Apocalypse* (Basic Books, 2011).
ISBN: 9780465019298 (\$25)
5. M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record, England 1066-1307*, 3rd edition (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012) ISBN: 9781405157919 (\$35)
6. Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton UP, 2013). ISBN: 9780691169682 (\$25)
7. Jean-Claude Schmitt, *The Conversion of Herman the Jew* (Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).
ISBN: 9780812222197 (\$25)
8. *The Battle of Agincourt*, ed. Anne Curry and Malcolm Mercer (Yale UP, 2015). ISBN: 9780300214307. \$42
9. Andrew Pettegree, *Brand Luther: 1517, Printing, and the Making of the Reformation* (Penguin, 2015).
ISBN: 9781594204968 (\$24)
10. Thomas V. Cohen, *Love and Death in Renaissance Italy* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2004). ISBN: 9780226269719. (\$27)
11. Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford UP, 1990) ISBN: 9780804717991. (\$26)

12. Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (Norton, 1996).
ISBN: 9780393314427 (\$25)
13. Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (University of California Press, 1993).
ISBN: 9780520082700 (\$26)

Other Required Readings:

Although the assigned books comprise the major reading for the semester, we will also complement them with short excerpts from other books and articles by authors who have written on the same subject. Typically these other readings will be found in pdf form on Canvas; sometimes you will need to acquire them yourselves through UNCG's library.

Student Learning Outcomes

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

1. Critically evaluate important works of modern scholarship both orally and in writing
2. Conduct evidence-based discussions of scholarship in a professional, collegial manner
3. Locate, assess, and communicate reviews and other subjective analyses of the assigned readings
4. Identify and analyze a range of methodological approaches to historical writing

Teaching Methods and Course Requirements

A. Teaching Methods:

The course is taught as a seminar in which all participants critically analyze joint readings. The instructor takes a semi-socratic approach, suggesting (when needed) topics and questions for discussion, and filling in historiographical background when necessary. The point of discussion is to assess the arguments of the assigned readings, particularly with an eye towards their contribution to debates on signal themes of medieval and early modern historiography. Students will make regular presentations on cognate matters of historiographical concern, and will help to lead discussion.

B. Requirements

Requirement	Percentage of Course Grade
Oral Presentation	15%
General Participation	15%
Five Analytical Essays	50%
Sample Course Syllabus	20%

1. Oral Presentation: (15%) (Student Learning Outcomes 1, 3)

Each week one of you will open our discussion with a brief (10 minute) presentation that accomplishes the following three tasks:

1. Offer your (informed) opinion about what you found the argument of the main book to be, whether or not you found it to be persuasive, and why or why not you found it persuasive
2. Offer a mini-biography of the author (as much as can be gleaned), paying special attention to the author's historiographical alignments.
3. Explain the scholarly reception of the main work for the week (as evidenced by reviews).
4. Suggest three lines of inquiry to be pursued in the subsequent discussion

Along with your presentation you should distribute a 1-page handout with whatever relevant points about the book, author, and/or historiographical 'problem du jour' that you wish to share with us

(some biographical details, potentially relevant quotations, your questions, etc.).

The actual oral part of the presentation should not feature you reading your handout. Summarize your points succinctly and clearly, and do so in a confident, professional way (eye-contact, spontaneous speech [i.e., not reading notes], etc.).

2. General Participation (15%) (Student Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 6)

As a graduate seminar, the course demands participation from all students. I recognize that much of the material may be unfamiliar to some of you; despite this reasonable point, I still expect students to take an active and frequent part in the discussion. If you find that you are not saying almost anything (one interjection per meeting, say), you are likely to receive a C for this part of the course grade. Grades in the A and B range are only awarded to students who speak regularly and participate in discussion by considering and responding to the comments of others (professor and students). I am less concerned with **what** you say than in seeing you make a decent effort to orally analyze the reading and offer some sort of reasoned explanation for your analysis. (Okay, I *am* also interested in *what* you say, but still)

3. Analytical Essays: (50% total, 10% each) (Student Learning Outcomes: 1, 6)

Students must complete five (5) short analytical essays. Each should be 4-5 pages long (1200-1500 words), typed, with 1" margins, and with appropriate citations. Responses are due the week following discussion (i.e., essays related to the readings for week 3 are due in week 4). You have substantial freedom in deciding when you write your essays. All students must write on the subject of EITHER week 2 (Fleming) OR week 3 (Pirenne thesis); you also must complete at least one more short essay prior to spring break. When you choose to write the other three essays is up to you. Some students like to churn them out swiftly, others like to pick and choose according to their schedules, their interests, or other issues.

The topic of each of these essays is left purposely undefined. You should identify a problem, issue, or major point of significance raised by the reading and discuss it, using evidence from the readings to support your position. I don't want to see summaries. What I do want to see is you making an argument about the reading, and supporting it with evidence. That argument can come in several forms: you can support, modify or reject the author's argument; you might explain the significance of the main work to the historiography of the main theme; you might take sides in a debate; or you might devise an argument of your own (yay!).

