



# History 398: Seminar on Medieval Peasants

**Dr. Sandy Bardsley**  
**Moravian College**  
**Fall 2008**

**Office: Comenius 303**  
**Phone: (610) 861-1398**  
**Email: [sandybardsley@moravian.edu](mailto:sandybardsley@moravian.edu)**

**Office Hours: Mon, Wed, Fri 9-10am; Mon & Fri 1-2pm  
plus other times by appointment**

This course is first and foremost a writing course, in which you will produce a high-quality article-length paper on a topic of your choice. Your paper will be based on original research from primary sources, but it will also engage the historiographical context of your topic. This course should give you the opportunity, in other words, to put into practice everything you've learned during the last few years about how to be an historian.

In addition, you will learn about the lives of peasants in late medieval England. The chronological and geographical context for our work is important, but it is less important than the opportunities the course provides for engagement with primary and secondary sources. Do not worry if you do not already know much about medieval English peasants: we will begin the semester reading a textbook that gives good background information.

Our regular class reading load is not particularly heavy, but the amount of reading and writing associated with research is considerable! Be prepared to write, rewrite, and assist others with their writing. Because we meet only once a week, you will find that the amount of work required for each class session is more than you are accustomed to: you'll need to figure out ways of spreading the workload across the week.



## Goals of the Course

By the end of this course, you should have improved your abilities to:

1. approach writing as a *process*, one which involves considerable ongoing reflection and revision.
2. use primary sources critically and carefully.
3. respond to secondary sources and engage in historiographical debates.
4. appreciate the ways in which the expectations for writing change according to format and audience.
5. use the writing conventions appropriate to the discipline of history.
6. give and receive constructive criticism.
7. deliver effective oral presentations.

## The Role of Writing in this Course

In this course, you will engage in four different types of writing, each with a particular set of conventions and a different audience:

1. **Research paper based on primary sources.** The final product must be at least 20 pages long, written for an audience of other historians. It must be of publishable quality – indeed, I hope that some of you will consider submitting the final versions of your papers to journals for publication. This paper must be written in formal academic prose, with complete footnotes and a bibliography. Please note that you will be writing this paper in stages throughout the semester, with lots of opportunities for feedback and rewriting between each stage.
2. **Journal entries.** Up until Thanksgiving, you will be writing weekly journal entries to reflect on our readings and on the process of researching and writing. The main audience for these entries will be yourself – they will serve as a place for you to untangle ideas, think through research strategies and data, and even vent about the frustrations you encounter. The secondary audience for the entries will be me – I will read over each entry to check that you are keeping up your journals and taking them seriously. In terms of format and style, journal entries may be less formal. They will be graded for content, regularity, and willingness to engage with ideas, rather than for stylistic concerns such as spelling and grammar. Even though errors in spelling and grammar will not detract from your grade, I hope that you will proofread journal entries nonetheless: proofreading will help you clarify your ideas, and this will ultimately improve your paper.
3. **Feedback to others on their writing.** As part of the ongoing process of rewriting and rethinking, you will help others with their papers and they will do the same for you. Each time a major part of the paper is due, you will write up comments to help other members of your writing group (I will assign you to writing groups once the semester is underway). Your main audience will be that of your peers, although I will also collect a copy of your comments in order to assess and help you with the important (if often overlooked) skill of offering useful feedback and constructive criticism.
4. **Free-writing during class.** Sometimes we will use part of our class time to think through issues and ideas by writing about them. I will not collect these writings, but I will sometimes ask you to read them aloud or to summarize them. Your main audience will thus be yourself, and your focus should be on exploring and thinking through ideas and arguments. As with the readings journals, free-writing will be a means to an end – an important part of the writing *process* – rather than an end in itself.



## Required Texts

The only assigned textbook for this class is Judith M. Bennett, *A Medieval Life: Cecilia Penifader of Brigstock, c. 1297-1344* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998).

All other required readings for this course (including instructions on course assignments) can be found in the Coursepack handbook which I will distribute to you in class. Please bring the assigned pages of this Coursepack with you to class each week. I am also assuming that you have retained copies of *The Bedford Handbook* from your Writing 100 class and Mary Lynn Rampolla's *Pocket Guide to Writing in History* from Hist 270 and other history courses. If you do not have these books, I suggest that you buy or borrow copies – you will need them.

## Attendance Policy

Attendance is not required in this course, but it is very highly recommended. Much of what we cover will build on previous classes, and those who are absent will find it hard to keep up with what is going on. Absentees will also find that their class participation grade suffers. Attendance is particularly important since we meet only once a week and since so much of our course involves discussion and exploration of ideas that cannot easily be replicated from class notes.

