

**THE MEDIEVAL WORLD**  
HIST 2420 W: Autumn 2014-Winter 2015  
Department of History, University of Manitoba

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Class Monday, Wednesday and Fridays, 9:30-10:20  
Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 10:30-11:30, or by appointment.

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This course offers an introduction to the history of Europe from the conversion of the Roman Empire to the beginning of the European conquest of the Americas. Themes during the autumn will include the conversion of the Empire, the dissolution of the Mediterranean world, the reshaping of the political, economic and institutional structures of the Roman Empire, a plague, the articulation of a Church, the consolidation of new political authorities, and new approaches to living and learning. In the winter, themes will include the Gregorian reforms, the Crusades, the increased role of written communication, the elaboration of ideas of kingship, the growth of commerce, the transformation of rural life, the growth of towns, changes in learning and culture, and yet another but more famous plague. We aim to recover beliefs, practices, institutions and experience in such a way that we begin to appreciate the expectations of members of medieval societies, and to analyze the reasons for changes in the structures of the societies themselves.

While developing a basic familiarity with medieval history, its sources, and its interpretive challenges, you will also work to develop your knowledge of the historian's craft. The course will require critical interpretation of primary sources, rigorous scrutiny of scholarly argument, and the ability to construct arguments and narratives in clear and correct prose. The assignments will give you opportunity to improve these skills.

**Course Books:**

Available for purchase in the Bookstore; I will also expect you  
to print out some primary sources and journal articles.

Clifford R. Backman, *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2009).

Patrick J. Geary, ed. *Readings in medieval history*. (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2003, or Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 2010).

**Course Expectations & Requirements**

There are four principal ways I expect you to learn in this class:

**Lectures:** I aim neither to duplicate nor to summarize material discussed in the survey, but rather to present new interpretations of and information about the period. You miss lectures at your peril, for the information and interpretations presented there will be tested on the exams. Although I generally use powerpoint, do not think that the material written on the slides is necessarily most important; I like to show images and maps, and it is a convenient way to do that. Listening to what I say is crucial.

**Reading:** A primary source, sometimes called “original source” or sometimes just “source”, is a document or other object created at the time an event took place, or as close to that event as possible. (For example, many events in medieval history are known through medieval chronicles or other forms of accounts, rather than things created at the time the event took place. In that case, they are known as primary sources.) Later scholars produce “secondary sources”, works that describe, analyze and interpret the past using primary sources and other secondary works.

Primary sources, such as those in the reader—Geary’s *Readings in medieval history*—are the foundation of historical knowledge. Reading primary sources is a tricky business; understanding them always demands careful and often laborious reading, questioning, research, and rereading. I recommend taking notes on passages you find particularly difficult, as the process of taking notes demands active thought. If you do not understand a word, you should look it up in a dictionary. It is also useful to look up names, events, or even sometimes concepts in a reference work such as an encyclopedia. Wikipedia can be a useful place to start, but see the list of helpful reference works for this course and particularly the *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* for more useful documents.

When reading primary sources, it is always useful to ask a few questions. What genre is the document? That is, is it a statute, a letter, an epic poem, a theological treatise, a history, a hagiography, a legal record of a deal, a financial account or some other type of written account? For medieval texts, it is often useful to see whether there are classical sources—that is a Greek or Roman prototype—to which the author might be referring. Who wrote the document? Why did he or she write it? Did she or he give a reason for writing? (The answers to the last two questions may or may not be identical.)

Secondary sources require another form of reading. Authors of secondary sources are never just neutral purveyors of information; even when presenting an uncontroversial narrative, they are presenting a distinct interpretation and argument about the past. When reading secondary sources, you should become aware of the author’s argument. You should think about it critically, which does not usually mean that you should conclude that it is biased rubbish. Rather, you should look at what sources they are using and how they are interpreting them, as well as the sort of question they are answering. Are there other questions that they could ask? Do their sources limit and shape the answers they can provide? Finally, one can start to see how scholars relate to each other over time, by asking how do questions that authors raise relate to earlier work on the field?

The textbook survey provides another source of information and different interpretations of the period than I will give in the lecture. It is recent, and contains excellent bibliographies that provide suggestions for further research and reading. It is a secondary source—indeed, it is almost a tertiary source, so to speak, because it depends so heavily on secondary sources that it is often difficult to see the role of primary sources in its account. Here, too, critical reading is necessary, but often the question asked is more: why does the author think a particular range of facts and a particular interpretation is necessary and useful? How does it fit together with the material in the lectures and the primary sources that I have read? Make sure to look at maps; it is difficult to understand history if you are not familiar with geography.

### **Assignments and Essays:**

Assignments, such as the bibliographic exercises, help you to develop a command of the knowledge and skills needed to understand medieval history.

