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HIST 212 syllabus

Tracey L. Billado
Queens College, tbillado@qc.cuny.edu

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HISTORY 212: Europe in the Middle Ages, Fall 2025

Class meetings: Tu/Th 10:45 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Classroom: Rathaus 208
Instructor's email: tracey.billado@qc.cuny.edu
Instructor: Professor Billado
Instructor's office: Powdermaker 352K
Office hours: Tu 3:00-4:00 p.m. & by appt

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course explores European history from the end of ancient times through the late Middle Ages. It then looks at what that history has meant and means for the modern world. In the first part of the course, we will read some original texts from medieval Europe and look at what modern scholars have to say about medieval Europe. These readings will give students a chance not only to learn about but also to take part in the creation of knowledge about medieval Europe. In the second part of the course, we will look at how everyday people from different times and places—even today—have created their own versions of the Middle Ages. We will examine what those versions of the Middle Ages can show us about what those people cared about, wanted, or were worried about. So, we will examine medieval Europe in at least three ways:

- as a world that may seem like the origins of modern "western" society, where we might find familiar things like law courts, market economies, religious institutions, government bureaucracies, and forms of discrimination and persecution;
- as a world that may seem like a "foreign country," where holy people were adored for kissing the sores of sick people, where the law sometimes condoned violence, where priests might have wives, and where magic and medicine were often inseparable;
- as a collection of stories, images, and ideas that everyday people—including us—have used and reused over time for all kinds of reasons and in many different forms—in literature and movies, in art and architecture, in games and reenactments, and even in propaganda supporting a wide range of political movements, from socialism to fascism.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: Students will 1) demonstrate familiarity with the history and historical geography of medieval Europe; 2) practice producing historical research by analyzing primary sources that are the building blocks of our knowledge about the past; 3) improve critical thinking and expository writing skills through assignments based on primary and secondary sources.

REQUIRED TEXTS: This course uses OER/ZTC materials.[1] This means there are no textbooks to purchase for this course. The required materials are all available either on Brightspace, through the Queens College library, or on the internet.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1) **Primary source annotations** (25%): We will use the tool **Hypothes.is** to collectively annotate and kick off discussion of course readings. On the first day of class, we will discuss how you can create a Hypothes.is account and add the Hypothes.is extension to a web browser.
2) **Participation in class discussion** (15%): Please come to class prepared to participate in discussion. Our annotations in Hypothes.is will get us started and then the conversation will continue in the classroom. We will ask questions about the readings, try to come up with plausible answers, and use evidence from the readings to support our ideas. We may not all agree on the answers, and that is okay! When that happens, we will practice how history is made by talking about our different ideas and the evidence that supports each idea.

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[1] The creation of the syllabus for this course was funded in part by the CUNY OER Initiative. For help in adding OER/ZTC resources to this syllabus, I thank Dr. Leila Walker, the Humanities & Digital Scholarship Librarian at the Queens College Rosenthal Library.

3) **Two in-class essay exams** (30%): For each exam, you will spend an entire class period outlining and writing two essays that will be based on class readings and discussions. Within each exam, you will have a choice of three essays out of which you will choose two to write on.
4) **Choose your own adventure project** (25%): You have a wide range of class projects to choose from for this assignment. You can and should read the directions for each type of project on Brightspace and we will spend some time discussing projects during the first few weeks of class. Previous students have chosen to write traditional term papers (i.e., a research paper based on historical primary and secondary sources) or historiography papers (i.e., a research paper based on a selection of secondary sources that are all aiming to answer the same historical question). Other students have presented their research by creating podcasts, mock up museum exhibits, film scripts, lesson plans for middle or high school, websites, historical fiction, artworks, magazine articles, and multimedia presentations. For whichever project you choose, you will write 1) a project proposal, then 2) a project bibliography, then 3) a project narrative and, finally, you will give a presentation of/about your project during the last three weeks of class.
5) **Reflection on adventure project and self-evaluation** (5%): During the exam period, you will write 1) a reflection on the experience of creating your adventure project and 2) a self-evaluation of your performance in the course. These pieces of writing will be due on Brightspace by the end of our scheduled exam period (TBA).

