

History 3360: The Early Middle Ages

Professor S. Olson

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MW 2:30-3:45 Laurel Hall 108

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This course surveys the history of the medieval West from late Antiquity into the 11th century. Although our period was marked by invasions – Germanic at the start, and Viking and Magyar at the end (to say nothing of internecine warfare in between!) – it was truly the “formative age” of European civilization: evidently, then, something more was going on than warfare and destruction. Indeed, early medieval Europe was a setting for one of the oldest human stories: survival and re-building in the midst of chaos, struggle and loss. As we shall see in some detail, “built-to-last” institutions were created from a mix of classical civilization, barbarian culture, and Judeo-Christian traditions. We will focus on the decline and transformation of paganism, the emergence of the medieval Church, the expansion of agriculture, and the development of Germanic kingship. Particular attention is paid to the history of religion and belief systems over this era of profound change.

Through lectures, films, and discussion we will survey the history of this period, and also talk about the types of evidence that have survived, how they can be used to reconstruct and interpret medieval history, and sometimes how they have been used by historians, past and present. Along with our survey text, we will read together a modern biography of St Augustine (354-430 C.E.), a history written in northern France at the height of the 10th-century “time of troubles,” and numerous other primary source documents from the period that reveal aspects of economic, social, cultural and political life.

Required Texts

Clifford Backman, *The Worlds of Medieval Europe* (3rd ed.) (2015)

Clifford Backman, *A Medieval Omnibus: Sources in Medieval European History* (2015)

Thomas F. Martin & Allan D. Fitzgerald, *Augustine of Hippo: Faithful Servant, Spiritual Leader* (2011)

S. Fanning & B. Bachrach, eds & trans, *The Annals of Flodoard of Reims, 919-966*

Course Requirements

*Two hourly exams, each worth 25% and one final exam worth 30% of the final grade. All exams are comprehensive and include essay and short answer questions. For the essay portion, one week before each exam a set of five essay questions will be provided to students (on HuskyCT), of which three will appear on the exam. Students will choose one and write a 5-6-page blue book essay. Short answer items (four out of eight) will be taken from lecture and class discussion. (A full set of lecture outlines will be posted on HuskyCT).

*One 10-page essay worth 20% (topic to be discussed): hardcopy due in class on **November 15**. Late papers will not be accepted without proof of a valid medical excuse.

Use of laptop computers: we will discuss this the first day of class.

Policy on plagiarism: The *Oxford English Dictionary* (available at <http://www.oed.com/>) defines plagiarism as follows: “to take and use as one’s own (the thoughts, writings, or inventions of another person); to copy (literary work or ideas) improperly or without acknowledgement; to pass off as one’s own the thoughts or work of another.” Academic misconduct is discussed in the Student Code on the Community Standards website (community.uconn.edu), Appendix A. The Homer Babbidge Library also has a “plagiarism fact sheet” at <http://www.lib.uconn.edu/instruction/tutorials/plagiarism.htm>. Anyone who commits academic misconduct will, **at the very least**, receive an F for that portion of coursework and have to redo the work for no credit; failure to redo that work will result in an F for the course.

Students with disabilities: If you have a disability for which you wish to request academic accommodations, please contact the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD), located in Wilbur Cross, Room 204 (860-486-2020 or at csd@uconn.edu). More information is available on the CSD website (www.csd.uconn.edu). Please also speak with me early in the semester.

READINGS, FILMS & EXAM SCHEDULE

August

- 28 Introduction to the course (getting medieval)
- 30 Reading Primary Sources. *Worlds*, xv-xxi; *Sources*, vii-xii, 1.5

September

- 6 The Later Roman Empire; crises of the Third Century. *Worlds*, 3-23; *Sources*, 1.6
- 11 The Early Christian Church and “new deeds of heroism.” *Worlds*, 25-40; *Sources*, 2.3
- 13 Film: “From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians” *Sources*, 2.9
- 18 Constantine: Reform and Revolution. *Worlds*, 40-56; *Sources*, 2.6, 2.7
- 20 St Perpetua, early martyr and autobiographer. *Sources*, 2.5
- 25 The Origins of Monasticism: “a desert peopled with monks.” *Worlds*, 88-97
- 27 *Augustine of Hippo*, pp. vii-x; 1-70

October

- 2 *Augustine of Hippo*, cont’d, pp. 71-149
- 4 First Exam
- 9 Film: “Barbarian Invasions & Rome’s Final Collapse.” *Sources*, 5.3
- 11 Barbarian invasions and successor “states.” *Worlds*, 58-81; *Sources*, 3.1, 3.3
- 16 Byzantium: the Rome that did not fall. *Worlds*, 121-132; *Sources*, 5.4
- 18 The Genesis of Islam and the Muslim Empire. *Worlds*, 133-142; *Sources*, 5.5
- 23 The Early Medieval Church & Benedictine Monasticism. *Worlds*, 82-86, 97-110; *Sources*, 4.3, 4.4
- 25 Early medieval society; rise of the papacy. Film: “The Dark Ages.” *Worlds*, 112-121; *Sources*, 4.2, 5.2
- 30 Cultures of Power: Merovingians & Carolingians. *Worlds*, 144-164; *Sources*, 6.2

November

- 1 Second Exam
- 6 Carolingian Renaissance. *Worlds*, 164-176; *Sources*, 6.3, 7.2
- 8 Film: “A World Inscribed: Medieval Manuscripts”
- 13 Collapse of Empire: invasions of the Ninth & Tenth Centuries. *Worlds*, 181-210; *Sources*, 7.3
- 15 Recovery begins. *Worlds*, 212-237; introduction to Flodoard’s *Annals*, vii-xxxi, 3-12
- 27 Flodoard, *Annals*, cont’d, 13-68
- 29 Evidence of Political Recovery. *Worlds*, 239-282

December

- 4 Ecclesiastical reform as evidence of recovery, Tenth & Eleventh Centuries. *Worlds*, 284-297, 310-315; *Sources*, 10.2
- 6 Film: “The Roots of the First Crusade.” *Worlds*, 297-310