

Special Topics in Medieval History: Debating the Middle Ages

History 294

Fall 2009

Wednesday and Friday, 10:20 am-11:30 am

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 9 am – 11 am (and by appointment)

Our understanding of history is not passed down unchanged from generation to generation, but instead is constantly evolving. The debates of historians fuel the improvements in how we interpret the past. This course will give students the opportunity to study and evaluate some of the most significant debates among medieval historians and to see how they have formed current ideas about the Middle Ages.

We will first study the basic historical outline of the history of the Middle Ages, from ca. 500 to ca. 1500. This work will build the basis for our joint discussion of the historiography of the period – the ways in which historians have approached (and often disagreed about) important issues about the medieval past. We will focus on four controversies of particular relevance to modern historians of the Middle Ages: the nature of the transition from the Roman Empire to the early medieval world; the emergence of “feudalism” and “feudal” culture; the role of gender; and the relationship between religion and medieval society. Students will be expected to read, discuss, and analyze the merits of the work of historians in these areas, and produce their own research paper that engages with secondary sources.

Students are not expected to have any previous knowledge of the Middle Ages.

Goals of the Course

- To gain a greater understanding of the major events and trends of the history of Western medieval Europe from ca. 500 to ca. 1500.
- To learn the difference between primary and secondary sources, and to study in particular how to analyze and evaluate secondary sources.
- To discover the most significant areas of debate in medieval history and the historians doing work in these areas.
- To learn the basic tools of researching and writing about secondary sources.
- To improve the ability to read, discuss, write, and present about the past.

Books Available for Purchase in the Bookstore

- Barbara H. Rosenwein, *A Short History of the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009). ISBN 978-1442601048.
- *Debating the Middle Ages: Issues and Readings*, ed. Lester K. Little and Barbara H. Rosenwein (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998). ISBN 9781577180081.

Please note:

- These two items have also been placed on reserve at Reeves Library.
- While you are free to purchase the books on the Internet, please find the same editions listed here.
- Be sure to bring assigned readings to class for discussion.
- Additional material will be made available to students enrolled in the course, and certain articles will be accessed from books on reserve.

Additional Books on Reserve

- John H. Arnold, *What is Medieval History?* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2008).
- *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms*, ed. Thomas F. X. Noble (New York: Routledge, 2006).
- Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).
- *Lordship and Community in Medieval Europe: Selected Readings*, ed. Fredric L. Cheyette (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968).
- Georges Duby, *The Early Growth of the European Economy: Warriors and Peasants from the Seventh to the Twelfth Centuries*, trans. Howard B. Clarke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978).
- Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work & Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).
- *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Julia M. H. Smith (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
- Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2003).
- Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity, AD 150-750* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971).

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend class and be punctual. It is the students' obligation to take their own notes. Much of the information and methods covered in class, which will form part of the material that will be tested on the exam and papers, cannot be found in the reading. In addition, students will not be able to gain any credit for participation if they do not attend class sessions.

In the cases of *documented* illness or family emergency that will make it impossible for students to attend class or complete assignments, students are urged to get in touch with the instructor.

Academic Honesty Policy

Students are expected to adhere to Moravian College's Academic Honesty Policy for all assignments in this course. It is imperative that you familiarize yourself with the definition of plagiarism, which (even when done inadvertently) is considered a serious offense. I expect that all exams and papers are *your own work*. Any time that you use someone else's ideas in a paper, you must give credit to the person. For further information, see the appropriate pages in the Student Handbook or come speak with me.

Schedule of Classes and Readings

Wednesday, 9/2/09: Introduction

Friday, 9/4/09: The End of Rome and the Rise of the Middle Ages

Reading: B. H. Rosenwein, *Short History*, pp. 21-32, 40-56, 75-99.

Wednesday, 9/9/09: Centralization and Fragmentation

Reading: B. H. Rosenwein, *Short History*, pp. 118-35, 152-72.

Friday, 9/11/09: Resurgence of Europe

Reading: B. H. Rosenwein, *Short History*, pp. 182-216, 223-36.