TOPICS, READINGS, and ASSIGNMENTS SCHEDULE

KEY: **BS**=*material on Brightspace*
HYP=Hypothes.is annotation assignment;
BROOKS=our OER textbook, Christopher Brooks, *Western Civilization: A Concise History*, vol. I and Christopher Brooks, *Western Civilization: A Concise History*, vol. II
IMS=the *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, the source for many of our readings
"Handouts" will be discussed in class and posted to Brightspace in the "handouts" module
"Assignments" are listed on the day of the class period when they are due (at the start of class)

PART I: INTRODUCTION and ORIENTATION

Tu 8/26 **What is history? What is medieval history? How to use Brightspace, QC library resources, and Hypothes.is**
Handouts: 1) Syllabus & FAQ; 2) Hypothes.is directions; 3) Brooks annotation directions

Th 8/28 **The sources of history**
Handouts: 1) The sources of history; 2) How to annotate a primary source
Assignment: Course survey (BS)
HYP: BROOKS, ch. 13 (link on BS)

PART II: AFTER ROME: LATE ANTIQUITY and THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

Tu 9/2 **Rome's Heir I**
Assignment: HYP: 1) Theodoric, letters (IMS)
HYP: 2) *Hildebrandslied* (IMS)
HYP: 3) A Christian king goes out to battle (link on BS)

Th 9/4 **Rome's Heir II**
Assignment: HYP: 1) *Salic Law* (IMS)
HYP: 2) Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks* (IMS)

Tu 9/9 **Rome's Heir III**
Assignment: HYP: 1) The Jews of Spain and the *Visigothic Code* (IMS)
HYP: 2) *Life of Balthild* (link on BS)

Th 9/11 **Religious Culture: Latin Christianity, Western Monasticism, and the Papacy I**
Assignment: HYP: 1) *The Rule of Saint Benedict* (IMS)
HYP: 2) *The Rule of Saint Columba* (IMS)
HYP: 3) Saint Columban, *Boat Song* (IMS)

Tu 9/16 **Religious Culture: Latin Christianity, Western Monasticism, and the Papacy II**
Assignment: HYP: 1) Bede, *Ecclesiastical History* (IMS)
HYP: 2) Theodore, *Penitential* (link on BS)

Th 9/18 **Religious Culture: Western Monasticism and the Papacy III**
Assignment: HYP: 1) Pope Leo I, sermons (IMS)
HYP: 2) Pope Gelasius, letter to Emperor Anastasius (IMS)

Su 9/21 **Choose your own adventure ideas due on Brightspace by 11:59 p.m.**

Tu 9/23 **NO QC CLASSES**

Th 9/25 **Carolingians, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings I**
Assignment: HYP: 1) *Annales of Lorsch* (IMS)
HYP: 2) Charlemagne, letter to Abbot Fulrad (IMS)
HYP: 3) General capitulary of the missi (IMS)
HYP: 4) Capitulary for Saxony (IMS)
HYP: 5) Capitulary *de villis* (IMS)

Tu 9/30 **Carolingians, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings II**
Assignment: HYP: 1) Einhard, *Life of Charlemagne* (IMS)
HYP: 2) *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (IMS)
HYP: 3) *The Laws of King Alfred* (IMS)

Th 10/2 **NO QC CLASSES**

Su 10/5 **Choose your own adventure proposal due on Brightspace by 11:59 p.m.**

Tu 10/7 **Carolingians, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings III**
Assignment: HYP: 1) *Audun and the Bear* (link on BS)
HYP: 2) *Thorstein Shiver* (link on BS)

Th 10/9 **IN CLASS EXAM #1**

Tu 10/14 **NO CLASS: QC MONDAY CLASSES MEET**

PART II: THE CENTRAL and LATE MIDDLE AGES

Th 10/16 **Lordship and Society in Literature and Practice I**
Assignment: HYP: 1) BROOKS, ch. 14 (link on BS)
HYP: 2) Capitularies on oaths (IMS)
HYP: 3) Charter of Cluny (IMS)

Su 10/19 **Choose your own adventure bibliography due on Brightspace by 11:59 p.m.**

Tu 10/21 **Lordship and Society in Literature and Practice II**
Assignment: HYP: 1) *Miracles of Saint Benedict* (IMS)

