

Medieval  
Studies  
Courses

Spring

2013

# Medieval Studies Program

## Courses being offered in Spring 2013

### First-Year Writing Seminars\*:

**MEDVL 1101**  
**Section 101**  
16706

**ASPECTS OF MEDIEVAL CULTURE:**  
**“The Forest Primeval” from Philosophy to Folklore**  
TR 2:55-4:10. D. Cudmore.

What is a forest? An idyllic paradise? Troll territory? A locus of resources? Home? In this class, we will take a multi-angle approach to reading forest ecosystems and cultural imagination in Europe and North America. Beginning with the early Middle Ages, we will encounter forests in texts such as philosophic writing on “spiritual wilderness”, Celtic nature poetry, and Otherworld romances. We will then discuss the forest in folklore and balladry, and in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. We will conclude with selected works of writers such as Thoreau, Muir, and Lopez, through which we will examine what might be the role of literature in current environmental discussions. Film and music, such as *Princess Mononoke* and Sibelius’ *Tapiola* will supplement literary readings. Writing assignments will include short analyses, longer research papers, creative writing, and weekly journal entries.

**Section 102**  
16707

**Reading in the Middle, & Digital, Ages**  
TR 8:40-9:55. J. Anderson.

In an age of “new media,” the ways we read, and interact with, texts seem to be undergoing rapid changes and deep transformations. In such an environment, what can we gain from considering “really old media,” like medieval manuscripts? A lot! This course will survey the history of how people made, read, and used texts from the early Middle Ages through the Reformation. Drawing on Cornell’s Rare Book and Manuscript Collections, scholarly essays, and our collective experiences with digital media, we will strive to think and write about old books and old documents in new ways. Writing assignments will include formal descriptive analyses of medieval manuscripts and comparative analyses of medieval and modern modes of reading.

**Section 103**  
16708

**Saints at War: Battling the Devil in the Middle Ages**  
TR 1:25-2:40. R. Mullett.

Spiritual struggles, in which the heroic Christian fights supernatural devils or human aggressors in order to maintain faith, are common in stories about saints in the Middle Ages. These clashes, which range from beguiling temptation to verbal abuse, and are combatted by saintly steadfastness and miraculous agency, help make these stories worth analyzing as literary and cultural documents rather than simply moral lessons. This class will examine a broad range of medieval saints’ lives, from the late Roman Empire’s “lives” of St. Perpetua and St. Antony, through later accounts to Chaucer’s period and beyond. Class discussions will seek to draw out major themes and historic issues in order to develop the skills for writing informal responses, close readings, and critical essays.

**Section 104**  
16709

**Writing the Ruin of Empires**  
TR 10:10-11:25. Z. Yuzwa.

Crisis. Collapse. Even the ultimate decline of Western civilization. You find this story told everywhere, from newspapers to *The Colbert Report*. But, authors in the West have been writing narratives of decline for as long as they have been writing at all. Our question in this course is not really why great civilizations fall, but rather why we have always been so interested in predicting it. We will therefore attend especially to those imaginative properties which inhere to narratives of decline. We examine a range of ancient and

\* All First-Year Writing Seminars are 3 credits.

medieval texts, setting them in conversation with contemporary works of art – literary, cinematic, pictorial – in order to understand the aesthetic and rhetorical function of such cultural pessimism. Assignments include informal responses and critical essays.

**MEDVL 1103**  
**Section 101**  
16710

**LEGENDS, FANTASY & VISION:**  
**From Utopia to Dystopia: Medieval Fantasies & Modern Hells**  
MWF 9:05-9:55. H. Byland.

“It was a bright cold day in April and the clocks were striking 13.” George Orwell’s *1984*, one of the best-known works of dystopian literature, is just one addition to a long tradition of writing about the perfect society. Beginning with selections from Plato’s *Republic* and moving through such medieval utopian works as Augustine’s *City of God* and Christine de Pizan’s *Book of the City of Ladies*, we will grapple with presentations of the ideal society. With this foundation, we will move into more modern dystopian literature, such as Yevgeny Zamyatin’s *We* and Mary Bradley Lane’s *Mizora*. Formal writing assignments, including creative writing and peer-review, as well as class discussion will strengthen students’ critical thinking and writing abilities.

