

History 2A
Prof. Bensch
Spring 2019

Office Hours (Tr 204):
Th 11:30-1:15
and by appointment

SYLLABUS

MEDIEVAL EUROPE

The goal of the course is to introduce students to the Middle Ages through sources written by contemporaries. In many instances, you will be reading the principal evidence upon which all modern historians have based their accounts. These materials provide us with more than just facts, for they permit us to eavesdrop on individuals from the distant past speaking to each other. In order to listen in on their conversations, you must become aware of how an author writes about his materials as well as what he writes. The tone of a document is just as important a piece of historical evidence as its contents; perceptions of events are just as "real" as the events themselves. As we shall see, dreams and dragons can tell us as much about the past as speeches and battles.

In addition to the texts available at the bookstore (marked with an asterisk in the syllabus), you will be expected to work carefully with the primary source materials: the works of medieval authors will form the foundation of the course. Three brief, lucid synthetic essays (by P. R. L. Brown, Julia Smith, and R. W. Southern) will provide the background for lectures and readings in the primary sources. For those students wishing a more detailed narrative of the period, one can recommend J. Le Goff, Medieval Civilization.

Each class will be devoted partly to lecture but will reserve ample time for discussion to begin each session. You should read the weekly materials before class and be prepared to participate actively. Your grade will be determined by a midterm (10%), a final examination (25%), 2 short papers (1,500-2,000 wrds. - approximately 6-8 pp.: 40%), 3 announced quizzes on "hard facts" (15%), and your preparation for and participation in class discussions (10%).

In accordance with History Department guidelines, more than three unexcused absences may result in a No Credit for the course. History 2A will be a DIGITAL FREE CLASSROOM; no laptops, smart phones, I-pads or other digital devices will be permitted in the classroom unless there are special circumstances.

I. Week of Jan. 22

- a) Introduction. The Decline of Rome: Awful Revolution or the Birth of Europe?
- b) The Nature of Empire: Carrying the Big Stick.

Readings: Sources, nos. 1-10.

**P. R. L. Brown, The World of Late Antiquity, 11-48.

II. Week of Jan. 29

- a) Myths Old and New: Roman Patriotism versus Early Christianity.
- b) Bandits and Immigrants: Romans and Barbarians to 418.

Readings: Sources, nos. 11-25.

Brown, 49-69, 82-95, 115-25.

III. Week of Feb. 5

- a) Coexistence and its Alternative: Germanic Settlement in Gaul to 480 and the Empire of Attila, 433-53.
- b) The Indian Summer of Antiquity: Mediterranean and non-Mediterranean Europe to 570.

Readings: Sources, nos. 26-42.

Brown, 126-59.

** J. M. H. Smith, Europe after Rome: A New Cultural History, pp. 1-9, 51-82.

IV. Week of Feb. 12

- a) Christianity in New Robes: Religion and the Barbarians to 597.
- b) The Northern World: The Heroic Ideal.

Readings: Sources, nos. 43-47.

** Gregory of Tours, History of the Franks, Prologue, Bk. I, 1, 30-48; Bk. II.

** Beowulf.

Brown, 96-115.

Smith, pp. 13-51

V. Week of Feb. 19

- a) Barbarians at Work: Violence, Loyalty, and Coexistence.

Quiz on Thursday Feb. 19

- b) The North Comes of Age: The Spread of Christianity, 597 to 754.

Readings: Sources, nos. 48-69.

Gregory of Tours, Bks. III-V; VI, 10, 26-27, 32, 35; VII, 4-8, 31, 47; VIII, 29, 31; IX, 18-19, 34; X, 18, 27-28.

VI. Week of Feb. 26

- a) A Northern Augustus: Charlemagne, 768 to 814.
- b) Europe Reshaped: The Carolingian Renaissance and the Dissolution of the Empire.

Readings: Sources, nos. 70-84.

Smith, 217-52.

VII. Week of March 5

Paper 1 Due on Tuesday March 5

- a) The West under Siege: The Vikings and the Consolidation of Europe.

- b). **Midterm on Thursday, March 7**

Readings: Sources, nos. 85-96.

Smith, pp. 151-82, 293-97.

VIII. Week of March 19

- a) A New Dawn: European Society after the Millennium.
- b) The Feudal Revolution: Anarchy or Stabilization?

Quiz 2 on Thursday, March 21

Readings: Sources, nos. 97-116.

** R. W. Southern, The Making of the Middle Ages, 11-49, 98-117.

IX. Week of March 26

- a) Sorting Out the Sacred and Profane: New Roles for Clergy and Laity in Christian Society.
- b) Proliferating Cells for Living: Village, Town, and Corporation.

Readings: Sources, nos. 117-134.
Southern, 118-69.

X. Week of April 2

- a) The Twelfth-Century Renaissance: New Attitudes Toward Self and Community.
- b) States in Formation: Kings, Lawyers, and Accountants, 1066-1250 A.D.

Readings: Sources, nos. 135-40, 147-154.
Southern, 74-98, 170-257.

XI. Week of April 9

- a) Europe on the March: Eastern Expansion and Reconquista to 1250.

Readings: Source Book, nos. 141-146.

- b). Discussion of El Cid.

****Poema del mío Cid.**

Southern, 49-73.

XII. Week of April 16

- a) The Apogee: The International Order of the Thirteenth Century.
- b) The Protestors: Heretics, Reformers, and Ascetics.

Readings: Sources, nos. 155-67.

XIII. Week of April 23

- a) The Fourteenth-Century Crisis: Plague, Insecurity, and Mysticism.
- b) Discussion of Margery Kempe.

Readings: Sources, nos. 168-74;

**** Margery Kempe, The Book of Margery Kempe, pp. 33-196, 219-31, 257-97.**

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XIV. Week of April 30

Quiz 3 on Tuesday, April 25

- a) Europe in the Late Middle Ages: A Society in Decline?

Paper 2 Due on Thursday, April 30

- b) Wrap-up.