4. Sample Course Syllabus

In lieu of a final exam or essay, students will prepare a syllabus for an upper-level undergraduate course on a topic of their choosing. The syllabus should have a title, a 1-2 paragraph introduction stating the goals of the course, a list of required readings, a list of assignments, and a weekly schedule of topics and readings. To the syllabus you should also attach a bibliography of readings you have consulted (or might consult) in preparation to teaching your course.

The main work of this assignment is thus bibliographical. While I will pay attention to the goals of the course and the assignments you have devised, most of my assessment will concern the readings you have assembled (both for you, the instructor, and for the students) and the list of topics you have constructed for the course. In other words, I am interested to see how well you have explored

the historiography of your topic, whether you've identified key works and authors (when I know them!), and so forth.

The “Legal” stuff:

1. All students should be familiar (or make themselves familiar) with the UNCG Academic Integrity Policy: <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/>
2. All work should be your own. Plagiarism is intolerable all the time, but there is absolutely no excuse for it at the graduate level.
3. Attendance is critical in this course. If you miss more than 1 class without explanation, I will take some sort of disciplinary measures.
4. All course materials must be completed to receive a grade. I am giving you substantial leeway in scheduling your own due-dates. Don't make me mad by piling them all up at the end of the semester!

Schedule of Classes and Readings

NOTE: I have listed the readings for each week in a particular order. I **strongly** suggest that you read them in the order listed (starting with 1, etc.). This is largely a matter of historiography; that is, the earlier readings typically offer a viewpoint being challenged by the ‘main’ book for that week.

Week 1

January 12: Course Introduction

Week 2

January 19: the Early Middle Ages – Written Texts and Archaeology

Readings:

1. (Canvas) Peter Hunter Blair, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England*, 2nd Edition (1977), pp 1-54

2. Robin Fleming, *Britain after Rome*, entire

Issues: material culture vs written history, political vs social history, invasion vs migration, how the collapse of Roman Britain occurred, others

Week 3

January 26: the Early Middle Ages: the Mediterranean Economy and Trade

Readings:

1. (Canvas) Henri Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe* (1933), p 1-14

2. (canvas) Bryce Lyon *The Origins of the Middle Ages: Pirenne's Challenge to Gibbon* (1972), 57-87

3. (Canvas) Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Blackwell, 2000), 1-49

4. (Canvas) Michael McCormick, “New Light on the ‘Dark Ages’: How the Slave Trade Fuelled the Carolingian Economy,” *Past and Present* 177 (2002), 17-54

5. (Canvas) Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* (Oxford, 2005), 1-16, 693-824, and 825-831.

Issues: the Pirenne Thesis, the geo-social unity of the Mediterranean, human agency, political

vs social/economic history, value of archaeology, collapse of Roman Empire

Week 4

February 2: the Impact of Charlemagne

Readings:

- 1.(Canvas) Heinrich Fichtenau, "Nobles and Officials," in his *The Carolingian Empire* (Blackwell, 1957), 104-143
2. *Charlemagne: Empire and Society*, ed. Joanna Story (Manchester UP, 2005)

Week 5

February 9: Lordship and its Discontents

Readings:

1. (Canvas) Fredric Cheyette, "Some Reflections on Violence, Reconciliation and the 'Feudal Revolution,'" in *Conflict in Medieval Europe*, ed. Warren Brown and Piotr Górecki (Ashgate, 2003), 243-264.
2. Thomas Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton UP, 2009)

Issues: what is power?; lordship vs. government; definition of 'state'; stateless society; anarchy; violence as a social ill; teleological views of history (Whig History). Other voices in this: Dominique Barthélémy, Stephen D. White, Richard Barton.

Week 6

February 16: Motivations for Crusading

Readings:

1. (Canvas) Hans Eberhard Mayer, "The Origins of the Crusades", in *The Crusades*, tr. John Gillingham (1965; tr. 1972), 9-40
2. Jay Rubenstein, *Armies of Heaven*

Issues: motives of first crusaders, material, spiritual, apocalyptic, other

Week 7

February 23: Writing and Medieval Government

Readings:

1. M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 3rd edition (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012)
2. (Canvas) Charles Briggs, "Literacy, Reading and Writing in the Medieval West," *Journal of Medieval Studies* 26 (2000), 397-420
3. (Canvas) Rodney Thomson and Nigel Morgan, "Language and Literacy," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain. Volume II: 1100-1400*, ed. N. Morgan and R. Thomson (Cambridge, 2008), 22-38

Issues: what is literacy?; who was literate (and when) in the MA?; literacy vs. orality; types of written 'texts'; link between writing and power

Week 8

March 1: Saints and Belief

Readings

1. Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton UP, 2013)

Issues: what is a saint? Types of saints? Canonization; gender and sanctity; How should historians deal with miracles? Why is hagiography not biography? Role of communities in ‘creating’ sanctity.

