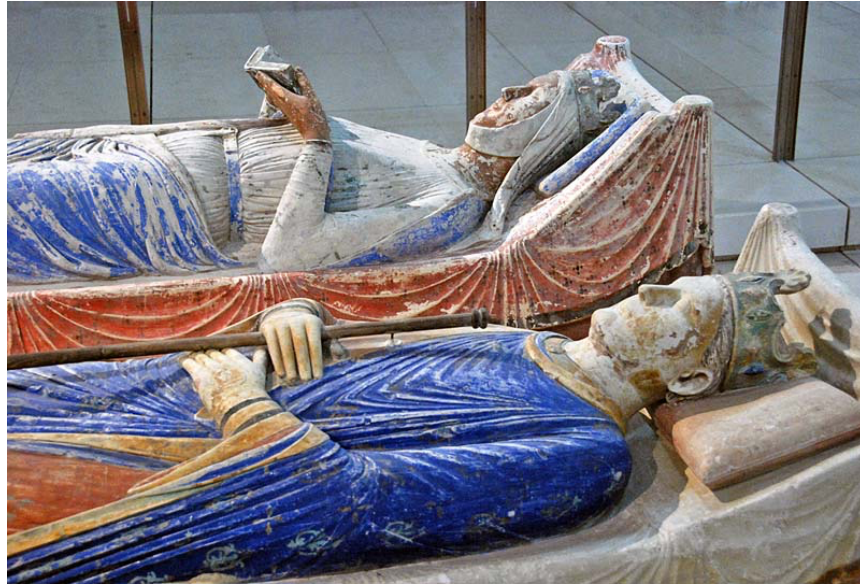


# HISTORY 221: THE MEDIEVAL LEGACY



**Course Information:** History 221-01 (CRN 10365) and 221-02 (CRN 10366). Time: Lectures (both sections), MW 9:00-9:50; Discussion for 221-01, F 9:00-9:50; Discussion for 221-02, F 10:00-10:50. Room for lecture (MW), MHRA 1214. Room for discussion for 221-01 (Friday, 9-9:50): MHRA 1211. Room for discussion for 221-02 (Friday 10-10:50): MHRA 3204.

**Professor's Information:**

Dr. Richard Barton; Office: 2115 MHRA Bldg.; Office phone: 334-3998; Mailbox: 2118A MHRA; Email: [rebarton@uncg.edu](mailto:rebarton@uncg.edu)

**Teaching Assistants:**

Ms. Emilee Robbins (email: [enrobbi2@uncg.edu](mailto:enrobbi2@uncg.edu))

**Professor's Office Hours:** Mondays, 10-11AM, Wednesdays 11AM-12PM and by appointment

**Course Description:**

Our course covers the Middle Ages in Europe, a period lasting from the collapse of the Roman Empire in the west (around 500 CE) until the so-called Renaissance (14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries CE). That's a long time! To make better sense of it, we will subdivide our period into the Early Middle Ages (750-1000), the High or Central Middle Ages (1000-1300), and the Late Middle Ages (1300-1500). These are the centuries that produced castles, crusades, peasants, lords, townsmen, queens, nuns, monks, and more. On one level, then, our task is to learn something these people, events, institutions, and beliefs. But, contrary to popular misperception, our goal won't be to simply memorize names and dates. Rather, we will be practicing the interpretive skills of the historian. We

will ask questions of the past, and we will look for evidence from the past that helps us to answer those questions. In the process of doing this, we will also learn to subject our evidence to scrutiny, asking who, when, where, and why that evidence was produced, and what value it may (or may not) have for us as new historians.

## TEACHING METHODS

This course features lectures given by Professor Barton on Mondays and Wednesdays, plus a mandatory discussion section on Fridays led by Emilee Robbins, the teaching assistant for this course.

## Course Assignments Break-down

The weight of the final course grade represented by each of the various assignments is indicated as follows:

Discussion Participation	15%
Discussion Posts	10%
First Writing Assignment	10%
Second Writing Assignment	15%
Midterm	25%
Final Exam	25%

## ASSIGNMENTS:

For definition of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), with discussion of how individual assignments work with each SLO, see the end of this document.