**Section 102**  
16711

**There & Back Again: The Medieval Origins of Tolkien’s Quest**  
TR 11:40-12:55. R. Grabowski.

J. R. R. Tolkien tops many lists as the greatest author of the twentieth century, a distinction that often dwarfs his role as a long-time professor of Anglo-Saxon literature at Oxford. This class will explore how Tolkien’s interest in and scholarship on medieval literature and languages informed his fiction writing. Readings will include selections from *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Silmarillion*, as well as some of his shorter works and essays. These texts will be read alongside important medieval works such as selections of Old English poetry, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Old Norse poetry and sagas, and the Finnish *Kalevala*. This course will hone students’ writing and analytic skills through class discussion, writing exercises, and formal papers.

**ROMS 1102**  
16685

**THE CRAFT OF STORYTELLING: *DECAMERON***  
MW 2:55-4:10. 3 credits. M. Migiel.

All of us tell stories for a variety of reasons—to entertain, to console, to teach, to persuade—to discover and explore both our inner lives and the world we inhabit. Stories are one of the prime ways in which we make sense of a world that is not always propitious. They serve as instruments by which we seek to shape our future. In this seminar, we shall consider how the craft of storytelling helps us face the task of living: the love and the happiness and the community we seek, the virtues we espouse, our talents and our vulnerabilities. Our principal reading (in English translation) will be a masterpiece of European literature, Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron* (ca. 1350–52), which showcases one hundred stories told by ten young Florentines fleeing the Black Death of 1348. Students will write both analytic and personal essays.

## **Courses for upper-level undergraduates and graduate students:**

**MEDVL 2170**                      **EARLY IBERIAN SURVEY** (also SPAN 2170)  
16848                              TR 10:10-11:25. 4 credits. Conducted in Spanish. S. Pinet.

This course explores major texts and themes of the Hispanic tradition from the 11th to the 17th centuries. We will examine general questions on literary analysis and the relationship between literature and history around certain events, such as medieval multicultural Iberia, the creation of the Spanish Inquisition in the 15th century and the expulsion of the Jews in 1492; the encounter between the Old and the New Worlds; the ‘opposition’ of high and low in popular culture, and of the secular and the sacred in poetry and prose. Readings may be drawn from medieval short stories and miracle collections; chivalric romances, Columbus, Lazarillo de Tormes, Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Calderón, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, among others.

**MEDVL 2219**                      **LANGUAGE & HISTORY IN THE BRITISH ISLES**  
16843                              MWF 10:10-11:00. 4 credits. W. Harbert.

This course examines themes in historical linguistics, language contact, and sociolinguistics, in the context of the complex linguistic history of the British Isles.

**MEDVL 2236**                      **INTRODUCTION TO GAELIC** (also LING 2236)  
16844                              MWF 1:25-2:15. 4 credits. W. Harbert.

Introduction to the Scottish Gaelic language, with some discussion of its history, structure, and current status.

**MEDVL 2271**                      **FAMILY LIFE IN RENAISSANCE ITALY** (also HIST 2271, ITAL 2271)  
16923                              T 2:30-4:25. 4 credits. Sophomore Seminar. J. Najemy.

The seminar explores the structures and sentiments of family life in Renaissance Italy, from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, through a combination of translated primary sources and modern studies. Chief among the primary sources are the fifteenth-century dialogues *On the Family* by the humanist Leon Battista Alberti, supplemented by diaries and memoirs, letters, sermons, and prescriptive writings by fathers, humanists, and churchmen. Among the topics to be investigated are the variety of family structures, marriage, sexual relations, wives and husbands, parents and children, families in politics, and family memory and commemoration in art and religious life.

**MEDVL 2590**                      **THE CRUSADES** (also HIST 2590)  
14827                              TR 1:25-2:40. 4 credits. O. Falk & P. Hyams.

This Lecture Course examines the Crusading Movement and the States it produced from the eleventh century to the fall of the mainland Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1292. Central themes include but are not limited to the following: the Medieval Conquest, Settlement & Loss by Europeans of “Latin” lands in the Mid-East, the associated history of the Church and its contextual intellectual history, political narrative and military history, social and economic analysis, together with an elementary understanding of Islam and the conflict of cultures and religions during a formative period in Western Civilization.

**MEDVL 3080**                      **ICELANDIC FAMILY SAGAS** (also ENGL 3080)  
17130                              MWF 11:15-12:05. 4 credits. T. Hill.

An introduction to Old Norse-Icelandic mythology and the Icelandic family saga—the “native” heroic literary genre of Icelandic tradition. Texts will vary but will normally include the Prose Edda, the Poetic Edda, *Hrafnkels Saga*, *Njals Saga*, *Laxdaela Saga*, and *Grettirs Saga*. All readings will be in translation.

