Welcome to medieval history! In our romantic imaginations, the history of the Middle Ages is concerned primarily with knights in shining armor, damsels in distress, and quests after such items as the “Holy Grail.” While the nobility, women, and Christianity will all play a part in our course, the sources we examine and the questions we ask of them will bear little resemblance to scenes from King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Instead, we will be looking at a wide variety of sources to see 1) how the exercise of government changed over this period as kings and nobles struggled to exert their authority; 2) how the beliefs, practices, & institutional functions of Christianity changed over this period; 3) how women participated in various facets of medieval culture; and 4) how individuals were defined by the various groups to which they belonged. The Middle Ages - roughly the period from 500 (the end of the Roman Empire in the West) to 1400, or 1500, or 1600 (depending on when the Renaissance occurred in a particular location) – could be described as a period in which people were engaged in defining who was “in” and who was “out” of various groups. In order to create such a definition, each person’s role in medieval society had to be defined, and further, so did each aspect of his or her role. Thus, we will look at changes in the history of law & government, the history of Christianity, and the history of women through the prism of a society that was attempting to codify precisely what it meant to be a part of that society. It would also be useful for you to keep in mind that while for many historians the Middle Ages marks the beginning of modern history, for others the Middle Ages is a period characterized primarily by its differences from the modern (or post-modern) world in which we live. We will be engaged in a search for modern institutions which have their origins in the medieval period, but we will not be blind to the differences that exist between that age and our own.

To formulate our own conclusions about these questions, we will be using primary sources (those written during the Middle Ages). In order to make good oral and written evaluations of the sources, you must always consider the biases, both positive and negative, of the author and the nature of the source. All historical sources are not created equal; you’ll need to make informed judgments about each of them. Since this is a history course, the topics of our discussions will be roughly chronological, but we will be more concerned with analytical
methods than with strict chronology. In other words, you will spend more time in
this class reading and analyzing primary source materials than you will spend
memorizing names and dates.

For the purposes of evaluation (grading), we will focus on three interrelated skills.
The first, active discussion of the materials, involves reading the material before
the day of the discussion so that you can contribute both comments and informed
questions to that discussion. The second, identification questions, focuses on
accurately identifying a term (person, place, idea, date) and relating that term to a
larger theme of the course using both information from lecture and primary source
evidence when possible. Periodically, you will have to write a one-page
identification at the beginning of class. Identification questions will appear on the
in-class portions of the two midterms and the final. The third skill, creation of an
analytical essay, will form the major part of all three of the exams and will be
written at home. For this exercise, you will build an argument in a 3-4 page essay
which answers a question I have posed, again using primary source material
wherever possible. You will write one essay for each of the midterms and three
essays for the final. Further instructions will accompany each assignment.

At the end of the course you will be able to:

- explain the significance of terms (people, events, places, dates) as they relate to
  the four aspects of medieval society we will examine.
- construct an analytical essay using related primary source material as evidence to
  support an argument in answer to a specific historical question.
- understand which elements in medieval society can be seen as origins for modern
  beliefs or institutions and which cannot.

**Regulations**

Attendance: If you miss more than six classes, you will automatically fail the course.

Honor code: Any violation of the honor code (such as plagiarism or cheating) will
automatically result in a failure for the course and possible academic discipline, i.e.
suspension or expulsion.

Assignment completion: Failure to complete any part of the course – in-class
identifications/discussions, first midterm, second midterm, or final – will result in an “F”
for the course.
Grade Breakdown

Discussion and In-Class Identifications 20%
First Midterm 25%
Second Midterm 25%
Final 30%

Required Texts


Lecture Topics and Readings

Monday, August 18: Introductions/Source Interpretation
Wednesday, August 20: Roman Origins – law & government
Friday, August 22: Christian Origins I: Belief
   Readings: Geary – *Theodosian Code*; Hollister & Bennett – 5-48; Handout
   – Nicene Creed & St. Vincent of Lerins’ Definition of Orthodoxy

Monday, August 25: Christian Origins II: Institutions
Wednesday, August 27: Germanic Origins: the Successor States
Friday, August 29: Benedict & Early Medieval Monasticism

Monday, September 1: Labor Day – no classes
Wednesday, September 3: Italy under the Lombards: Gregory the Great
Friday, September 5: Gregory of Tours: the Franks
   Readings: Geary – *Gregory the Great*; *The Tomb of Childeric, Father of Clovis*; *Salic Law*; *Gregory of Tours*; Handout – Gregory of Tours on Frankish Queens

