

Violence in the Middle Ages
History 442 – Spring 2022



Course Information:

History 442-01 (CRN 10659), Spring 2022

Time: MW 2:00-3:15

Place: MHRA 1211

Instructor Information:

Dr. Richard Barton

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Office hours: Mondays 10-11AM, Wednesdays 11AM-12PM, 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 both topically and chronologically, considering a range of important themes through reading of both primary sources

and modern scholarship. 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. William Miller, *Humiliation and Other Essays on Honor, Social Discomfort and Violence* (Cornell U.P., 1993). ISBN: 9780801481178
2. All other readings will be available as pdfs on Canvas or elsewhere. You are responsible for downloading and/or acquiring them. It is not a good excuse to say that you couldn’t access the canvas site and therefore couldn’t do the reading (unless, of course, I’ve made an error). I recommend downloading all the material as soon as I have uploaded it to prevent future issues.

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.

Student 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. Formulate a thesis based on primary sources that is contextualized in the secondary scholarship
4. Write clear, argument-driven essays employing standard citation style
5. Use electronic resources to locate academic scholarship appropriate to the subject at hand.

Course Requirements

Participation/Discussion	10%
Discussion Posts (10)	10%
Essay on Miller, <i>Humiliation</i>	10%
Primary Source Analysis	25%
Historiography Essay	20%
Final Take-Home Exam	25%

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. Weekly Discussion Posts (Learning Goals 1, 2)

Beginning in week 2, students will turn in 250-word response to one or all of the week's readings via Canvas' discussion post feature. Half of the class will make responses for Mondays, and the other half for Wednesdays. Responses are due by midnight the night before class (so, Sunday nights and Tuesday nights). This does NOT mean that you only need to read for the days on which you write a response, though! Your response should address the appropriate prompt found in the Canvas discussion post area. You should also comment (in non-hostile way) on at least one of your peer's responses. You will write 12 responses, and I will drop the two lowest graded responses.

3. Paper on William Miller (15%) (Learning Goals 2, 3, 4)

This will be a short (2-3 page) essay analyzing Miller's arguments about violence and related topics (like reciprocity).

4. Primary Source Analysis (Learning Goals 1, 3 and 4)

You will write a 4-6 page paper (1200-2000 words) in which you analyze what a chunk of a major primary source tells us about that text's attitudes towards violence. I will provide a short list of texts from which to choose. You will need to select a 50-page section of that text, read it, consider what the section has to tell us about violence, and write a convincing analysis of it.

5. Historiography Essay (20%) (Learning Goals 2, 3, 4, 5)

You will write another 4-6 page essay (1200-2000 words) in which you discuss how at least two article-length secondary sources treat a common topic. I will provide a list of suggested topics. You will need to use bibliographic search techniques to locate suitable academic/scholarly articles or books related to the topic. You will then read two of the items you found, consider what they tell us about their topic, and write a convincing analysis of both what they said and the value of what they said. I must approve your bibliography before you write the paper.

6. Final Take-Home Essay (25%) (Learning Goals 1, 2, 3, 4)

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 (3-5 pages). It will be due in exam week.

Grading Scale

A = fulfills assignment entirely while demonstrating original insight and reflection

B = fulfills assignment entirely and thoughtfully

C = mostly fulfills assignment, but without originality or analysis, or with serious problems of presentation (e.g., writing)

D = partially incomplete, perfunctory, or displays fundamental lack of comprehension

F = mostly incomplete, plagiarized, never turned in

100-97% = A+

96-93 = A

92-90 = A-

79-77 = C+

76-73 = C

70-72 = C-

89-87 = B+

86-83 = B

82-80 = B-

69-67 = D+

66-63 = D

60-62 = D-

59 or lower = F

Important Policies and Regulations

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 Integrity Policy

Each student is required to sign the Academic Integrity Policy on all major work submitted for the course. You should familiarize yourself with the University policy on Academic Integrity:

<http://studentconduct.uncg.edu/policy/academicintegrity/complete/>.

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 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.

Late work Policy

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.

Completion of Formal Work Policy

To receive a passing grade in the course, you must complete all formal course requirements (essays, exams). Even if they are badly late, they must be completed.

Additional Requirements and Advice

1. **Retain Copies of your work:** 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.

3. **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.

3. **PDFs:** it is your responsibility to acquire and master the pdfs I have assigned for the class. Consider that I could have assigned books instead of pdfs, which would have increased the cost of books enormously. Some of you may be able to take notes directly onto your pdfs; others should take notes on doc files.