## Academic Honesty Policy

I expect that you will complete all assignments in this course individually and independently, and I will refer any cases of suspected cheating or plagiarism to the Academic Affairs Office. I strongly encourage you to ensure that you are familiar with Moravian's Academic Honesty Policy, found in the Student Handbook. As this policy explains, it is possible to commit plagiarism without intending to be dishonest, but serious consequences result regardless of intent.

Let me clarify two particular occasions when it is legitimate (and even desirable) to use the help of others. First, while I expect that you will write all assignments on your own, I *do* encourage you to discuss with each other the ideas and arguments contained in our course, both within class and outside of it. For example, you might run into a friend in the library and start talking about how your paper is going. Perhaps, for instance, you are puzzled about how to interpret a particular primary source. Your friend, after listening to you, might make an observation or suggestion. As you write your paper, it is legitimate to explain and respond to that comment, *as long as you do not claim the idea as your own*. You might, for example, write something like, "In talking about this reading with [your friend's name], he/she suggested that this primary source might reflect [your friend's suggestion]. This makes good sense to me because . . ." In other words, signal clearly which things are someone else's opinion and which things are your own. You should also insert a footnote that acknowledges your debt to someone else's ideas or thoughts – by the end of the semester, you will almost certainly find that your work has been strengthened by suggestions from your classmates, and you should thank them accordingly. People often do this by adding a special footnote or endnote before their regular notes. Here's an example.<sup>1</sup> Second, I encourage you to seek help with writing. It is perfectly legitimate to ask others to read over your paper and look for errors of spelling, grammar, and expression. You might also ask others to look over your written work and help you with paper organization and structure. I am happy to read drafts of papers, especially if you give me advance warning. I also encourage you to use the Writing Center. Again, it is good practice to insert a footnote in your paper in which you thank anyone who has read and commented on a draft.

---

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Marianne Cutler, of East Stroudsburg University, for proofreading this syllabus for me.

One other thing to note about plagiarism: often people do not realize that it is possible to plagiarize from oneself. In other words, if someone was to turn in a paper that was identical or very similar in parts to a paper he/she had turned in for another class, this would constitute plagiarism. If you hope to work on a topic that you've already examined in another class, please talk carefully with me about it first. You may be able to expand part of a paper you've previously written, or take it in a different direction, but *this absolutely needs to be cleared with me before you begin.*

## Inclusive Language Policy

Moravian College policy strongly encourages the use of inclusive, non-discriminatory language in all academic writing and communication. For instance, rather than writing about "mankind," write about "people" or "humankind." Rather than use the term "he" when referring to a person in the abstract (as opposed to a specific individual), replace it with "they" or "he/she." This mindfulness about language reflects Moravian's commitment to a tolerant and inclusive campus community. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have about inclusive language or to work with you to find ways to make your language more inclusive.

## Evaluation

Your grade for this course will be calculated as follows:

Journals	10%
Historiographical Abstracts	5%
Paper Chunk 1	10%
Paper Chunk 2	10%
Paper Chunk 3	10%
Paper Chunk 4	10%
Complete Draft	10%
Final Paper	15%
Paper Presentation	10%
Participation (including feedback to others)	10%

# Class Schedule

Please note: we only meet on Fridays, but there are often assignments due (by email) by 12 noon on a Wednesday. I suggest that you make a note of these in your diaries/planners!

August 29	<b>Introduction</b>
September 5	<p><b>The Peasant World I</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bennett, <i>A Medieval Life</i>, chapters 1-3.</li> <li>• Patrick Rael, “Research Papers: Keeping a Research Journal,” Coursepack [hereafter abbreviated to CP] 1-3.</li> <li>• Primary Sources and Potential Research Questions, CP 4-6.</li> <li>• Primary Source: Court Rolls, CP 7-12.</li> </ul> <p><b>Journal 1:</b> First, please summarize the readings for today from Bennett in 1-1.5 pages (double-spaced). Write this under the heading, “Reading Summary.” Reducing these chapters to just 1-1.5 pages will certainly involve leaving lots of information out! I want you to identify the information that seems most relevant to you as you begin to plan your own project. Second, in something between ½ a page and a full page double-spaced, please set out your initial thoughts about what you might research for your paper. Head this section, “My Project.” Look at Rael’s suggestions on research journals. Questions you might consider: what topics and sources interest you most so far? Has the reading from Bennett suggested any potential topics to you?</p>
September 12	<p><b>The Peasant World II</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bennett, <i>A Medieval Life</i>, chapters 4-6.</li> <li>• Patrick Rael, “Research Papers: Paper Writing Steps,” CP 13.</li> <li>• Primary Source: Manorial Accounts, CP 14-16.</li> </ul> <p><b>Journal 2:</b> First, please summarize the readings from Bennett in 1-1.5 pages (double-spaced). Write this under the heading, “Reading Summary.” Second, continue your musings on your own project and where you think you might be headed under the section, “My Project” (½ - 1 page).</p>
Week of September 19	<p><b>Individual meetings with me about paper topics</b></p> <p>No assignments are due, but please be aware that you will need to be well prepared for this meeting and that you should be ordering secondary sources on interlibrary loan as soon as possible after we meet.</p>
September 26	<p><b>The Peasant World III</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bennett, <i>A Medieval Life</i>, chapters 7-10.</li> <li>• Patrick Rael, “Research Papers: Taking Notes,” CP 17.</li> <li>• Primary Source: Chronicles, Sermons, and Literature, CP 18-24.</li> </ul> <p><b>Journal 3:</b> First, please summarize the readings from Bennett in 1-1.5 pages (double-spaced). Write this under the heading, “Reading Summary.” Second, you should – by now – have a reasonable idea of what your own project will involve. Record your progress in refining questions and ordering sources under the section, “My Project” (½ - 1 page).</p>