**MEDVL 3120/6120**      **BEOWULF** (also ENGL3120/6120)  
16760/16761      MWF 2:30-3:20. 4 credits. Prerequisite: one semester's study of Old English or equivalent. T. Hill.

A close reading of *Beowulf*. Attention will be given to relevant literary, cultural, and linguistic issues.

**MEDVL 3140**      **LOVE & ECSTASY: FORMS OF DEVOTION IN MEDIEVAL ENGLISH**  
**14706**      **LITERATURE** (also ENGL 3140)  
TR 2:55-4:10. 4 credits. S. Zacher.

Late medieval art is known for its violent and graphic depictions of the crucifixion of Christ. Devotional practices followed suit, emphasizing the carnal details of the passion, and using the suffering of Christ as a centerpiece for religious devotion. This course will explore the range of affective responses exhibited in literatures written by and for anchorites, mystics, religious and lay audiences, paying special attention to metaphoric depictions of Christ as lord, lover, and mother. Special attention will be paid to bodily ecstatic forms of devotion and discipline, including self-mutilation, mortification, celibacy, fasting, and martyrdom. In order to analyze these phenomena we will rely on contemporary theories of the body and of (self-) discipline. Primary readings will be in Middle English.

**MEDVL 3190**      **CHAUCER** (also ENGL 3190)  
14769      MWF 12:20-1:10. 4 credits. A. Galloway.

Chaucer was called a founder of English poetry before he was entirely cold in his grave. Why is what he wrote more than six hundred years ago still riveting for us today? It's not just because his world and language of London and the royal court turned out to be one of the centers of later English language and literature; it's also because what he wrote was funny, chilling, political, philosophical, and notoriously bawdy. We will read some of his early short poems then dig into his two greatest achievements: the epic *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Canterbury Tales*, in relation to his cultural contexts and literary traditions. Chaucer will be read in Middle English, but no previous knowledge of the language is required.

**MEDVL 3210**      **MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY** (also PHIL 3210)  
16356      MWF 10:10-11:00. 4 credits. L. Cesalli.

A selective survey of Western philosophical thought from the fourth to the 14th century. Topics include the problem of universals, the theory of knowledge and truth, the nature of free choice and practical reasoning, and philosophical theology. Readings (in translation) include Augustine, Boethius, Anselm, Abelard, Aquinas, Scotus, and Ockham. Some attention will be given to the development of ideas across the period and the influence of non-Western traditions on the West.

**MEDVL 3270**      **CONSTANTINOPLE/ISTANBUL, 330-1566** (also ARTH 2740)  
15574      TR 8:40-9:55. 4 credits. B. Anderson.

Ancient Byzantium, rebuilt and renamed by the Roman emperor Constantine the Great, raised by his successors to be the capital of a "Byzantine" empire, object of desire for travelers and crusaders, crowning conquest of the Ottoman sultan Mehmet: the city on the Bosphorus stands at the center of the late antique, medieval, and early modern Mediterranean. We will consider its urban development from ancient polis to modern metropolis, its marvels of religious architecture from the Hagia Sophia to the Süleymaniye, the splendor of its residences from the Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors to the Topkapı Sarayı, and the daily life of its humbler residents from the games of the Hippodrome to the taverns and brothels.

**MEDVL 3308**      **READINGS IN CELTIC LANGUAGES** (also LING 3308)  
15508      TBA. 1 credit. W. Harbert.

Reading/discussion groups in Welsh or Scottish Gaelic.

**MEDVL 3316**                      **OLD NORSE II** (also LING 3316)  
15494                                      MWF 9:05-9:55. 4 credits. L. Heimisdottir.

Old Norse is a collective term for the earliest North Germanic literary languages: Old Icelandic, Old Norwegian, Old Danish, and Old Swedish. The richly documented Old Icelandic is the center of attention, and the purpose is twofold: the students gain knowledge of an ancient North Germanic language, important from a linguistic point of view, and gain access to the medieval Icelandic (and Scandinavian) literature. Extensive reading of Old Norse texts, among them selections from some of the major Icelandic family sagas: Njals saga, Grettis saga, and Egils saga, as well as the whole Hrafnkels saga.

**MEDVL 3500**                      **THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE** (also HIST 3500, ITAL 3500)  
14840                                      MW 2:55-4:10. 4 credits. J. Najemy.

