

University of Wisconsin – Madison
Department of History

History 115: Medieval Europe 410-1500

Tuesdays and Thursdays
2:30PM - 3:45 PM
Humanities 1131



Prof. Elizabeth Lapina

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Office hours: 1:30-2:15 on Tuesdays and Thursdays (and by appointment)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

We will begin this class with a discussion of the relations between Romans and barbarians, the rise of Christianity and the role of Christianity in forging the new medieval civilization. We will then move on to three heirs of the Roman Empire: the Carolingian Empire, the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic Empire. After dealing with the last major invasion of Western Europe, that of the Vikings, we will move on to the age of castles and cathedrals, also known as the Twelfth-Century Renaissance. One of the features of this medieval Renaissance was the expansion of Latin Europe into the Middle East during the crusades. Another feature had to do with the self-affirmation of the laity. This self-affirmation resulted in the appearance of the new chivalric culture and in the rise of heresy. The course will conclude with a discussion of the travels of Marco Polo and of the relations between Western Europe and the wider world.

READING ASSIGNMENTS:

Please bring all of the primary or secondary sources assigned for that week (with the exception of the textbook) to your discussion sections. When it comes to sources available on-line, you can bring them to sections in either paper or electronic format.

The following primary sources are available at the University of Wisconsin bookstore and on reserve at the College Library (Helen C. White Hall, 600 North Park Street). If you wish, you can use different editions (including those available on the Web) as long as you are aware of and accept the inconveniences this might cause you.

- St. Augustine, *Confessions* (Penguin Classics)
- *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in English* (Liturgical Press)
- Einhard, *Life of Charlemagne* (Penguin Classics)
- Abelard & Heloise, *The Letters and Other Writings* (Hackett Publications)
- *Poems of Arab Andalusia* (City Lights Publisher)
- Chretien de Troy, *Lancelot: The Knight of the Cart* (Yale University Press)
- *Egil's Saga* (Penguin Classics)
- Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo* (Penguin Classics)
- *Beowulf* (translated by Seamus Heaney)
- *Magna Carta* (Penguin Classics; this volume is to come out in the course of the semester; you can read the full text on the following site: <http://www.bl.uk/magna-carta/articles/magna-carta-english-translation>)

Other primary sources assigned for the class are available via various sites identified in the syllabus.

The secondary sources (= articles) assigned for Week 3 are available electronically via Memorial Library Catalogue. Locating and downloading these articles independently is an important part of the assignment. If you have trouble doing so, please ask your friendly librarian for help.

THE TEXTBOOK:

The textbook, Clifford R. Backman, *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*, is available at the University Book Store and on reserve at the College Library. The purpose of the textbook is to complement the lectures. You are not responsible for the information that it contains for the final exam.

GRADING:

Short papers:	7% each, 49% total
Midterm:	11%
Final:	25%

Participation: 15%

SHORT PAPERS:

You have to write seven short responses to questions based on the assigned readings. Each response should be about 700 words. It is entirely up to you to choose the questions that you want to answer. The papers are due in sections where the assigned readings are to be discussed. No late papers will be accepted. No electronic submissions will be accepted. You cannot write an extra paper to compensate for a poor grade. You do not have to use the textbook or do any outside research for any of the short responses. Even if you decide to use the textbook, your answers should be based primarily on the assigned readings. While grading, we will be asking the following questions:

- (a) Are spelling and grammar adequate?
- (b) Are there both an introduction and a conclusion?
- (c) Is the essay well-structured? Does each paragraph develop one theme / idea? Are there effective transitions between paragraphs?
- (d) Are there two brief (sentence-length) quotations from the assigned text(s)?
- (e) Are these quotations well integrated into the essay? Are they relevant? Do they come from different parts of the assigned text(s)?
- (f) Does the essay reflect a careful reading of the assigned text(s) or does it discuss the topic very generally?
- (g) Does the essay answer the question asked?