### 1. Discussion Participation (15%) (SLOs A1, B1, B2, B3)

Your TA has discretion with how this grade is defined and evaluated. Your TA will at a minimum reward attendance and frequent, perceptive verbal participation in the discussion of sources. Participation grades will be low (C or lower) if you don't participate in discussion. To do well in discussion, you should have attended the lectures (for context) and then read the assigned primary source readings; you should also have thought about them before discussion begins, and perhaps jotted down some questions you have about them, or the location of some passages/quotations that you found particularly interesting.

### 2. Weekly Discussion Posts (10%) (SLOs: A1, A2, B1, B2, B3)

Every week that discussion section meets (that is, twelve times), each student is required to post a 150-word response to one of several questions posed by me concerning the readings for that week. I'll open a discussion window at the beginning of the week (Monday) for each discussion section, and it will close on Thursday at 1:00 (to allow your TA time to read them). In your post, you should respond thoughtfully and specifically to the question by making reference to the assigned readings. While I will not require you to reply to your peers, doing so may result in extra credit. Note that we will drop 1-2 of the lowest discussion post grades.

**3. Writing Assignments** (25%, 10% for the first, 15% for the second) (SLOs: A1, A2, B1, B2, B3)  
Twice during the semester students will write a 400- to 600-word evaluation of one of the assigned primary sources. Although brief, these assignments should be considered formal writing; students should use formal prose to make a clear argument in answer to the chosen prompt. Written assignments are to be uploaded as .doc or .docx files to Canvas.

**4. Midterm Exam** (25%) (SLOs: A1, A2, B1, B2, B3)

The midterm exam will be a take-home, open-book exam. Students will write 2-3 short responses analyzing primary sources, and one longer, 3-4 page, essay that responds to one of the provided questions. Exams are to be uploaded as .doc or .docx files to Canvas.

**5. Final Exam** (25%) (SLOs: A1, A2, B1, B2, B3).

The final exam will also be a take-home and open-book exam. The format will be comparable to the midterm, although I may ask for a second short essay (TBA). Exams are to be uploaded as .doc or .docx files to Canvas.

## Grading Scale

100-97% = A+	89-87 = B+	59 or lower = F
96-93 = A	86-83 = B	
92-90 = A-	82-80 = B-	
79-77 = C+	69-67 = D+	
76-73 = C	66-63 = D	
70-72 = C-	60-62 = D-	

## REQUIRED BOOKS (available in the UNCG Bookstore)

1. Patrick Geary, ed., *Readings in Medieval History*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (University of Toronto Press, 2015) [ISBN: 978-1442634398].

UNCG's Jackson Library has acquired an unlimited-user ebook copy of Geary, located here: <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.libproxy.uncg.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=6980b8e9-d42c-408a-9bdc-00135bd56722%40sdc-v-sessmgr03&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtG12ZQ%3d%3d#db=nlebk&AN=1565463>

Some of you may still prefer hard copy, but this offers an affordable alternative.

2. Wim Blockmans and Peter Hoppenbrouwers, *Introduction to Medieval Europe, 300-1550*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Routledge, 2018). [ISBN: 978-1138214392]

## WHAT, WHEN AND HOW TO READ

### What?

In the schedule of classes found in the next section, you will find a list of all the readings for the course. They are coded as follows:

Textbook: this means Blockmans and Hoppenbrouwers, *Introduction to Medieval Europe*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (abbrev. B&H)

Geary: this refers to our primary source collection, *Readings in Medieval History*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, ed. Patrick Geary

Canvas: this refers to a reading NOT in B&H or Geary; you will find it in the appropriate module on our course Canvas page

Online: this refers to a reading available on the web; I provide a link to the appropriate site

### When?

Readings are listed *beneath* the day for which they are assigned. This means that you should complete the reading prior to attending class for that day. For example, you should read B&H, pp. 1-11 prior to class on January 10 (heh).

