

GONZAGA-IN-FLORENCE SYLLABUS

Course: HIST 311 Medieval Europe
Credits: 3 Credits
Instructor: Roberto Sabbadini



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SCHEDULE: MONDAY 3:35-6:30

OFFICE HOURS: MONDAY, 6:30-7:30. Contact at: roberto.sabba@libero.it

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course analyzes the development of western European social, political, religious and cultural structures and institutions during the Middle Ages, one of the most complex and fascinating historical periods. The course explores this development in a broad chronological perspective, from the fall of the Roman Empire to the late medieval crisis, and in relation to the other great civilizations that deeply influenced the growth of western Europe's unique history and the evolution toward a peculiar European identity.

The course is chronologically and thematically divided in five main parts. We will first analyze *the origins of the Middle Ages*, as a result of the collapse of the Roman civilization and as a consequence of the interaction of western Europe with Islam and the Byzantine Empire. We will then focus over the birth of *Feudal Europe*, the social, political and economic structure that characterizes a new peculiar civilization. The year 1000 represents a real watershed opening the way to a demographic and economic growth that will provide the framework for the first great *expansion of the West* outside the borders of Christianity. A sort of *'golden age'* will follow, the twelfth and thirteenth century's cultural revival and development of feudal monarchies that will embark Europe on its long road to modernity. The course will conclude by analyzing the *late medieval crisis* symbolized by the great plague epidemic known as the Black Death, another important watershed.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to provide the students with a basic knowledge of the main historical events and personalities; an analysis of the main historical processes; an understanding of the political, social, religious and cultural phenomena that characterized the European society in the Medieval period. Through this approach students will come to understand the roots of the European identity and will be able to relate the historical background to cultural, religious and political issues.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, students are expected to be able to:

- demonstrate a confident knowledge of significant historical events and personalities which shaped the history of the Middle Ages;
- engage in the process of historical interpretation through the analysis of documents;
- apply their analytical skills to complex historical questions;
- develop models and concepts for analyzing culture, society and politics that can be applied to many different situations, both historical and contemporary;
- present coherent persuasive arguments in oral and written form.

GRADING AND OTHER POLICIES

Students will be evaluated on the basis of two in-class examinations (mid-term and final), a paper and class participation proportionally broken down as follows:

- 30% Mid-term Exam
- 30% Final Exam
- 30% Paper
- 10% Class Participation

Students will have a **mid-term exam** and a **final exam** organized in the same way and each composed of three parts: a long essay, short answers and short definitions/identifications. The final exam is not cumulative.

Students are required to write one **term paper**.

Length requirement for paper: 8 pages (i.e. 2300 words), typed (font Arial, size 12, double spaced). The 2300 words do not include bibliography, that is to be considered additional and compulsory. The final paper shall have at least 5 bibliographical references. The use of Wikipedia is not allowed.

The topic of the paper is chosen by the student and discussed with the teacher. Each student will have to submit an abstract of the final paper, including a preliminary bibliography. The abstract is a short summary, illustrating the idea of the paper and the thesis. Deadline to choose the topic of the final paper: October 24. The paper is due on November 21.

Following **grading system** will be observed:

0 - 59 = **F**, 60 - 69 = **D**, 70 - 72 = **C-**, 73 - 76 = **C**, 77 - 79 = **C+**,
80 - 82 = **B-**, 83 - 86 = **B**, 87 - 89 = **B+**, 90 - 92 = **A-**, 93 - 100 = **A**

Course Organization: The course will be structured in lectures, discussions of the reading material and analysis of primary sources, home assignments and oral presentation of the papers.

Participation: Participation will be assessed by asking the students to:

- prepare the **reading assignments** for class; on your lecture schedule you will find the required readings for each lecture; they should be completed before each class meeting as a homework assignment. The reading assignments will be checked by oral questions and short written assignments;
- be active in discussions;
- present oral reports of the paper.

Participation also refers to regular behaviour in class.

Students are asked to take careful notes during every lecture and in-class activity: they are to be considered a fundamental didactic base for the whole course. The readings will not provide you with all the necessary material to complete the course successfully.

Exams: The evaluation of the exams is assessed according to the following criteria:

- analytical skills
- understanding of the reading material and notes
- study of the reading material and notes
- clarity of expression

Paper: The paper will be graded according to the following criteria:

- How clearly and specifically the thesis statement sets forth the subject and purpose of the essay.
- How well the essay deals with the topic in terms of completeness of thought, understanding and complexity of ideas.
- How coherent, logical and organized are the ideas, thoughts, and examples.
- How well the examples support or illustrate the points made and how extensive and thorough the use of such support material is.

- How competent the written form of the essay is: grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, and spelling.

Attendance

University policy allows a maximum of six absences for a three credit course. If more than six classes are missed, the final grade will be a "V".

REQUIRED READING

The required book is available for purchase in Florence

C.R. Backman, *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*. Oxford University Press, 2009.

COURSE OUTLINE & SCHEDULE

- Week 1: ***Introduction: Medieval Europe***
The Origins of the Middle Ages: The End of the Ancient World
The fall of the Roman Empire. Christianity. The roman-barbarian kingdoms.
Reading: ch. 1-3, pp. 3-79
- Week 2: ***The Origins of the Middle Ages: Byzantium and Islam***
The Byzantine Empire. The rise of Islam. The Franks and the Papacy
Reading: ch. 5, pp. 111-130; ch. 6, pp. 131-136
- Week 3: ***Feudal Europe: The Revival of the Empire***
Charlemagne: the revival of the Empire
From the Carolingian to the Holy Roman Empire
Reading: ch. 6, pp. 136-163; ch. 7, pp. 167-178; ch. 9, pp. 226-233
- Week 4: ***Feudal Europe: The Feudal Society***
Feudalism. The tripartite society: peasants, monks, knights
Reading: ch. 8, pp. 195-209; ch. 9, pp. 219-225; ch. 4, pp. 80-101
- Week 5: ***The Expansion of the West: Christianity beyond its Borders***
A new trend: commercial and political expansion. The crusades
Reading: ch. 10, pp. 274-285
- Week 6: **Mid-Term in-class exam**
- Week 7: ***Feudal Europe: Papacy and Empire***
The investiture controversy. The universal empire: Frederick I and Frederick II
The theocratic church: Innocent III
Reading: ch. 10, pp. 262-274; ch. 12, pp. 327-350
- Week 8: ***The 'Golden Age': The Urban Civilization***
The government of the city
Reading: ch. 11, pp. 291-326; ch. 14, pp. 377-399
- Week 9: ***The 'Golden Age': The Urban Civilization***
The citizen. The merchant. The friar
Reading: ch. 15, pp. 405-427; ch. 16, pp. 437-450
- Week 10: ***The 'Golden Age': Nation-States and City-States***

The European kingdoms: France and England. The Empire. The Italian states
Reading: ch. 13, pp. 353-371

Week 11: ***The Late Medieval Crisis and the transition to the Early Modern period***
The Crisis of the XIVth century: the Black Death and the Hundred Years War
Reading: ch. 17, pp. 460-495; ch. 20, pp. 531-542

Week 12: ***Oral Presentations***

Week 13: **Final in-class exam** (date to be announced)