When quoting the assigned text(s) or referring to specific passages, you should identify the page numbers either in parenthesis or in a footnote. Please do not forget to do the readings, even if you are not writing a response (otherwise, you will not get a good grade for participation AND will have a lot of catching up to do before the final exam!).

THE MIDTERM:

The midterm will be a take-home. It will be due in class on The penalty for late midterms will be 10% per day beginning with the day when it is due. The midterm will contain a series of quotations. You will have to identify the author, the title and the approximate date of the primary source, from which a quotation is drawn. You will then have to place the quotation in historical context and discuss its significance.

THE FINAL EXAM

The final exam will contain a combination of the following assignments:

- [1] Blank map (you will have to match a list of geographical / political entities with numbers on a blank map).
- [2] IDs.
- [3] Quotations.
- [4] Essay(s).

On both the midterm and the final, there might be a possibility to gain extra-credit points for answering a question about one or more images shown during lecture. There will be a study sheet to help you prepare for the final exam.

TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM:

As a courtesy to your fellow students, I ask that you not to go on the internet during lectures. If you cannot do this, please sit in the back.

WRITING CENTER:

The Writing Center is a very useful resource if you want help with your papers. Information about the Center can be found here:

<http://www.writing.wisc.edu/>

ACADEMIC HONESTY

The University of Wisconsin considers academic honesty to be a very serious issue. I will always enforce the university policies on academic honesty. I suggest that you read carefully the following website dealing with the rules about plagiarism:

http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html

If you have questions about plagiarism, please contact me or your TA. Further information about student codes of conduct is found here:

<http://students.wisc.edu/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html#points>

DISABILITY

Disability guidelines for course accommodations are found at the UW McBurney Disability Resource Center site: <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu>

SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

January 19 (T): **The Roman Empire.**

January 21 (R): **The Rise of Christianity.**

WEEK 2: **Barbarian Conquest and Successor States.**

January 27 (T)

January 29 (R)

Short paper. Answer one of the following questions.

[1] Why did Augustine consider it worthwhile to write about such apparently minute episodes of his life as stealing some pears from a garden as an adolescent?

[2] Why did Augustine choose to convert to Christianity and what alternatives did he consider?

Reading Assignment: St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Books 1-8 (pages 21-179).

Textbook (recommended): Chapter 1 (“The Roman World at its Height”) and Chapter 2 (“The Rise of Christianity”).

WEEK 3: **The Early Church. Monasticism.**

February 3 (T)

February 5 (R)

Short paper:

IF YOUR LAST NAME BEGINS WITH LETTERS A-L: Evaluate Walter Goffart's argument that Rome has conquered the barbarians.

IF YOUR LAST NAME BEGINS WITH LETTERS M-Z: According to Peter Heather, what events led to the Fall of Rome?

Reading Assignment:

IF YOUR LAST NAME BEGINS WITH LETTERS A-L: Walter Goffart, "Rome's Final Conquest: The Barbarians," *History Compass* 6:3 (2008) 855–883.

IF YOUR LAST NAME BEGINS WITH LETTERS M-Z: Peter Heather, "The Huns and the End of the Roman Empire in Western Europe," *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 110, No. 435 (Feb., 1995), 4-41.

Textbook (recommended): Chapter 3 ("Early Germanic Society")

WEEK 4: **Byzantium.**

February 10 (T): meet at the entrance to the exhibition "Illuminating the World: The Saint John's Bible" at Chazen Museum of Art (750 University Ave)

February 12 (R)

Short Paper: What was the life of a medieval monk or nun like?

Reading Assignment: *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in English* (entire).

Textbook (recommended): Chapter 4 ("Cloister and Culture")

WEEK 5: **Islam.**

February 17 (T) and February 19 (R)

Short paper: According to Psellus, what characteristics were important in a ruler?

Reading Assignment: Psellus, *Chronographia*, Book 6

<http://legacy.fordham.edu/Halsall/basis/psellus-chrono06.asp>

Textbook (recommended): Chapter 5 ("The Emergence of the Medieval Worlds," especially the section "Continuity and Change in the Mediterranean")

WEEK 6: **Northern Europe.**

February 24 (T) and February 26 (R)

Short paper: What are some of the key themes in the poems of Arab Andalusia?