October 3	<p><b>Historiographical Analysis and Coroners' Rolls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selections from Barbara Hanawalt, <i>The Ties That Bound: Peasant Family Life in Medieval England</i>, CP 25-38.</li> <li>• Barbara Harris, Review of <i>The Ties That Bound</i> in <i>Journal of Social History</i>, CP 39-42.</li> <li>• Primary Source: Coroners' Rolls, CP 43-50.</li> <li>• "Useful Feedback and Constructive Criticism," CP 51-52.</li> </ul> <p><b>Historiographical abstracts</b> are due to me in class. Please submit at least five abstracts of secondary sources (in most cases, these will be books, book chapters from edited collections, and/or articles in journals). Each abstract should be at least ½ page single-spaced or a full page double-spaced. Each must identify (a) the author's thesis; (b) the sources he/she has used; and (c) the ways in which you think it will be useful for your paper (for instance, might it be a good comparison? Might you argue against the author's conclusions?).</p> <p><b>Journal 4:</b> First, please summarize the readings from Hanawalt &amp; Harris in 1-1.5 pages double-spaced (your total for both together should be 1.5-2 pages, not 1.5-2 pages each). Write this under the heading, "Reading Summary." Second, continue to muse on your own project and record the progress you have made your analysis of primary sources under the section, "My Project."</p>
Week of October 10	<p><b>Individual Meetings with Me</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please bring to this meeting two copies of an agenda in which you list at least three questions you have so far and a rough outline of where you plan to go with the paper chunk due next Wednesday.</li> </ul>
Wed Oct 15	<p><b>Paper Chunk 1</b> is due to me and to writing group members by 12 noon.</p>
October 17	<p><b>Writing Workshop &amp; Historiographical Debate 1: How Cohesive was the Medieval Peasant Community and Did it Decline?</b></p> <p>We will spend part of today's class workshopping your first paper chunks. The rest of the class will focus on an historiographical debate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• J. A. Raftis, "Changes in an English Village After the Black Death," <i>Mediaeval Studies</i> 29 (1967), 158-77, CP 53-62.</li> <li>• Christopher Dyer, "The English Medieval Village Community and its Decline," <i>Journal of British Studies</i> 33 (1994), 407-29, CP 63-85.</li> <li>• "Initial Paper Outline," CP 86-87.</li> <li>• <b>Journal 5</b> is due: Please summarize the readings by Raftis &amp; Dyer in 1.5-2 pages double-spaced. Be sure to identify each author's thesis and sources, as well as the places where they agree and disagree with one another.</li> </ul>
Week of October 24	<p><b>Individual Meetings with Me</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 24 hours before our meeting time, please send me an email in which you outline your latest plans for your project, list at least three questions you have for me, and explain where you plan to go with the paper chunk due next Wednesday. This assignment will count as <b>Journal 6</b> and must be <i>at least 250 words</i> long.</li> </ul>
Wed October 29	<p><b>Paper Chunk 2</b> and <b>Initial Outline</b> are due to me and to writing group members by 12 noon.</p>