Wednesday, 9/16/09: Late Medieval Stresses

Reading: B. Rosenwein, *Short History*, pp. 252-58, 263-87.

Friday, 9/18/09: Decline and the End of the Middle Ages

Reading: B. Rosenwein, *Short History*, pp. 305-45.

Wednesday, 9/23/09: Midterm Exam

Friday, 9/25/09: What is Medieval History?

Reading: John H. Arnold, *What is Medieval History?*, pp. 86-127.

Wednesday, 9/30/09: The Fate of Rome's Western Provinces, I

Reading: *Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 1-14

Walter Pohl, "Conceptions of Ethnicity in Early Medieval Studies" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 15-24).

Walter Goffart, "The Barbarians in Late Antiquity and How They Were Accommodated in the West" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 25-44).

Friday, 10/2/09: The Fate of Rome's Western Provinces, II

Reading: Chris Wickham, "The Fall of Rome Will Not Take Place" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 45-57).

Richard Hodges and David Whitehouse, "The Decline of the Western Empire" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 58-72).

Michael McCormick, "New Light on the 'Dark Ages': How the Slave Trade Fuelled the Carolingian Economy," *Past & Present* 177 (2002): 17-54 (to be forwarded to enrolled students).

Wednesday, 10/7/09: The Fate of Rome's Western Provinces, III

Reading: Ian N. Wood, "Gregory of Tours and Clovis" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 73-91).

Bonnie Effros, "Grave Goods and the Ritual Expression of Identity" (*From Roman Provinces*, pp. 189-232).

Friday, 10/9/09: The Fate of Rome's Western Provinces, IV

Assignment: First paper due in class and discussion

Wednesday, 10/14/09: Methods of Research with Secondary Sources

Reading: W. C. Booth, G. G. Colomb, and J. M. Williams, *The Craft of Research*, pp. 68-101.

Friday, 10/16/09: Feudalism and its Alternatives, I

Reading: *Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 107-13.

Joseph R. Strayer, "Feudalism in Western Europe" (*Lordship and Community*, pp.12-21).

Otto Hintze, "The Nature of Feudalism" (*Lordship and Community*, pp. 22-31).

Elizabeth A. R. Brown, "The Tyranny of a Construct: Feudalism and Historians of Medieval Europe" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 148-69).

Wednesday, 10/21/09: Feudalism and its Alternatives, II

Reading: Georges Duby, "The Age of Feudalism" (*Early Growth of the European Economy*, pp. 157-80).

Dominique Barthélemy, "The Year 1000 Without Abrupt or Radical Transformation" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 134-47).

Thomas N. Bisson, "Medieval Lordship," *Speculum* 70 (1995): 743-59 (to be forwarded to enrolled students).

Friday, 10/23/09: Feudalism and its Alternatives, III

Reading: Pierre Bonnassie, "The Banal Seigneurie and the 'Reconditioning' of the Free Peasantry" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 114-33).

Fredric L. Cheyette, "Giving Each His Due" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 170-79).

Monique Bourin and Robert Durand, "Strangers and Neighbors" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 180-90).

Wednesday, 10/28/09: Feudalism and its Alternatives, IV

Reading: Gerd Althoff, "Amicitiae [Friendships] as Relationships between States and People" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 191-210).

Jacques Le Goff, "The Symbolic Ritual of Vassalage" (*Time, Work, and Culture*, pp. 237-87).

Friday, 10/30/09: Gender, I

Reading: *Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 213-18.

Julia M. H. Smith, "Gendering the Early Medieval World" (*Gender in the Early Medieval World*, pp. 1-19).

Susan Mosher Stuard, "Burdens of Matrimony: Husbanding and Gender in Medieval Italy" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 290-98).

Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "The 'Cruel Mother': Maternity, Widowhood, and Dowry in Florence in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 264-76).

Wednesday, 11/4/09: Gender, II

Reading: Janet Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels: The Careers of Brunhild and Bathild in Merovingian History" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 219-53).