Why did Italian intellectuals between roughly 1300 and 1550 think of their age as a “Renaissance”? This course explores the major intellectual, cultural, religious, and political developments in Italy from the political thought of Dante and Marsilius of Padua in the age of the communes, through the several stages of Italian Humanism’s revival of ancient learning from Petrarch to Bruni, Alberti, Valla, and Pico, down to the crisis of both Italian liberty and the cult of antiquity in the generation of Machiavelli, Guicciardini and Castiglione. The course seeks to problematize the notion of a “Renaissance” in the period’s ambivalent attitudes toward history, politics, learning, culture, gender, language, and the role of intellectuals in politics and society. Emphasis is placed on the close reading and interpretation of primary sources.

**MEDVL 3670**                      **AN INTRODUCTION TO SAINTS** (also FREN 3670, ITAL 3670)  
16850                                      TR 2:55-4:10. 4 credits. Conducted in English. C. Howie.

We’ll aim to familiarize students with the long history and ongoing significance of saints for Christian (and non-Christian) literature, art, and practice. We’ll begin with the first taste of hagiography - the Greek word that means literally the “writing of sanctity” - in the Acts of the Apostles, then proceed to early lives of desert hermits and virtuous women, before turning to the great flourishing of saints in the literature and art of the European Middle Ages. We’ll also address the cult of relics - what does it mean to touch the remains of a blessed body? - as well as syncretism (the blending of indigenous religion and Christianity, often in the colonial world) and the secular afterlives of sanctity in contemporary American culture. Students will be invited to pursue a semester-long project about a particular saint or account of sanctity (including critiques of sanctity).

**MEDVL 4002/6020**                      **LATIN PHILOSOPHICAL TEXTS** (also PHIL 4002/6020)  
16380/16383                                      TBA. 1-4 credits. S. MacDonald & L. Cesalli. Consent of instructor required.

Reading and translation of Latin philosophical texts.

**MEDVL 4351/6351**                      **PROBLEMS IN BYZANTINE ART** (also ARTH 4351/6351)  
15598/15604                                      M 10:10-12:05. 4 credits. B. Anderson.

Topic for spring 2013: Byzantine iconoclasm  
Byzantine iconoclasm is one of the most enigmatic phenomena in early medieval history. The eighth and ninth centuries witnessed a ferocious debate about the suitability of religious images and their role in worship. The ultimate “victory of the icons” was of decisive importance for the later development of Byzantine culture and Orthodox Christianity, but the origins and nature of the debate remain obscure. Was Byzantine society convulsed for a century by arguments about the nature of representation? Or did these arguments serve to mask a power struggle among elites and emperors? We will consider these questions from multiple viewpoints (art historical, social historical, theological, etc.) and also consider related trends in the early medieval West and the early Islamic world.

**MEDVL 4360**                    **CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE** (also HIST 4360)  
14868                            W 7:30-9:25. 4 credits. P. Hyams.

This seminar concentrates on a time (late 9th-13th centuries) when much of Europe lacked formal systems of justice, and so handled questions of social control quite largely by extra-legal means. Its subject is in one sense political history upside-down, as viewed by individuals rather than their rulers. We examine ways in which anthropology and some recent approaches to law can assist: the readings will be partly anthropology, partly translated medieval accounts of actual conflicts, with samples of recent interpretation. The topics covered should be of interest to law students and majors in anthropology and other modern social sciences.

**MEDVL 6102**                    **LATIN PALEOGRAPHY** (also LATIN 7222)  
16271                            W 1:25-3:20; F 1:25-2:15. 4 credits. A. Hicks.

This course is an introduction to and survey of Latin scripts from Roman antiquity through the early Renaissance, with an emphasis on the identification, localization, and reading of scripts. Class meetings will combine practical study of Latin scripts through medieval manuscripts in the Kroch library, facsimiles, and online digital reproductions with instruction in the cultural-historical background to manuscript production, library practices, and bibliographical resources. Students will also be introduced to basic techniques for codicological description and the principles of textual criticism. There will be a mid-term and a final exam. A solid understanding of Latin grammar and morphology is a prerequisite for the course, and students in doubt about their readiness should consult with the instructor.

**MEDVL 6210**                    **SEMINAR IN MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY** (also PHIL 6210)  
16258                            M 2:30-4:25. 4 credits. L. Cesalli.

Graduate seminar covering a topic in medieval philosophy.

**MEDVL 6645**                    **GOTHIC** (also LING 6645)  
16845                            TBA. 4 credits. Prerequisite: LING 1101. W. Harbert.

Linguistic structure of Gothic, with extensive readings of Gothic texts.

**MEDVL 6662**                    **OLD RUSSIAN TEXTS** (also LING 6662)  
16846                            TBA. 4 credits. W. Browne.