Monday, September 8: Early Medieval Saints
Wednesday, September 10: Charlemagne
Friday, September 12: the Carolingian Renaissance
   Readings: Geary – *Life of Saint Balthild*; Einhard; *Selected Capitularies*; Hollister & Bennett – 102-124

Monday, September 15: The Vikings in England & France
Wednesday, September 17: King Alfred
Friday, September 19: Byzantium
   Readings: Geary – *King Alfred*; Hollister & Bennett –49-64; 125-139
Monday, September 22: The Rise of Islam
Readings: Hollister & Bennett – 86-101; Handout – Excerpts from the Qur’an

Wednesday, September 24: First Midterm: the Early Middle Ages

Friday, September 26: Aristocratic Lordship
Readings: Geary – Fulbert of Chartres; Hugh of Lusignan; Galbert of Bruges; Hollister & Bennett – 141-154

Monday, September 29: Peasant Lordship

Wednesday, October 1: First Crusade

Friday, October 3: Women: Marriage & the Family in the High Middle Ages
Readings: Geary – Fulcher of Chartres; Solomon Bar Simson; Ibn Al-Athir; Anna Comnena; Hollister & Bennett 155-171; 217-229

Monday, October 6: Medieval Monasticism – Cluny

Wednesday, October 8: Scholasticism & Medieval Universities
Friday, October 10: Medieval Monasticism – the Cistercians
Readings: Geary – Charters of Cluny; Anselm; Bernard of Clairvaux; Hollister & Bennett – 188-203; 248-251; 313-316

Monday, October 13: Fall Break – no class

Wednesday, October 15: Investiture Controversy I: The Early Stages
Friday, October 17: Investiture Controversy II: Compromise?
Readings: Geary – The Investiture Controversy; The Concordat of Worms; Hollister & Bennett – 203-210; 242-248

Monday, October 20: “A White Mantle of Churches”: Gothic Architecture

Wednesday, October 22: Heresy? Waldensians & Cathars
Friday, October 24: The High Medieval Papacy: Innocent III
Readings: Geary – The Fourth Lateran Council; Hollister & Bennett – 256-261; 302-308

Monday, October 27: The Mendicants: Dominic, Francis, & Clare

Wednesday, October 29: Royal Centralization: England
Friday, October 31: Magna Carta
Readings: Geary – The Rule of Saint Francis of Assisi; Clare of Assisi; Canonization Process of St. Dominic; Magna Carta; Hollister & Bennett – 210-216; 268-279

Monday, November 3: Royal Centralization: France

Wednesday, November 5: Expanding Economy: Growth of Towns & Guilds
Friday, November 7: Second Midterm: High Middle Ages
Readings: Geary – Joinville; Enquêtes of King Louis; Hollister & Bennett – 171-182; Handout – Town and Guild Charters
Monday, November 10: The Late Medieval Papacy: Babylonian Captivity
Wednesday, November 12: The Late Medieval Papacy: Schism & Conciliarism
Friday, November 14: Catherine of Siena, Saint or Pest?
   Readings: Geary – *Dialogues of Catherine of Siena*; Hollister & Bennett – 264-266; 280-289; 336-345; Handout – Excerpts from the correspondence of Catherine of Siena

Monday, November 17: The Hundred Years’ War
Wednesday, November 19: Joan of Arc
Friday, November 21: The Black Death: Boccaccio’s *Decameron*
   Readings: Geary – *Jean Froissart; The Trial of Joan of Arc*; Hollister & Bennett – 323-336; 346-356; Handout – Excerpts from Boccaccio’s *Decameron*

Monday, November 24: Heresy: the Inquisition of Jacques Fournier
Wednesday, November 26: Thanksgiving Holiday – no class
Friday, November 28: Thanksgiving Holiday – no class
   Readings: Geary – *Jacques Fournier*

Monday, December 1: Late Medieval Women – Chaucer’s *Wife of Bath* and Margery Kempe
Wednesday, December 3: Defining In & Defining Out – the Rise of the Other in the Late Middle Ages
Friday, December 5: Periodization – Petrarch – Medieval or Renaissance Man?
   Readings: Geary – *The Book of Margery Kempe*; Handout – Chaucer’s *Prologue to the Wife of Bath’s Tale*

Monday, December 8: Periodization: What were the Middle Ages?

Monday, December 15: 8-11 a.m. Final Exam