Pauline Stafford, "Women and the Norman Conquest" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 254-63).

Friday, 11/6/09: Gender, III

Reading: Caroline Walker Bynum, "Men's Use of Female Symbols" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 277-89).

Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men*, pp. 1-19, 151-67.

Wednesday, 11/11/09: Religion and Society, I

Reading: *Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 301-9.

Peter Brown, "Religion" (*World of Late Antiquity*, pp. 49-113).

Sofia Boesch-Gajano, "The Use and Abuse of Miracles in Early Medieval Culture" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 330-39).

Friday, 11/13/09: Religion and Society, II

Reading: Marie-Dominique Chenu, "The Evangelical Awakening" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 310-29).

Dominique Iogna-Prat, "The Dead in the Celestial Bookkeeping of the Cluniac Monks around the Year 1000" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 340-62).

R. I. Moore, "Literacy and the Making of History, c. 1000-c. 1150" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 363-75).

Wednesday, 11/18/09: Oral presentations on material for second paper

Friday, 11/20/09: Oral presentations on material for second paper

Wednesday, 12/2/09: Themes in Medieval History

Assignment: Second paper due in class and discussion

Friday, 12/4/09: Religion and Society, III

Reading: Jean-Claude Schmitt, "Religion, Folklore, and Society in the Medieval West" (*Debating the Middle Ages*, pp. 376-87).

John Van Engen, "The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem," *The American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 519-52 (to be forwarded to enrolled students).

Wednesday, 12/9/09: Religion and Society, IV

Reading: John Bossy, "The Mass as a Social Institution, 1200-1700," *Past & Present* 100 (1983): 29-61 (to be forwarded to enrolled students).

Michael S. Driscoll and Susan Guise Sheridan, "Every Knee Shall Bend: A Biocultural Reconstruction of Liturgical and Ascetical Prayer in V-VII Century Palestine," *Worship* 74 (2000): 453-68 (to be forwarded to enrolled students).

Grading

Midterm, on 9/23	15%
First paper (5-6 pp.), due on 10/9	20%
Second paper (11-12 pp.), due on 12/2	30%
Oral presentation (11/18, 11/20)	5%
Participation	30%

Requirements

- The midterm will demonstrate knowledge of significant events, figures, and terms of the Middle Ages, which will facilitate our work with secondary sources. To be taken in class on 9/23. The format of the midterm will be discussed in class.
- The first paper (5-6 pp., due in class on 10/9/09) will discuss an aspect of the transition from the Roman to medieval world, using a combination of secondary sources from *Debating the Middle Ages* and *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms*.
- The second paper (11-12 pp., due in class on 12/2/09) will be an historiographical paper, either discussing the work of a significant medieval historian or a theme of interest to medieval historians. A session of class will be devoted to discussing the methods of doing secondary research (10/14/09).
- Late papers will be penalized one “step” per day late (e.g., an A paper would become an A-; an A- paper would become a B+; and so on).
- Descriptions of the format for both papers will be distributed in class and discussed. Both papers should employ footnotes for references, and use the Chicago Manual of Style format. You might want to consult your copy of Diana Hacker’s *The Bedford Handbook* for further information on this format.
- Papers must be submitted in hard copy.
- Students who would like help with their writing are encouraged to take advantage of the resources of the Writing Center.
- Participation grades are assigned based upon your contributions in lectures and class discussion. It is imperative that you prepare the readings assigned for each day before class and are ready to talk about them. Simply attending class does not guarantee you a high participation mark.
- Students will deliver oral presentations in class on 11/18 and 11/20 on the topic of their second paper, and we will discuss your results as a class. The format of the oral presentations will be discussed in class.
- Please note that it is within my purview as an instructor to apply qualitative judgment in determining grades. I will do my utmost to be fair and consistent.
- There are no make-up exams or presentations, save for documented emergencies.
- There are no extra-credit assignments in this course.

Disabilities

Students with disabilities who need special facilities or consideration should present the appropriate documentation from Disability Support Services to the instructor.