Essays demand that you engage more deeply with a portion of the course material, master arguments and sources, and provide an opportunity to improve your writing and style. I will reward hard work, good thinking, close reading, correct and elegant writing, and interpretive flair. History demands lots of reading, and historical research often involves taking wrong paths such as reading books that look promising but ultimately don't relate to your questions, and nearly always involves changing your question and argument as you learn more about your subject. This takes time. The best history students work long in advance on their essays, seek help when they need it, and edit their work. All students should save their research notes, and be prepared to discuss their papers with me should I want to discuss it.

**Exams:** Examinations provide an occasion to bring together your knowledge, and to make sense of what you have learned from lectures, your readings, and from other sources. The mid-term quiz will be a chance to practice a question that you will have on the final. It will request a short—three or four paragraph—interpretation of short passages, known as “gobbets,” from the primary sources that you will be reading during the course. This will test your skills as a close reader of texts, but also your knowledge of broader context.

The final exam will involve three parts. There will be some short identification questions about concepts, peoples, books, and other such factual knowledge of the period. The second part will be familiar to you from the mid-term quiz, and involve writing short answers in response to primary sources. Finally, there will be a long essay, that will ask you to integrate detail and analysis in discussing historical changes over a long period of time, the more than a millennium covered by the course.

**A note on academic honesty:** Education and scholarship depends upon a certain sort of basic honesty. I expect that when you claim to have done work, you will actually have done it. Work done for another course cannot be used in this course. When you use the work or ideas of another scholar or student, you should respect them by treating their work fairly and accurately, and give them public credit by citing them openly. Always err on the side of giving too much credit to others than too little. In formal essays, I prefer citations in footnotes using the form known as the Chicago humanities style; see the quick guide at [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)

The University cares about academic honesty as well, because it has to maintain a standard of fairness and equity. You can find its mandate in the section on ‘Academic Integrity’ of the General Academic Regulations in the online Academic Calendar and Catalog and the Faculty of Arts regulation (online at [http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/student/student\\_responsibilities.html](http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/student/student_responsibilities.html)), but the Faculty of Arts requires me to repeat it here, as well.

*“The common penalty in Arts for plagiarism on a written assignment is a grade of F on the paper and a final grade of F (DISC) (for Disciplinary Action) for the course. For the most serious acts of plagiarism, such as purchase of an essay and repeat violations, this penalty can*

*also include suspension for a period of up to five (5) years from registration in courses taught in a particular department/program in Arts or from all courses taught in this Faculty.*

*The Faculty also reserves the right to submit student work that is suspected of being plagiarized to Internet sites designed to detect plagiarism or to other experts for authentication.*

*The common penalty in Arts for academic dishonesty on a test or examination is F for the paper, F (DISC) for the course, and a one-year suspension from courses acceptable for credit in the Faculty. For more serious acts of academic dishonesty on a test or examination, such as repeat violations, this penalty can also include suspension for a period of up to five years from registration in courses taught in a particular department or program in Arts or from all courses taught in or accepted for credit by this Faculty”.*

**Marking:** I will make every effort to return papers within a week, and you will thus have considerable feedback before the voluntary withdrawal (VW) date of 19 March 2015. I normally hand out marked work in class. The comments on your work are supposed to help you improve, so I encourage you to look at them when you pick up your work in class. (The Faculty of Arts wants me to warn you that if you do not pick up your work for four months after the course ends, the work will become the property of the Faculty of Arts; once it belongs to the Faculty, it will “be subject to confidential destruction.”) I will take into account the quality and diligence of research, the creativity, strength, and coherence of thought and argument, and the correct use of grammar, usage, proofreading and citation. Since this is a course that meets the University Senate's W requirement, students must pass the requirement for written English in order to pass the course.

4 % a day will be deducted for unexcused lateness.

A +, 90-100 %: Exceptional: Astonishingly excellent work, which demonstrates originality and a singular command of the subject.

A, 80-89 %. Truly excellent work, free from errors. A strong thesis, well organized paragraphs, and substantial evidence of close reading on single source papers or broad research in the research paper. In research papers, some awareness of the development of historiographical traditions. Excellent and error free citations, and in the research paper a large and intriguing bibliography.

B+, 75-79 %. Very good work, but with some errors.

B. 70-75 %. Good, with evidence of hard work. Certainly must have a suitable thesis. Errors in grammar and usage, and less creativity and coherence in argument and interpretation. Sporadic references to the literature.

C+, 65-69 %. Satisfactory, but little coherence in argument and poor writing, and in the research paper, little evidence of creativity and diligence in research.

C. 60-64 %. Poorly written, and with little evidence of being familiar with the subject about which they are writing, and little evident effort placed into finding material for research.