Week 9

March 8: No Class, Spring Break

Week 10

March 15: Medieval Society and the Other

Readings:

1. Primary sources (read first!): pp. 199-239 in Schmitt, *The Conversion*
2. (Canvas) Avrom Saltman, “Hermann’s *Opusculum de conversione sua*: Truth or Fiction?” *Revue des Études juives* 147 (1988), 31-56
3. (Canvas): Aviad Kleinberg, “Hermannus Judeus’ Opusculum: In Defence of its Authenticity,” *Revue des Études juives* 151 (1992), 337-353.
4. Jean-Claude Schmitt, *The Conversion of Herman the Jew* (Univ. of Penn. Press, 2012)

Issues: relationship of jews to christians in MA; frequency of conversion; problems of veracity in conversion narratives; is the opusculum authentic; how can conversion narratives be used in broader medieval history

Week 11

March 22: Interpreting Medieval Warfare

Readings:

1. (Canvas) John A. Lynn, “The Embattled Future of Academic Military History,” *Journal of Military History* 61 (1997): 777-789
2. *The Battle of Agincourt*, ed. Anne Curry and Malcolm Mercer (Yale UP, 2015).

Issues: what constitutes ‘military history’?; how has it changed?; what was significant about Agincourt? Culture vs tactics; material culture

Week 12

March 29: The Protestant Reformation: Religion, Printing, and Personality

Readings:

1. (Canvas) Steven E. Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities* (Yale UP, 1975), 1-14, 47-67
2. Andrew Pettegree, *Brand Luther* (Penguin, 2015)
3. (Canvas) R.W. Scribner, “Incombustible Luther: the Image of the Reformer in Early Modern Germany,” *Past and Present* 110 (1986), 38-68

Issues: what is impt about Luther? Printing and reformation; ideas vs culture; social history vs intellectual vs theological history of the reformation; Luther as ‘pop star’; how revolutionary was the reformation?

Week 13

April 5: New Looks at the Renaissance

Readings:

1. Thomas V. Cohen, *Love and Death in Renaissance Italy* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2015).

Issues: TBA

Week 14

April 12: Natalie Davis and 16th-Century Social History

Readings:

1. Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford UP, 1990)

Issues: TBA

Week 15

April 19: Writing and Culture in the Ancien Régime

Readings:

1. Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (Norton, 1996)

Issues: TBA

Week 16

April 26 (Tuesday, but follows Friday schedule): No Class

April 27: Reading Day

Sample Syllabi Due: Friday, 30 April, by noon in my office

OTHER COURSE INFORMATION

I. Use of Reference Materials

You may come across many terms, expressions, and topics with which you are unfamiliar. Don't just let them slide by; rather, use a dictionary and/or encyclopedia to identify whatever it is you are having trouble with. The reference librarians in Jackson Library will be able to assist you in finding reference works.

II. Guidelines for Critical Reading and Writing

Learning how to read, analyze, and write about historical literature in a critical way is the main objective of this course. Keep the following in mind as you read and write about the books and articles this semester:

- a. Check the date and place of publication (don't be fooled by reprints or later editions). How are these important to an understanding of the book? Consider a book on medieval Germany written by an Englishman in 1943.
- b. Read the author's introduction or preface and/or acknowledgments. Whom else does he/she know, or with whom and with what types of historical writing does he/she choose to associate his/her work? To whom is he/she indebted? Whom does he/she consider as an opponent? Does the author state his/her purpose in writing the book? No author is an island, and very few are truly original; most authors are indebted either personally to someone else or methodologically to a school or approach.
- c. Pay careful attention to the author's use of sources. To ascertain this, you will need to be aware of

his/her footnotes and/or bibliography, even if you do not read every single reference (indeed, you probably shouldn't read every reference). How does the selection and use of sources inform the author's historical interpretation? Does the author use a single source [a treatise, a chronicle, an inquest]? A single category of sources [parish records, letters, memoirs, legal sources, etc.]? Many different types of sources? Does he/she make use of literary sources? Statistical sources? Police records? Are all sources equally reliable? Would use of another kind of source altered his/her conclusions?

d. Does the author make clear what is (are) his/her thesis (or theses) in the book or article? That is to say, can you discern if an argument is being made? Or, is the book pure narrative? [be careful!, for even narratives can have agendas and/or theses] If there is no apparent argument, is this a problem? If there is an argument, does it fit into some larger historiographical debate? Or, does it fit into or alongside some major historical or ideological theory?

e. Does the author bring to his/her analysis a particular method or approach? In some weeks, you may well read works on the same subject from diametrically opposing methodological perspectives. While the tendency may be to believe that one is “right” and the other “wrong”, we will find that it is more useful to simply try to uncover, analyze, and criticize the methods being used, and to express an opinion about which method seems to offer a better, or more important, understanding of the topic in question.

f. To what sort of audience is the book or article addressed? Other scholars? A general readership? Students? How do considerations of audience affect an author's selection and use of sources?

g. Is the work in question a monograph, based primarily on original research? Or is it a synthesis that integrates new material with older ideas? Or some combination of the two?