HYP: 2) Stabilus the serf in the *Miracles of Saint Benedict* (link on BS)
HYP: 3) Monastic curse (link on BS)
HYP: 4) Fulbert of Chartres, letter to Count William of Aquitaine (IMS)
HYP: 5) Bertran de Born, two poems (link on BS)
HYP: 6) Charter of Ermengard of Narbonne (link on BS)

Th 10/23 **Lordship and Society in Literature and Practice III**
Assignment: HYP: Agreement between Count William V of Aquitaine and Hugh IV of Lusignan (IMS)

Tu 10/28 **Reform, Renaissance, and European expansion I**
Assignment: HYP: 1) Gregory VII, *Dictatus Papae* (IMS)

Th 10/30 **Reform, Renaissance, and European expansion II**
Assignment: HYP: 1) Abelard, *Sic et Non* (IMS)
HYP: 2) Marie de France, *Lanval* (link on BS)

Su 11/2 **Choose your own adventure revised bibliography due on Brightspace by 11:59 p.m.**

Tu 11/4 **Reform, Renaissance, and European expansion III**
Assignment: HYP: 1) Urban II, speech at Clermont (IMS)
HYP: 2) Solomon bar Simson, *Chronicle* (IMS)
HYP: 3) Accounts of the siege and capture of Jerusalem (IMS)

Th 11/5 **Religious Poverty, Persecution, and Plague I**
Assignment: HYP: 1) BROOKS, ch. 15 (link on BS)
HYP: 2) *The Rule of the Franciscan Order* (IMS)

Tu 11/11 **Religious Poverty, Persecution, and Plague II**
Assignment: HYP: Bishop Jacques Fournier, trial of Béatrice de Planisoles, here and here

Th 11/13 **Religious Poverty, Persecution, and Plague III**
Assignment: HYP: 1) Boccaccio, *Decameron* (IMS)
HYP: 2) The Black Death and the Jews (IMS)
HYP: 3) Stature of Laborers (IMS)

Su 11/16 **Choose your own adventure narrative due on Brightspace by 11:59 p.m.**

Tu 11/18 **EXAM #2**

PART III: MEDIEVALISMS and ADVENTURE PRESENTATIONS

Th 11/20 **Medievalisms**
Assignment: HYP: Umberto Eco, "The Return of the Middle Ages" (link on BS)

Tu 11/25 **Medievalisms and Adventure Presentations**
Assignment: HYP: Lynn Ramey, "Race and Identity in Medieval Europe"

Th 11/27 **NO QC CLASSES**

Su 11/30 **Choose your own adventure revised narrative due on Brightspace by 11:59 p.m.**

Tu 12/2 **Medievalisms and Adventure Presentations**
Assignment: HYP: Arthur Lindley, "The Ahistoricism of Medieval Film" (link on BS)

Th 12/4 **Medievalisms and Adventure Presentations**
Assignment: HYP: Sid Ray, "Hunks, History, and Homophobia" (JSTOR, directions on BS)

Tu 12/9 **Medievalisms and Adventure Presentations**
Assignment: HYP: Robin Fleming, "Picturesque History and the Medieval" (JSTOR, directions on BS)

Th 12/11 **Medievalisms and Adventure Presentations**

EXAM PERIOD (TBA sometime between Tuesday, 12/16 and Monday, 12/22): Self-evaluation and reflection on your choose your own adventure project reflection due on Brightspace

This schedule is subject to revision. Revisions will be posted & announced on Brightspace.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION and POLICIES

OFFICE HOURS: Please come to office hours (question time)! My office hours are for you! Studies show that students who go to their professor's office hours tend to do better in their courses.

CUNY POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY and AI STATEMENT: Academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion. In this class, any portion of an assignment that closely resembles material found in print, on the internet, or in an essay by another author will be considered plagiarism and receive a zero. Plagiarism will be reported to the QC Academic Integrity Officer. Moreover, any student who plagiarizes an assignment will also be required to pass a plagiarism test before submitting any other written assignment for class. Plagiarism may also result in an F for the course and/or expulsion from the college. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) is also prohibited in all assignments for this course. This includes, but is not limited to, the use of AI-generated text, speech, or images, as well as the use of AI tools or software. Violations of this policy will result in the same penalties as for plagiarism. Read more **here**.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: The Office of Special Services (SPSV) is committed to supporting students with qualifying disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by providing reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access. If you have previously received accommodations due to a disability, believe you may have a disability, or have a temporary disability, please visit the office's **website** for further information on the assistance they can offer you. Accommodation is not retroactive, so you are encouraged to get registered sooner rather than later. You may also contact their office by **email** or call 718-997-5870 during office hours for assistance.