Schedule of Class Meetings and Readings:

WEEK 1

January 10 (M): Course Introduction

January 12 (W): What is 'Violence'?

Online: Oxford English Dictionary (OED): look up 'violence'. [Use UNCG's Jackson Library, Databases>Oxford English Dictionary.]

Miller, "Burning a Witch", in *Humiliation*, p. 1-14

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

WEEK 2

January 17 (M): NO CLASS (MLK Jr. Day)

January 19: What is violence, redux?

Miller, "Getting a Fix on Violence," in *Humiliation*, p. 53-92

Canvas: Walter Map, *Courtiers' Trifles*, excerpt

WEEK 3

UNIT 1: the Early Middle Ages

January 24 (M): Early Medieval Prescription: Law and Ordeals

Canvas: *the Laws of the Salian Franks*, excerpts, pp. 77-83, 86, 97-98, 104-108 (Chaps. XIII-XVII, XXIV, XXXV, XLI-XLIII)

Canvas: Liturgies for conducting Ordeals

January 26 (W): Reciprocity as a Motivating Factor

Miller, "Requiting the Unrequited Gift," in *Humiliation*, p. 15-52

WEEK 4

January 31 (M): Early Medieval Practice: feud, war, ordeal

Canvas: Gregory of Tours, *Ten Books of Histories*, excerpts on 'feuds'

Canvas: Gregory of Tours, *Ten Books of Histories*, excerpts on war

Canvas: Hincmar of Rheims, *De divortio*, passage on Theutberga's ordeal

Canvas: ordeals from the 11th and 12th centuries

DUE: Miller essay, upload to canvas by midnight

February 2 (W): Feuds and Reciprocity in Saga Iceland, pt. 1

Canvas: *Njal's Saga*, pp. 73-128. Note: Be sure to consult the maps, genealogies, and glossaries as needed (see Magnusson and Palsson, 359-378)

WEEK 5

February 7 (M): Feuds and Reciprocity in Saga Iceland, pt. 2

Canvas: *Njal's Saga*, pp. 128-175

February 9 (W): Emotion as a Motivating Factor

Miller, "Emotions, Honor and the Affective Life of the Heroic," in *Humiliation*, pp. 93-131

Canvas: Charter of Juhel of Mayenne

Canvas: *Raoul of Cambrai*, excerpt (p. 219-229)

WEEK 6

UNIT 2: Seigneurial Violence

February 14 (M): Lordship and Vassalage

Canvas: Oaths of Fidelity

Canvas: Fulbert of Chartres, letter to William of Aquitaine

Canvas: Conventum between Hugh of Lusignan and William of Aquitaine

February 16 (W): Customs and Evil Customs

Canvas: Charters describing customs (consuetudines)

Canvas: Cases of “Evil Customs”

Canvas: Tracey Billado, “Rhetorical Strategies and Legal Arguments: ‘Evil Customs’ and Saint-Florent de Saumur,” in *Oral Histories of the Middle Ages. The Spoken Word in Context*, ed. Gerhard Jaritz and Michael Richter (Budapest, 2001), 128-141.

WEEK 7

February 21 (M): Feuding and Peacemaking

Canvas: Charters describing feuds from the Loire valley

Canvas: Stephen D. White, “Feuding and Peacemaking in the Touraine,” excerpts (pp. 195-213, 213-221, 246-263)

February 23 (W): Saints and “Violence”

Canvas: Selected miracles from *The Book of Sainte Foy*, tr. Pamela Sheingorn (Philadelphia, 1995), pp. 39-41, 43-57, 73-77. Pay careful attention to pp. 73-77 [N.B.: Grassende = Garsinde]

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

WEEK 8

February 28 (M): A Feudal Revolution?

Canvas: Thomas Bisson, “The ‘Feudal Revolution’”

Canvas: Stephen D. White, “Debate: the Feudal Revolution”, pp. 205-223

March 2 (W): War and the Other

Canvas: Aelred of Rievaulx, “The Battle of the Standard,” in *The Historical Works*, tr. J.P. Freeland, ed. M. Dutton (Cistercian Publications, 2005), 247-269

Canvas: John Gillingham, “Conquering the Barbarians: War and Chivalry in Twelfth-Century Britain,” *Haskins Society Journal* 4 (1992), 67-84

March 4 (F): **DUE: Primary Source Analysis**

WEEK 9

March 7 (M): NO CLASS (Spring Break)

March 9 (W): NO CLASS (Spring Break)

WEEK 10**UNIT 3: Normalized Schemes**

March 14 (M): Normalized Schemes: Sexual Violence

Canvas: Kathryn Gravdal, "Chrétien de Troyes, Gratian and the Medieval Romance of Sexual Violence," *Signs* 17 (1992), 558-585.