D. 50-59 %. Poorly organized, without a useful thesis. Many errors in editing, sloppy writing, and little sign of diligent research or close reading. Using only the textbook as a source in the research paper.

F. 0-49 %.

The Faculty of Arts also asks me to remind you that “Students who wish to appeal a grade given for term work must do so within 10 working days after the grade for the term work has been made available to them.”

## Assignments:

### Paper I: 10 %: Due Monday, 6th October.

#### Primary Source Interpretation: The Rule of St. Benedict

In 6 pages—or roughly 1500 words—answer the question, “What is the role of the abbot in Benedict’s rule?” The text is in the Geary reader. Remember the context in which the document was produced, but above all scrutinize the text carefully. The emphasis of this paper should be on the text and its interpretation, though secondary sources and works of reference can be used to assist you in your interpretation. (Of course, they should be credited and cited when used.) Make sure you have a clear thesis statement, articulated clearly, and organize your paper in order to prove your point.

### Article Assignment: 5 %: Due Monday, 20th October.

Historical journals are a basic professional tool of historians, where historians make arguments about how to interpret the past in articles, which are usually present a thesis about the past and defend it with some evidence in, roughly, twenty pages. (If they want to make a longer argument, they might produce a monograph—meaning a scholarly book on a single topic.) Read a recent (published during the last ten years) article (not a book-review) from a scholarly journal about a topic in early medieval history, say between 350-1000 C.E. To find the article, I recommend using the databases *ITER* and the *International medieval bibliography*. These are subscription services available to you through the Library’s home page. You can also look through such journals as *Early Medieval Europe*, *Anglo-Saxon England*, the *Journal of Medieval History*, *Speculum* and *Viator*, as well as using such databases as *Iter* and the *International medieval bibliography*. In a page, sketch the author’s argument, and analyze what sources the author used and how they interpreted them. “Listing” is not analysis; read the footnotes and try to classify the type of sources that the author is using—Saints’ lives? Chronicles? Letters? Art works? Archeological remains? – and briefly describe how they are using them. For instance, one might count the number of pots found in archeological digs in order to discuss trade, or analyze the images on them to discuss attitudes towards religion.

### Paper II: 15 %: Due Friday 18<sup>th</sup> November in class.

#### Sources & Scholarship

This paper asks you to combine the close reading of a primary source with the ability to find scholarly sources and interpret an appropriate scholarly article.

First, choose one of the edited texts in the reader from before 1050; if you have interests that are not well represented in the reader, you can use another primary source in consultation with me at least two weeks before the paper is due.

Second, devise a question about medieval history that can be answered using that source.

Third, develop a bibliography of at least five scholarly books and eight journal articles that would (if you had time to read them) allow you to begin to write with some authority. Use such databases as *Iter*, and the *International Medieval Bibliography*, or even J-stor or Google, as well as the Bison Library catalogue or other catalogues—I particularly recommend WorldCat. Write the

bibliography using the Chicago format, as guided by the link provided above; correct formatting counts.

Fourth, choose one scholarly article that you think would be particularly useful and write a six-page (roughly 1500 word) essay that uses your interpretation of the source and of the scholarly article to shape an answer to your question. When discussing the article, keep in mind that scholarly articles are arguments, and not just sources of fact; make sure to explain how the article's argument shapes your view of the question, while articulating a strong thesis rooted in your reading of the primary source.

**Paper III: Research Paper:**

In 12 pages (roughly 3000 words), explore a topic in medieval history. It can take its departure from a problem, question or debate, or from a particular primary source.

**Paper Bibliography and Proposal: 10%: Due Monday, 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2014.**

The proposal should be roughly a page long, and spell out a particular question or problem, and how you hope to answer it. You should use the references in your text, as well as the library catalogue and such services as the databases *Iter* or the *International Medieval Bibliography*—both available through the library—to develop a reasonable list of scholarly books and articles to develop your work. You should explain what primary and secondary sources you anticipate you will use, and how you will use them to answer your question. The bibliographic assignment gives you a suggestion of the minimum acceptable reading for the paper of five monographs and eight scholarly articles, but authors of papers in the high B and A range will most likely use more sources. Serious work in the humanities and social sciences—not to mention the real joys of historical research—requires substantial reading.

**Research paper: 25 %: Due Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2014.**

The research paper should depart from your proposal, incorporating suggestions for further questions, restructuring, and additional reading. Naturally, additional research is essential and expected; you are not restricted to the material, readings, and questions posed on your research proposal. If you significantly alter your subject from your proposal, however, you may want to consult with me. The paper should reflect serious research and thinking about primary and secondary sources, and be clearly and correctly written.