**MEDVL 6690**                    **SPACE, PLACE & NARRATIVE IN MEDIEVAL & EARLY MODERN SPAIN** (also SPAN 6690)  
16851                            T 12:20-2:15. 4 credits. Conducted in Spanish. S. Pinet.

This graduate seminar will explore configurations of space and place in different narrative genres of the Spanish middle ages and the renaissance. Topics to be addressed include didacticism, empire, local/global, frontier, loci, urbs/orbe; through cartography, cartographic writing, human geography and the production of space/place within genres such as epic, lyric, hagiography, picaresque, novel and drama. Theoretical texts that will inform these readings will include Michel de Certeau, David Woodward, Henri Lefebvre, Yi-Fu Tuan, Ed Casey, David Harvey, Denis Cosgrove.

**MEDVL 7201**                    **SEMINAR IN MEDIEVAL MUSIC** (also MUSIC 7201)  
16892                            W 1:25-4:25. 4 credits. J. Peraino.

Topic: The Chansons of Guillaume de Machaut

Guillaume de Machaut (1300-1377) has canonical status in music history as the first composer who was actively involved in the collection and preservation of his musical and literary works. These in turn display a high degree of authorial self-consciousness and ironic play redolent of postmodern literature and theory. This course examines the musical, literary, historical, and material contexts of his most “modern”

repertory, the *formes fixes* chansons (virelai, ballade, rondeau, and lai), and also addresses historiographical and theoretical approaches to the study of medieval music and its cultural meaning.

**MEDVL 8010**  
6558

**DIRECTED STUDY** – Individual  
2-4 credits. TBA. Staff.

**MEDVL 8020**  
6557

**DIRECTED STUDY** – Group  
2-4 credits. TBA. Staff.

**GRAD 9001**  
12595

**GRADUATE DISSERTATION RESEARCH**  
(required for anyone not taking other courses)

### **Course that might also be of interest to medievalists:**

**COML 4515/6515**  
15173/15176

**ARIOSTO, RABELAIS, SPENSER**  
W 2:30-4:25. 4 credits. Limited to 15 students. W. Kennedy.

A study of competing claims between narrative forms and national ideologies in Ariosto's epic romance, *Orlando Furioso* (Italy, 1516-32); Rabelais's prose fiction, *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* (France, 1532-52); and Spenser's allegorical epic, *The Faerie Queene* (England, 1590-96).

**MEDIEVAL STUDIES COURSES**  
Spring 2013

	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
8:00-8:50					
8:40-9:55		ARTH 3270 Constantinople/Istanbul		ARTH 3270	
9:05-9:55	LING 3316 Old Norse II		LING 3316		LING 3316
10:10-11:00	PHIL 3210 Medieval Philosophy		PHIL 3210		PHIL 3210
10:10-11:25		SPAN 2170 Early Modern Iberian Survey		SPAN 2170	
10:10-12:05	ARTH 4351/6351 Problems in Byzantine Art				
11:15-12:05	ENGL 3080 Icelandic Family Sagas		ENGL 3080		ENGL 3080
11:40-12:55					
12:20-1:10	ENGL 3190 Chaucer		ENGL 3190		ENGL 3190
12:20-2:15		SPAN 6690 Space, Place & Narrative in Med & Early Mod			

Courses listed as TBA:

LING 3308 Readings in Celtic Languages  
 LING 6645 Gothic  
 MEDVL 801 Directed Study - Individual  
 MEDVL 802 Directed Study - Group  
 PHIL 4002/6020 Latin Philosophical Texts

	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
1:25-2:15	LING 2236 Intro to Gaelic				LING 2236 MEDVL 6102 Latin Paleo

1:25-2:40		HIST 2590 The Crusades		HIST 2590	
1:25-3:20			MEDVL 6102 Latin Paleography		
1:25-4:25			MUSIC 7201 Seminar in Medieval Music		
2:30-3:20	ENGL 3120/6120 Beowulf		ENGL 3120/6120		ENGL 3120
2:30-4:25	PHIL 6210 Seminar in Medieval Philosophy	HIST 2271 Family Life in Renaissance Italy			
2:55-4:10	HIST 3500 The Italian Renaissance	ENGL 3140 Love & Ecstasy: Medieval English Literature FREN 3670 An Intro to Saints	HIST 3500	ENGL 3140 FREN 3670	
3:35-4:25					
3:35-5:30					
4:30-6:30					
7:30-8:45p					
7:30-9:25			HIST 4360 Conflict Resolution in Medieval Europe		