Reading Assignment: *Poems of Arab Andalusia*, pages 2, 3-4, 21-22, 26, 54, 57-59, 81, 83-91.

Textbook (recommended): Chapter 5 ("The Emergence of the Medieval Worlds," especially the section "The Rise of Islam") and Chapter 9 ("A New Europe Emerges: North and South," especially the section "The Spanish Kingdoms")

WEEK 7: **The Carolingian Empire.**

March 3 (T) and March 5 (R)

Short Paper: Comment upon one of the following quotations: [1] “For it [the poem] is now to us itself ancient; and yet its maker was telling of things already old and weighted with regret, and he expended his art in making keen that touch upon the heart which sorrows have that are both poignant and remote” (J. R. R. Tolkien). [2] “The poem is ... complex, tragic, full of speeches, often reflective. The poem’s center of gravity is its desire to make out the sense of life in the heroic age” (Michael Alexander, a translator of *Beowulf*)

Reading Assignment: *Beowulf* (entire)

Textbook (recommended): Chapter 5 (“The Emergence of the Medieval Worlds,” especially the section entitled “Continuity and Change in Northern Europe”)

WEEK 8: **The Vikings.**

Mid-term due in the beginning of sections.

March 10 (T) and March 12 (R)

Short paper: According to Einhard, what characteristics were important in a ruler?

Reading Assignment: Einhard, *Life of Charlemagne*, 15-44.

Textbook (recommended): Chapter 6 (“The Carolingian Era”)

WEEK 9: **The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century I.**

March 17 (T) The rise of learning.

March 19 (R) The rise of universities. Gothic art.

Short paper: What are some of the key characteristics of the society described in the saga?

Reading Assignment: *Egil’s Saga*, 54-205

Textbook (recommended): Chapter 7 (“The Time of Troubles”)

WEEK 10: **The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century II.**

March 24 (T) The rise of towns and the growth of trade

March 26 (R) The Magna Carta

Short paper. Answer one of the following questions.

[1] To what extent was Heloise an equal partner in her relationship with Abelard?

[2] Why did Abelard suffer from persecutions throughout his life?

Reading Assignment: Abelard & Heloise, *The Letters and Other Writings* (Abelard, *The Calamities of Peter Abelard*, pages 1-46 and First Letter, Heloise to Abelard, pages 49-62).

Textbook (recommended): Chapter 11 (“The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century,” especially the sections entitled “Aristotle, Anselm, Abelard and Ibn Rashd,” “The recovery of science” and “The rise of universities”) and Chapter 14 (“Art and Intellect in the Thirteenth Century,” especially the section entitled “From Romanesque to Gothic Vision”)

WEEK 11: **SPRING BREAK**

March 31 (T) and April 2 (R)

WEEK 12: **The Crusades.**

April 7 (T) and April 9 (R)

Short paper. Is the Magna Carta important? Why or why not?

Reading Assignment: The Magna Carta (entire text)

Textbook (recommended): Chapter 13 (“Politics in the Thirteenth Century,” especially the section “The Rise of Representative Institutions”) and Chapter 15 (“Daily Life at the Medieval Zenith,” especially the sections “Economic Changes” and “Townfolks’ Lives”)

WEEK 13: Medieval Castles. Chivalry.

April 14 (T) and April 16 (R)

Short paper: To what extent was the First Crusade an example of religious war?

Reading Assignment: The Siege and Capture of Antioch. Collected Accounts
(<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/cde-antioch.asp>)

Textbook (recommended): Chapter 10 (“The Reform of the Church,” especially the section “Christendom and the East”)

WEEK 14: Heretics and Friars.

April 21 (T) and April 23 (R)

Short paper: The key component of chivalric code was to avoid bringing shame upon oneself. Does Lancelot follow the code or does he break free from it?

Reading Assignment: Chretien de Troyes, *Lancelot: The Knight of the Cart*, pages 1-125.