While it is important to do ALL the reading, it is absolutely essential that you read the primary sources assigned for Friday discussions; since discussion sections center around discussion of those readings, you won't be able to participate if you haven't done the reading.

### How?

Because the primary sources (and much of the textbook, too) will probably be unfamiliar to you, I recommend taking notes on them as you read. You should try to write a brief summary (2-3 sentences) of each primary source/document as soon as you finish reading it so that you can remember the basic gist of it for class discussion. You should also jot down important ideas or passages, along with the page number where they may be found. It's much easier to note down important points as you read than it is to go back and find those points again once you've finished reading.

Especially if you are using the e-book version of Geary, it is imperative that you take good notes on the Geary readings AS YOU READ THEM. One benefit of a hard-copy is that you can take notes directly on the page, or use stickies to mark sections, etc. While the e-book is obviously cheaper (free!) and offers some practical efficiency, you won't be able to annotate the ebook unless you download a pdf of each chapter and know how to annotate pdfs (there is also a download limit of 100 pp for this item). That means that in discussion section, it isn't really acceptable to be scrolling through the ebook of Geary trying to remember where you read something; you need to take notes, with page numbers, so you can move quickly to a particular passage and use it to impress your TA.

## Schedule of Classes and Readings

### WEEK 1

**January 10:** Course Introduction: History, Historians and Historiography

Textbook: B&H, 1-11

**January 12:** Lecture: Post-Roman Europe

Textbook: B&H, 15-28 (these pages are optional), and 28-48 (recommended)

**January 14:** Discussion: What are the Middle Ages? What do Historians Do?

Canvas: A Medieval Document: Juhel of Mayenne Founds a Priory

Geary: The Tomb of Childeric, pp. 99-105. Also on Canvas

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**UNIT 1: THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES (800-1000)**

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**WEEK 2****January 17: NO CLASS (MLK Jr. Day)****January 19:** Lecture: Charlemagne and EinhardTextbook: B&H, 103-11**January 21:** Discussion: Einhard's Life of CharlemagneGeary: Einhard, *Life of Charlemagne*, 233-247

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**WEEK 3****January 24:** Rich and Poor in the Carolingian WorldTextbook: B&H, 88-103**January 26:** A Renaissance in the Ninth Century?Textbook: B&H, 257-269, 269-279**January 28:** Discussion: Carolingian RenaissanceGeary: General Capitulary on the Missi, 802, p. 262-267Geary: Charles the Great on the Study of Literature, aka Charlemagne's Letter to Baugulf, p. 256-257Canvas: "Letters of Alcuin," from *Carolingian Civilization*, ed. Paul Dutton, (Broadview, 1993), 106-119. Read only letters 1-5, p. 106-113.

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**WEEK 4****January 31:** Early Medieval Christianity: Beliefs, Bishops and PriestsTextbook: B&H, 50-61**February 2:** Monks and NunsTextbook: B&H, 62-80**February 4:** Discussion: Early Medieval ChristianityGeary: the Benedictine Rule, 136-162. This text is long and repetitive. Pay special attention to chaps. 4-7, 22, 23, 33, 38-40, 48, 59, 63-64, 68-73. Make sure you know what Benedict means by 'God's Work' [Lat. *Opus dei*].Geary: the Miracles of St Foy, 286-292

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**WEEK 5****February 7:** Elite Women: Queens and Nuns**DUE: First Writing Assignment** (upload .docx or .doc file to Canvas)**February 9:** Early Medieval Britain

**February 11:** Discussion: Gender in the Early Middle Ages

Geary: Life of Saint Balthild, 131-135

Geary: Plate 7, between pp. 224-225

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## WEEK 6

**February 14:** the Vikings

Textbook: B&H, 117-124

**February 16:** Alfred of Wessex and the Rise of England

**February 18:** Discussion: Alfred

Geary: Asser's Life of King Alfred, p. 194 (Geary's intro), and p. 200-208

Geary: the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, p. 208-215

Geary: Plate 6, between pp. 224-225

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## UNIT TWO: THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES (1000-1300)

