

History 3360: The Early Middle Ages

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Fall 2018
MW 2:30-3:45 MCHU 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!) – this 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, which tend to receive less attention than they should from modern historians.

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 Columbanus (543-615 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)
Burnam W. Reynolds, *Columbanus: Light on the Early Middle Ages* (2012)
S. Fanning & B. Bachrach, eds & trans, *The Annals of Flodoard of Reims, 919-966*
The Life of St Theodore of Sykeon (pdf) (available on HuskyCT course site)

Course Requirements

Class participation: 15%
Mid-term Exam: 30% of the final grade
10-page paper: 25%, due in class on November 12 (details later).
Final Exam: 30%. All exams are essay and short answer format. A set of essay questions will be handed out one week before each exam.

A copy of the course syllabus is on HuskyCT, and a set of lecture outlines will follow shortly. You should come to class having done the reading and prepared to answer and raise questions on the material.

Note: on days when there are reading assignments in Backman’s *Medieval Omnibus*, Reynolds’s *Columbanus*, or *The Annals of Flodoard*, please bring that book to class for discussion.

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 (<http://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

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

September

- 5 The Later Roman Empire; crises of the Third Century. *Worlds*, 3-23; *Sources*, 1.6
- 10 The Early Christian Church and “new deeds of heroism.” *Worlds*, 25-40; *Sources*, 2.3
- 12 Film: “From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians” *Sources*, 2.9
- 17 Constantine: Reform and Revolution. *Worlds*, 40-56; *Sources*, 2.6, 2.7
- 19 St Perpetua, early martyr and autobiographer. *Sources*, 2.5
- 24 The Origins of Monasticism: “a desert peopled with monks.” *Worlds*, 88-97
- 26 St Augustine & St Martin, early monastics in Africa, Italy & Gaul. *Sources*, 2.10, 4.1

October

- 1 Film: “Barbarian Invasions & Rome’s Final Collapse.” *Sources*, 5.3
- 3 Barbarian invasions and successor “states.” *Worlds*, 58-81; *Sources*, 3.1, 3.3
- 8 Byzantium: the Rome that did not fall. *Worlds*, 121-132; *Sources*, 5.4
- 10 Midterm Exam
- 15 *The Life of St Theodore of Sykeon* (pdf)
- 17 The Genesis of Islam and the Muslim Empire. *Worlds*, 133-142; *Sources*, 5.5
- 22 The Early Medieval Church & Benedictine Monasticism. *Worlds*, 82-86, 97-110; *Sources*, 4.3, 4.4
- 24 Following St Columbanus: Ireland, Gaul & Italy. *Columbanus*, ix-xi, 1-58
- 29 *Columbanus*, cont’d, 59-107
- 31 Early medieval society; rise of the papacy. Film: “The Dark Ages.” *Worlds*, 112-121; *Sources*, 4.2, 5.2

November

- 5 Cultures of Power: Merovingians & Carolingians. *Worlds*, 144-164; *Sources*, 6.2
- 7 Carolingian Renaissance. *Worlds*, 164-176; *Sources*, 6.3, 7.2
- 12 Film: “A World Inscribed: Medieval Manuscripts” PAPERS DUE
- 14 Collapse of Empire: invasions of the Ninth & Tenth Centuries. *Worlds*, 181-210; *Sources*, 7.3
- 26 Recovery begins. *Worlds*, 212-237; introduction to Flodoard’s *Annals*, vii-xxxi, 3-12
- 28 Flodoard, *Annals*, cont’d, 13-68

December

- 3 Evidence of Political Recovery. *Worlds*, 239-282
- 5 Ecclesiastical reform & the “roots” of the First Crusade. *Worlds*, 284-315; *Sources*, 10.2