October 31	<p><b>Writing Workshop &amp; Historiographical Debate 2: Conviviality and Charity</b></p> <p>We will spend part of today’s class workshopping your second paper chunks. The rest of the class will focus on an historiographical debate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Judith M. Bennett, “Conviviality and Charity in Medieval and Early Modern England,” <i>Past and Present</i> 134 (1992), 19-41, CP 88-110.</li> <li>• Maria Moisà, “Conviviality and Charity in Medieval and Early Modern England,” <i>Past and Present</i> 154 (1997), 223-234, CP 111-122.</li> <li>• Judith M. Bennett, “Conviviality and Charity in Medieval and Early Modern England – Reply,” <i>Past and Present</i> 154 (1997), 235-242, CP 123-130.</li> <li>• <b>Journal 7</b> is due: Please summarize the readings for today in 1.5-2 pages (double-spaced). Be sure to identify each author’s thesis and sources, as well as the places where they agree and disagree with one another.</li> </ul>
Week of November 7	<p><b>Individual Meetings with Me</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 24 hours before our meeting time, please send me an email in which you outline your latest plans for your project, list at least three questions you have for me, and explain where you plan to go with the paper chunk due next Wednesday. This assignment will count as <b>Journal 8</b> and must be <i>at least</i> 200 words long.</li> </ul>
Wed Nov 12	<p><b>Paper Chunk 3</b> and <b>Updated Outline</b> are due to me and to writing group members by 12 noon.</p>
November 14	<p><b>Writing Workshop &amp; Historiographical Debate 3: Did Women’s Wages Increase More than Men’s after the Black Death?</b></p> <p>We will spend part of today’s class workshopping your third paper chunks. The rest of the class will focus on an historiographical debate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy Bardsley, “Women’s Work Reconsidered: Gender and Wage Differentiation in Late Medieval England,” <i>Past and Present</i> 165 (1999), 3-29, CP 131-157.</li> <li>• John Hatcher, “Women’s Work Reconsidered: Gender and Wage Differentiation in Late Medieval England,” <i>Past and Present</i> 173 (2001), 191-98, CP 158-165.</li> <li>• Sandy Bardsley, “Women’s Work Reconsidered: Gender and Wage Differentiation in Late Medieval England – Reply,” <i>Past and Present</i> 173 (2001), 199-202, CP 166-169.</li> <li>• “Introduction and Conclusion,” CP 170.</li> <li>• <b>Journal 9</b> is due: Please summarize the readings for today in 1.5-2 pages (double-spaced). Be sure to identify each author’s thesis and sources, as well as the places where they agree and disagree with one another.</li> </ul>
Wed Nov 19	<p><b>Paper Chunk 4</b> (Intro &amp; Conclusion) and <b>Updated Outline</b> are due to me and to writing group members by 12 noon.</p>

November 21	<p><b>Writing Workshop &amp; Historiographical Debate 4: Lords' Control over Women's Marriage</b></p> <p>We will spend part of today's class workshopping your introductions and conclusions. The rest of the class will focus on an historiographical debate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eleanor Searle, "Seigneurial Control over Women's Marriage: The Antecedents and Function of Merchet in England," <i>Past and Present</i> 82 (1979), 3-43, CP 171-211.</li> <li>• Paul A. Brand, Paul R. Hyams, and Rosamond Faith, "Seigneurial Control over Women's Marriage," <i>Past and Present</i> 99 (1983), 123-48, CP 212-237.</li> <li>• Eleanor Searle, "Seigneurial Control over Women's Marriage: A Rejoinder," <i>Past and Present</i> 99 (1983), 148-60, CP 237-249.</li> <li>• <b>Journal 10</b> is due: Please summarize the readings for today in 1.5-2 pages (double-spaced). Be sure to identify each author's thesis and sources, as well as the places where they agree and disagree with one another.</li> </ul>
November 28	<p><b>No Class – Thanksgiving Break</b></p> <p>Although we don't have individual meetings scheduled as part of class, I encourage you to make an appointment to meet with me if you would like help strategizing about what to do over the break.</p>
Wed Dec 3	<p><b>Complete (absolutely-the-best-you-can-make-it) Draft</b> is due to me and to writing group members by 12 noon. Look at Rael's checklist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patrick Rael, "Research Papers: Revising the Draft" and "Research Papers: Writing Checklist," CP 250-252.</li> </ul>
December 5	<p><b>Writing Workshop 5</b></p> <p>We will spend the whole of today's class focused on giving each other substantial feedback on the complete drafts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please review again: Patrick Rael, "Research Papers: Revising the Draft" and "Research Papers: Writing Checklist," CP 250-252.</li> </ul>
Sat December 6	<p><b>Undergraduate Conference in Medieval and Early Modern Studies</b></p> <p>You may present a 15-minute version of your paper as part of the conference or during the exam period set aside for this class.</p>
Mon Dec 8	<p><b>Final paper</b> is due electronically <i>and</i> in hard copy to my office in hard copy by 4pm.</p>
Exam period	<p><b>Delivery of papers</b> that are not part of the conference. All must attend!</p>