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### WEEK 7

**February 21:** Post-Carolingian Europe

Textbook: B&H, 129-147

**February 23:** Demographic, Urban and Economic Take-Off

Textbook: B&H, 164-165, 237-257, 299-319

**February 25:** No Discussion sections

**DUE: Midterm (upload .docx file to Canvas)**

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### WEEK 8

**February 28:** A Localized World: Peasants, Manors and Lords

Textbook: B&H, 165-178

**March 2:** Peasants and Lords

**March 4:** Discussion: Peasants and Servitude

Canvas: Documents on Peasant Servitude (pdf)

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### WEEK 9

**March 7:** No Class, Spring Break

**March 9:** No Class, Spring Break

**March 11:** No Class, Spring Break

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### WEEK 10

**March 14:** Aristocratic Society: Lordship and Fidelity

Textbook: B&H, 169-187

**March 16:** Aristocratic Society: Chivalry

**March 18:** Discussion: Lords and Vassals

Geary: Fulbert of Chartres, Letter to William of Aquitaine, p. 334-335

Geary: Hugh of Lusignan, Agreement between Lord and Vassal, Geary, 335-339, but only read pp. 335-337 to get a taste for this complicated case

Geary: Galbert of Bruges, excerpts from *The Murder of Charles the Good*, 339-351

Canvas: Charter of Count Theobald of Blois, 1112-1114 (pdf)

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## WEEK 11

**March 21:** the Crusades

Textbook: B&H, 221-237

**March 23:** Education and Love

Textbook: B&H, 269-290

**March 25:** Discussion: Crusades/Abelard and Heloise

Canvas: “Letter 1” and “Letter 2” from *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*

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## WEEK 12

**March 28:** Reform and Renewal, 1050-1250

Textbook: B&H, 189-198

**March 30:** The Rise of the Papacy

Textbook: B&H, 198-216

**April 1:** Discussion: Investiture Controversy

Geary: “Renunciation of Gregory VII by the German Bishops” (p. 522-524), then “the Roman Lenten Synod of 1076” (p. 510), then “Excommunication of Henry IV” (p. 511)

Geary: Thomas of Cantimpré, 422-424

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## WEEK 13

**April 4:** Kingship in the High Middle Ages

Textbook: B&H, 127-152

**April 6:** Kingship in the High Middle Ages

Textbook: B&H, 153-163

**April 8:** Discussion: Magna Carta

Canvas: the Assize of Clarendon (pdf)

Geary: Magna Carta, p. 636-641 (Geary prints several versions of the document; only read this one). Pay special attention to the following clauses: 2-9, 12, 14, 15, 20, 28, 38, 39, 40, 52, 54, and 61

Canvas: the Trial of Enguerrand de Coucy, 1259 (pdf)

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**UNIT THREE: THE LATER MIDDLE AGES (1300-1500)**

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**WEEK 14**

**April 11:** Mysticism and Papal Decline

Textbook: B&H, 399-420

**April 13:** Government, Parliament and Parlements

Textbook: B&H, 381-396

**DUE: Second Writing Assignment** (upload .docx file to Canvas)

**April 15: NO CLASS SPRING HOLIDAY**

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**WEEK 15**

**April 18:** Plague in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century

Textbook: B&H, 329-343, 348-357

**April 20:** War in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century

Textbook: B&H, 357-362, 381-385

**April 22:** Discussion: Calamities of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century

Geary: Black Death, 491-500

Geary: Froissart, 590-602

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**WEEK 16**

**April 25:** Gender Roles: Joan of Arc

Textbook: B&H, 343-346

Geary: Trial of Joan of Arc, 602-615

**April 27:** Summary: the Legacy of the Middle Ages [Last day of classes]

April 28 (Thurs): No Class, Reading Day

April 29 (Fri.) Exams begin

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**WEEK 17**

**Final Exam:** Monday, 2 May, 8-11 AM

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## COURSE POLICIES

### Academic Integrity Policy

Students are expected abide by UNCG's [Academic Integrity Policy](#). Plagiarism or cheating will result in major penalties, and will be reported to the OSSR. In some cases, plagiarism or cheating can result in suspension or expulsion.