Canvas: excerpts from Chrétien de Troyes

March 16 (W): Normalized Schemes: Class Violence

Canvas: Gadi Algazi, "Pruning Peasants"

Canvas: Two Inquests from the Auvergne, c.1240

WEEK 11

March 21 (M): Normalized Schemes: Law and Distrain

Canvas: Paul Brand, "Lordship and Distrain in Thirteenth-Century England," in *The Making of the Common Law* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1992), 301-324, but only pp. 301-303 (for the example of the case of William de Vernun et al. v. the abbot of Darley]

Canvas: Daniel Lord Smail, "Enmity and the Distrain of Goods in Late Medieval Marseille," in *Emotions and Material Culture: International Round-Table Discussion, Krems an der Donau, October 7 and 8 2002*, ed. Gerhard Jaritz (Vienna, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2003), 17-30.

Canvas: Cases of Distrain

DUE: Bibliography of Secondary Sources (for Historiography Paper)

UNIT 4: the Violence of the State

March 23 (W): Does the State Matter?

Canvas: Charles Tilly, "Forward to the Princeton Classic" edition of Joseph Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* (orig. 1971)

Canvas: Fredric Cheyette, "The Invention of the State"

WEEK 12

March 28 (M): the "Administrative State"

Canvas: C. Warren Hollister and John Baldwin, "Rise of Administrative Kingship"

Canvas: Dossier: the legal case of Charles of Anjou, brother of King Louis IX, versus the lord of Troo

March 30 (W): Controlling the Ordeal and the Duel

Canvas: Richard Fraher, "TV Lateran's Revolution"

Canvas: Royal Restriction of Duels

Canvas: Duels in the 13th century

WEEK 13

April 4 (M): States and Persecution

Canvas: R.I. Moore, *Formation of a Persecuting Society*, 1-61 (intro and chap. 1)

April 6 (W): State Exactions

Canvas: Robert Bartlett, "The Impact of Royal Government"

Canvas: Excerpts from the *Querimoniae* of Louis IX

WEEK 14

April 11 (M): State Exactions

Canvas: Richard Barton, “Enquete, Exaction and Excommunication”

Canvas: Excerpts from the Le Mans inquest

April 13 (W): Royal War as Violence

Canvas: Stephen D. White, war and rebellion article, excerpts

Canvas: Anonymous of Béthune, excerpts on King John TBA

April 14 (Th.): **DUE: Historiography Essay**

WEEK 15

April 18 (M): Torture and Punishment

Canvas: Patrick Geary, “Judicial Violence and Torture in the Carolingian Empire,” in *Law and the Illicit in Medieval Europe*, ed. R. Karras, J. Kaye, and E.A. Matter (Philadelphia, 2008), 79-88.

Canvas: Nicole Gonthier, “Official Violence”, translation of chapter from Gonthier, *Cris de haine et rites d'unité: la violence dans les villes, XIIe-XVIe siècle* (1992).

Canvas: documents from appendix to Edward Peters, *Torture*, expanded edition (Philadelphia, 1996)

Canvas: Dossier on Thomas of Eldersfield

UNIT 4: Conclusions

April 20 (W): Fables as Reflections of Medieval Social Order

Canvas: Stephen D. White, “Legal Satire on the Bayeux Tapestry”

Canvas: Selected Latin Fables in Translation

WEEK 16

April 25 (M): Were the Middle Ages ‘more violent’?

Canvas: selections from Steven Pinker, *the Better Angels of Our Desire*

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

Canvas: James Scott, “Crops, Towns, Government”

April 27 (W): Conclusions

WEEK 17

May 4 (Wed.): **DUE: Final Exam, at noon**

COVID-19 and Health and Wellness Statements

Important Statements Provided by the UNCG Provost's memo of 1/7/2022

Spring 2022 Course Delivery: This course is scheduled to be taught in-person and all participants are required to face coverings in the class at all times. Students are strongly encouraged to wear three-layer surgical-style face coverings in class which are available at [designated on-campus locations](#). No food or drink (including water) is allowed in the class. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may require changes to our meeting plan; we will be monitoring the situation closely. If I need to change the format of the course temporarily due to outbreaks of illness, I will announce this via email and the course Canvas page.

Students who test positive: Students who test positive for COVID-19 are required to [self-report](#) and isolate per [University guidelines](#). Students can still participate in class virtually. I will provide details on how students will continue to engage.

UNCG COVID-19 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>