Textbook (recommended): Chapter 11 (“The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century,” especially the section “Courtly Life, Love and Literature”)

WEEK 15: The wider world. Marco Polo’s travels

April 28 (T) and April 30 (R)

Short paper: Why do the records tell us about medieval heretics and their persecutors?

Reading Assignment: *The Inquisition Record of Jacques Fournier Bishop of Pamiers 1318-1325*, translated by Nancy Stork (San Jose State University, 2004).

[1] “Confession of Agnes Francou”

[http://web.archive.org/web/20071120005311/http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/english/Fournier/afra
ncou.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20071120005311/http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/english/Fournier/afra
ncou.htm)

[2] “Confession of Barthélemy Amilhac”

[http://web.archive.org/web/20071120005321/http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/english/Fournier/ami
lhac.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20071120005321/http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/english/Fournier/ami
lhac.htm)

[3] “Jacqueline den Carot of Ax”

[http://web.archive.org/web/20071120005326/http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/english/Fournier/den
carot.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20071120005326/http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/english/Fournier/den
carot.htm)

Textbook (recommended): Chapter 16 (“Changes in Religious Life”)

WEEK 16: Review.

May 5 (T) and May 7 (R)

Short paper: To what extent was Marco Polo capable of comprehending cultures alien to him on their own terms?

Reading Assignment: *The Travels of Marco Polo*. (selections TBA)

Textbook (recommended): Chapter 19 (“Closing in, Closing Out,” especially the section “The Search for a New Route to the East”)

Goals of the History Major

(approved by the department, March 23, 2011; revised by the department, February 27, 2013)

The goal of the history major is to offer students the knowledge and skills they need to gain a critical perspective on the past. Students will learn to define important historical questions, analyze relevant evidence with rigor and creativity, and present convincing arguments and conclusions based on original research in a manner that contributes to academic and public discussions. In History, as in other humanistic disciplines, students will practice resourceful inquiry and careful reading. They will advance their writing and public speaking skills to engage historical and contemporary issues.

To insure that students gain exposure to some of the great diversity of topics, methodologies, and philosophical concerns that inform the study of history, the department requires a combination of courses that offers breadth, depth, and variety of exposition. Through those courses, students should develop:

1. Broad acquaintance with several geographic areas of the world and with both the pre-modern and modern eras.
2. Familiarity with the range of sources and modes through which historical information can be found and expressed. Sources may include textual, oral, physical, and visual materials. The data within them may be qualitative or quantitative, and they may be available in printed, digital, or other formats. Modes of expression may include textbooks, monographs, scholarly articles, essays, literary works, or digital presentations.
3. In-depth understanding of a topic of their choice through original or creative research.
4. The ability to identify the skills developed in the history major and to articulate the applicability of those skills to a variety of endeavors and career paths beyond the professional practice of history.

Skills Developed in the Major

Define Important Historical Questions

1. Pose a historical question and explain its academic and public implications.
2. Using appropriate research procedures and aids, find the secondary resources in history and other disciplines available to answer a historical question.
3. Evaluate the evidentiary and theoretical bases of pertinent historical conversations in order to highlight opportunities for further investigation.

Collect and Analyze Evidence

1. Identify the range and limitations of primary sources available to engage the historical problem under investigation.
2. Examine the context in which sources were created, search for chronological and other relationships among them, and assess the sources in light of that knowledge.
3. Employ and, if necessary, modify appropriate theoretical frameworks to examine sources and develop arguments.

Present Original Conclusions

1. Present original and coherent findings through clearly written, persuasive arguments and narratives.
2. Orally convey persuasive arguments, whether in formal presentations or informal discussions.
3. Use appropriate presentation formats and platforms to share information with academic and public audiences.

Contribute to Ongoing Discussions

1. Extend insights from research to analysis of other historical problems.
2. Demonstrate the relevance of a historical perspective to contemporary issues.
3. Recognize, challenge, and avoid false analogies, overgeneralizations, anachronisms, and other logical fallacies.