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### Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected at all class meetings. Missing more than 2 lectures or 1 discussion section without prior permission will result in a one-point deduction from the final grade average for each subsequent absence.

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### Late Work Policy

Assignments are due on the date and at the time listed on the syllabus; if a crisis (such as illness) arises, it is your responsibility to contact me. If you do not contact me, the work (when eventually received) will be penalized, usually at the rate of 1/3 of a letter grade per day. Major assignments for the class **MUST** be completed in order to receive a passing grade; this includes the exams, any papers, and anything else specifically labelled as such.

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### Additional Policies

1. In case later consultation should prove necessary, students should keep copies of all graded assignments until the end of the semester (at least).
  2. All course requirements must be completed to receive a grade for the class.
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### CANVAS Site

All materials for the course (except for the required books) will be posted on the Canvas site for the course. This is particularly important for announcements and some course readings. It is a good idea to check the Canvas site regularly. You can get to Canvas from the UNCG homepage.

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## IMPORTANT UNCG RESOURCES [with thanks to Dr. Rupert]

We are very fortunate that UNCG has a wide array of excellent services to support students at every level. These are your go-to experts for specific problems and issues. While many standard university procedures have been modified in these pandemic times, and some offices may have restricted in-person visiting hours, all are fully open and available to help. The links will take you directly to their updated Websites.

[Shield our Spartans](#): it is important that you regularly review UNCG's Covid-19 updates and strictly follow all required procedures. Show that you care about our community!

[History Department](#): Have you considered majoring or minoring in history? It's easier than you think! Browse our [Website](#) and [Facebook page](#) and feel free to reach out to any professor to discuss how history might fit into your study plans.

[Office of Accessibility Resources and Services](#) (OARS): The first stop for students who need accommodations for a documented disability. Make sure to send the required paperwork to your professor the first week of classes. No accommodations can be made without this completed paperwork.

[Jackson Library](#): all historians (and students in general!) should get to know the library. You should be aware of the [main catalog](#), the [databases](#), and the [inter-library loan office](#).

[Information Technology Services](#) (ITS): Your source for all tech issues, including computer malfunctions, issues with Canvas, Internet connectivity, etc. They know far more about all this than we do!

[Student Health Services](#): Provides free, confidential support for a variety of mental and physical health issues. Take good care of your body and your mind! Both are vital in these stressful times.

[Students First Office](#): This is your one-stop resource for a variety of support services to help ensure your academic success.

[Dean of Students](#): Provides information, guidelines, and practical information to support students in a wide range of situations, including crises and emergencies.

[Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#): This office has information about expectations for student conduct, academic integrity, appeal procedures, due process, and more.

[The Writing Center](#): Provides useful resources for all types of writing assignments, no matter how large or small. You can schedule a meeting to discuss a specific assignment and also access a wide variety of information and tips to strengthen your writing.

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

### A. General Education Learning Outcomes

History 221 fulfills the MAC General Education curriculum by providing competency in Critical Thinking and Inquiry in the Humanities and Fine Arts. As part of this competency, students will:

#### A1. *Critically analyze claims, arguments, artifacts or information.*

This SLO is addressed in nearly every assignment in the course. Discussion posts require students to make an argument concerning a primary source, often one assessing its significance; to do this they must critically read the source and contextualize it against other course information (lecture, textbook). The two writing assignments offer an extended opportunity in which to practice critical analysis; in them students must consider various analytical factors (authorial identity, social setting, temporal and cultural contexts, textual genre, etc) as they assess the significance of a particular primary source. Although broadly similar in scope, the two writing assignments are staggered so as to encourage greater student critical agency; for the first, they must respond to an analytical prompt set by me, but for the second, they must construct their own historically-grounded question and answer it through a critical reading of whichever text they have chosen. The midterm and final exams mirror these forms of critical analysis; both are take-home, and both are essay format. On each exam students write several short responses that allow them to demonstrate mastery of the skills practiced in discussion posts and writing assignments (i.e., critically analyzing a primary source by assessing its historical significance). They also write a longer essay that adds synthesis and comparison to the analytical mix; in addition to critically reading and decoding individual texts, they must assemble several such texts into a coherent argument on a larger theme. Even the ‘discussion’ portion of the class (worth 15%) is designed to practice the acquisition of critical thinking; led by the TA, students practice close reading of primary sources, mining them for pertinent examples which they use to illustrate broader themes of the course (and of the Middle Ages).

#### A2. *Construct coherent, evidence-based arguments.*

As noted in the narrative accompanying SLO A1, almost all of the assignments require students to learn and practice the skill of constructing evidence-based arguments. In

discussion posts, the students must specifically cite at least one example from whichever text they have chosen, and explain how that example and/or text can be seen as significant to the medieval past. The two writing assignments require a similar process of argument construction, albeit at greater length (1-2 pp); again, students proceed from their understanding of the period (derived from lecture and textbook) to write a critical essay that makes a clear case (based on examples from the text they have chosen) for significance to the period and beyond. The short responses on the exams also require a clear and coherent argument in defense of a position, while the long essay requires the construction of an argument that synthesizes analyses of individual texts into a larger thesis.

### B. Program- and Course-Specific Learning Outcomes

These outcomes necessarily overlap with some of the general education goals.

#### *B1. Analyze historical duration, succession and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures in a wide variety of places and periods (aka Historical Comprehension)*

- Specific instances of Historical Comprehension to be gained in History 221 include
- a. Identifying a suite of political, religious, and social characteristics that characterize the period after 500 CE as ‘medieval’. Some of these include kingship, secular and religious clergy, lordship, peasants, crusading, and chivalry. These characteristics form the central components of lectures (and can be identified as such via the syllabus). Students will acquire this skill by reading both textbook and primary source passages that illustrate each of these topics. Critical analysis of those readings and topics in discussion section will help contextualize those topics as ‘medieval’.
  - b. Explaining changes to these political, social and religious characteristics over the period 500-1500 CE.
  - c. Compare and contrast modern assumptions about political, religious and social institutions with those encountered in sources from the Middle Ages

#### *B2. Use historical thinking to contextualize and analyze primary and secondary sources representing different points of view (aka, Historical Analysis)*

- Specific instances of Historical Analysis to be gained in History 221 include
- a. Identifying and classifying different types of primary sources. Students encounter new types of documents produced in the medieval period (chronicles, ‘letters’, charters, miracle stories) and learn to analyze them critically as something other than neutral objects to be ‘mined’ for ‘facts’. Instead they learn how and why particular classes (or genres) of texts were constructed in the Middle Ages.
  - b. Evaluating the roles played by factors such as authorial identity, class, gender, and religious institution in shaping those sources. Beyond assessing the differences of genre, students are encouraged to consider the social, political, and religious factors that shaped the creation of particular texts and that, therefore, equally shape their historical meaning

#### *B3. Recognize and employ specific methodological approaches to the interpretation of the past, including (but not limited to) chronology, periodization, comparison/contrast, continuity/change, class, and gender (aka Methodology)*

Specific Instances of Methodology to be gained in History 221 include:

- a. Thinking about change over time. Given the wide temporal breadth of the course, students learn to recognize how seemingly fixed topics (kingship, social class, gender roles) are shaped by time and place, and thus how they change over time. The course consciously is organized around discrete topics over three time periods (early MA, High MA, late MA) so that the process of change over time can be evaluated
- b. Employing Compare/Contrast. This goal ties in well with thinking about change over time, as students can take texts, for example, about powerful women from the 6<sup>th</sup> century and the 12<sup>th</sup> century and compare/contrast them concerning gender norms and assumptions, societal roles, and changing religious environments. Students learn to construct relevant thematic categories within which to compare and contrast.