BRIGHTSPACE and QC EMAIL: You will need to check Brightspace and your Queens College email address daily to keep up with this course. All handouts and announcements and assignments will be posted there. If you have not done so, you must first set up a **CAMS** account to get email and access to Brightspace. After you have your CAMS account, to login to Brightspace, go to the **CUNY Portal** and pull down the login menu on the top right of the screen. When you login to the CUNY Portal, you will see a link to Brightspace to the right of the screen. After clicking that link, you will find a list of your current courses on the right. If you have trouble, see the resources **here** and the tutorials on Brightspace.

INFORMATIONAL TECHNOLOGY SERVICES (ITS): If you are experiencing technical difficulties with Brightspace, a computer, or the internet, please address those questions to ITS. Their office is in I-Building, room 200 (open Monday – Thursday, 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.). Virtual support is available from the QC Help Desk during the following times: Monday – Thursday: 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m.; Friday: 9:00 a.m. – 9:30 p.m.; via several methods: **ticket submission**, **email**, and

phone call back at 718-997-4444. (*Quick troubleshooting tip:* many problems users have with QC web applications stem from using incompatible web browsers. Try accessing these websites on a computer through the latest versions of Microsoft Edge or Firefox before going to the Help Desk.)

HELP WITH WRITING/ESL: If you need help with writing, ESL, grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, or style, check with the QC Writing Center in the first week of class to schedule regular visits with a tutor, especially before writing assignment due dates on the syllabus. The Writing Center operates out of Kiely Hall 229 and is also operates virtually. For more information, see **here**.

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS: If you need an extension to an assignment deadline for a religious observance, notify the instructor in an email in advance of that assignment's due date.

OTHER LINKS FOR HELP and SUPPORT:

- **Counseling:** The mission of Counseling Services is to enhance students' academic, intellectual, personal, and social growth.
- **Emergency funds:** The Queens College Carroll and Milton Petrie Student Emergency Grant Fund can provide quick response emergency grants to matriculated students in good academic standing who are experiencing personal emergencies.
- **Food pantry:** The Knights Table Pantry was established in the fall of 2018 as part of Queens College's commitment to reduce food insecurity among its student population.
- **Peer support:** Peer Support Services are open to all registered Queens College undergraduates.
- **Peer tutoring:** The Learning Commons (LC) offers peer tutoring, workshops, study spaces, and other services.
- **Printing:** The following locations are available for general student printing use: Powdermaker Hall Room 210 (24 Windows Computers and 8 Macintosh) and Rosenthal Library second floor (28 Windows and 2 Macintosh). Current Queens College students, staff, and faculty can use their QCard to pay for printing and copying services.

COURSE CONTENT NOTE: I have heard many historians joke that if their classes were movies or tv shows, they would be rated "R" ("Restricted – Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian") or "TV-MA" ("Mature Audience Only – Program designed to be viewed by adults and unsuitable for children under 17") because their course materials are sometimes quite disturbing. College-level history classes necessarily cover the full array of human experience so in those classes you will encounter descriptions of all sorts of violence, including war, torture, rape, horrible deaths (homicides, lynchings, massacres, executions). Readings and other materials for this course also include mention of hunger, starvation, domestic violence, the structural violence of poverty, violent executions, and religious persecution. In other words, if you are not troubled by at least some of the material presented in your history classes, then we (your professors) are doing it wrong!

PATHWAYS STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: This course satisfies the World Cultures and Global Issues (WCGI) requirement of the Pathways General Education Flexible Core. All Flexible CORE Courses must satisfy the following three learning outcomes: FC 1: Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view. FC 2: Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically. FC 3: Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions. In addition, this WCGI course satisfies the following outcomes: WCGI 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5. You can download the learning outcomes for this category **here**.

Note: This syllabus is subject to revision. Revisions will be posted and announced on Brightspace.

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