**Midterm Test: 5 %. In class, during the last day of autumn term.**

**Final Exam: 30%.**

See section on exams, above, for information about the format of the exam. Note that the Final will cover the entire course.

### A FEW HELPFUL REFERENCES

These are a few reference works that are useful places for a point of departure for more extensive work in medieval history.

Joseph R. Strayer, ed. *Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (New York: Scribner, 1982-), 13 vols, available in the Elizabeth Defoe Library reference section, D 114 D5 1982, and in St. Paul's College library at the same call number. Organized in alphabetical articles.

Rosamond McKitterick, ed. *The New Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995-2005), in Elizabeth Defoe—the normal shelves—D117.N48 1995. Organized in chronological volumes, with thematic chapters in each one. Occasionally a chapter will go outside the strict chronological limits of each book.

Apart from Iter and the International Medieval Bibliography, the “Internet Medieval Sourcebook,” available at <http://www.fordham.edu/HALSALL/sbook.html>, contains an invaluable collection of translated sources and excerpts. It also contains useful references to primary sources.

### AUTUMN TERM SCHEDULE

**WME**=Clifford R. Backman, *The Worlds of Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

**RMH**= Patrick J. Geary, ed. *Readings in medieval history*. (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2003).

#### Friday, 5 September: Introduction

##### Week I:

**Readings:** **WME**, introduction and chapter 1.

**M: 8 Sept:** Eternal Rome

**W: 10 Sept:** The Roman Economy

**F: 12 Sept:** Imagining Roman Religion

**Week II:** **WME**, Chapter 2: Read “The Martyrdom of St. Perpetua,” excerpt in **RMH**.

**M: 15 Sept:** Early Church

**W: 17 Sept:** Workshop A, St. Perpetua.

**F: 19 Sept:** Workshop B, St. Perpetua

**Week III:** **WME**, Chapter 3

**M: 22 Sept:** Christianity as Imperial Religion

**W: 24 Sept:** Defining Orthodoxy

**F: 26 Sept:** The Shaping of the Church's Institutions

**Week IV: WME, Chapter 4, Read “Rule of St. Benedict” in RMH.**  
**M: 29 Sept:** Workshop B: St. Benedict  
**W: 1 Oct:** Workshop A: St. Benedict  
**F: 3 Oct:** Approaching Barbarians

**Week V: Read for class on Wednesday—and have an electronic or paper copy with you in class:**  
S.D. Church, “Paganism in Conversion-Age Anglo-Saxon England: The Evidence of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* reconsidered,” *History* 93, issue 310 (2008): 162-180.  
**M: 6 Oct: Paper #1 Due!** Roman Britain to Bede’s World  
**W: 8 Oct:** How to read an article: “Paganism in Conversion-Age Anglo-Saxon England...”  
**F: 10 Oct:** Franks and Roman Gaul.

**Week VI: WME, Chapter 5**  
**M: 13 Oct: No Class: Thanksgiving**  
**W: 15 Oct:** Byzantium  
**F: 17 Oct: No Class: I’m at a conference.**

**Week VII: WME, Chapter 6**  
**M: 20 Oct: Article Assignment Due:** Muhammad  
**W: 22 Oct:** The Islamic Expansion  
**F: 24 Oct:** The end of Latin Christendom?

**Week VIII: WME, Review Chapter 6**  
**M: 27 Oct:** The Carolingians  
**W: 29 Oct:** Carolingian Renaissance  
**F: 31 Oct:** Carolingian Economies

**Week IX: In Geary, read Einhard, “Life of Charles the Great” and Selected Capitularies: Read all the capitularies, but give extra attention to “Paderborn, 785”, “Concerning the Saxons, 797”, “On the study of literature” and “De Villis”**  
**M: 3 Nov:** Workshop A: Einhard, Life of Charlemagne & Capitularies  
**W: 5 Nov:** Workshop B: Einhard, Life of Charlemagne & Capitularies.  
**F: 7 Nov:** Dissolution of Carolingian Empire

**Week X: WME, Chapter 7**  
**M: 10 Nov:** ‘Abbasid empire  
**W: 12 Nov:** Vikings  
**F: 14 Nov:** Class cancelled.

**Week XI: WME, Chapter 8**  
**M: 17 Nov: Paper 2 Due:** Anglo-Saxons and Danes  
**W: 19 Nov:** Ottonian Empire  
**F: 21 Nov:** Feudalism and Manorialism



**Week XII: WME Chapter 9**

**M: 24 Nov:** Capetian Kings and Normans

**W: 26 Nov:** Norman Conquest

**F: 28 Nov:** Apocalypse Now?

**Week XIII**

**M: 1 Dec:** Review

**W: 3 Dec:** Mid-term Test