## COVID-19 and Health and Wellness Statement

Approved by Faculty Senate on November 22, 2021

As we return for spring 2022, all students, faculty, and staff are required to uphold UNCG's culture of care by actively engaging in behaviors that limit the spread of COVID-19. These actions include, but are not limited to:

- [Following face-covering guidelines](#)
- Engaging in proper hand-washing hygiene
- Self-monitoring for symptoms of COVID-19
- Staying home when ill
- Complying with directions from health care providers or public health officials to quarantine or isolate if ill or exposed to someone who is ill
- Completing a [self-report](#) when experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, testing positive for COVID-19, or being identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive
- Staying informed about the University's policies and announcements via the [COVID-19](#) website

Instructors will have seating charts for their classes. These are important for facilitating contact tracing should there be a confirmed case of COVID-19. Students must sit in their assigned seats at every class meeting. Students may move their chairs in class to facilitate group work, as long as instructors keep seating chart records. Students should not eat or drink during class time.

A limited number of disposable masks will be available in classrooms for students who have forgotten theirs. Face coverings are also available for purchase in the UNCG Campus Bookstore. Students who do not follow masking requirements will be asked to put on a face covering or leave the classroom to retrieve one and only return when they follow the basic standards of safety and care for the UNCG community. Once students have a face covering, they are permitted to re-enter a class already in progress. Repeated issues may result in conduct action. The course policies regarding attendance and academics remain in effect for partial or full absence from class due to lack of adherence with face covering and other requirements.

For instances where the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (OARS) has granted accommodations regarding wearing face coverings, students should contact their instructors to develop appropriate alternatives to class participation and/or activities as needed. Instructors or the student may also contact OARS (336.334.5440) who, in consultation with Student Health services, will review requests for accommodations.

### **COVID-19 Spartan Shield Video**

UNCG Chancellor Frank Gilliam has challenged us to create a Culture of Care at UNCG where we all wear face coverings and social distance, less to protect ourselves but rather more to protect everyone around us. It shows that you care about the well being of everyone around you. We have created this video featuring your student body presidents to better explain how and why this is so important.

Please watch this video before the first day of classes.

<https://youtu.be/Mb58551qxEk>

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### **What is history?**

History is a process, and one of interpretation to boot; it is not merely the location and recitation of some inert set of objective facts. Historians - whether professors or students - must actively engage with sources by asking questions of them. Without a question, there cannot be an interpretation, and there cannot therefore be history. “Facts” are not objective, since “facts” must be selected by some person, and the process of selection (as well as that of interpretation) is subjective, not objective. There is no ‘natural’ or ‘objective’ reason why one ‘fact’ is more important than others. Whether you find the fact that Charlemagne was crowned Emperor in 800 more significant than the fact that Frankish kings practiced polygyny is only a reflection of what questions you are interested in (one fact concerns politics, the other social and legal practice); neither is ‘objectively’ more important.

It is thus the historian’s job to read many sources, thereby awakening questions that he or she may then use to form interpretations based on those sources. Good history is thus about persuading others of the plausibility of one’s interpretation - doing so requires one to a) formulate good questions; b) locate and master ‘good evidence’; c) interpret that evidence in the light of the question(s) one has asked; and d) communicate those interpretations in writing (or sometimes orally). Since this is an introductory course, many of the questions will have been pre-selected by me. I have also provided you with a body of evidence (your primary source readings) with which to address those questions and, hopefully, provoke some new ones.

Your task is to read the evidence in the light of the questions I have posed and formulate an interpretation of that evidence. To accomplish this well, you will need to read the material and attend lecture. Lecture will provide the context, some facts, most of the questions and some of the interpretations - without it, you will have trouble deciding what to do with the readings. If you don’t do the readings, however, you will undoubtedly fail, since you will not be able to provide the evidence needed to support the interpretations that you must make on exams, quizzes, and so forth. I am mostly interested in seeing you master the methods of the historian - the ability to present a plausible interpretation of evidence in a logical and coherent fashion.