

Europe in the Middle Ages

HIST 3312
Fall 2026
MW 12:30-1:45
PHED 130

Prof. Arthur Lee (alee@tamusa.edu)
He/him/his
CAB 318D
Office hours: MW 2:30-4:30

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Political, economic and cultural developments in Europe from the fall of the Roman Empire to the Renaissance.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

In this class, students will:

- Discuss the major events, individuals, and ideas that shaped the medieval world in all its complexity
- Reflect on the Middle Ages as a period of both rupture and continuity, both with what came before and after as well as with our own times
- Develop a sense of historical thinking through the close reading and analysis of a variety of sources
- Practice writing skills through academic writing and peer editing

COURSE READINGS:

Recommended Textbook:

Judith Bennett and Sandy Bardsley, *Medieval Europe: A Short History 12th Edition* (Oxford University Press) ISBN-10: 0190064617.

Optional (these books can all also be found online through sites like [Project Gutenberg](#)):

Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin, 1978)
Anonymous, *Beowulf*, trans. Seamus Heaney (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000)
Benedict of Nursia, *The Rule of Benedict*

Dhuoda, *Handbook for William: A Carolingian Woman's Counsel for Her Son*, trans. Carol Neel (Catholic University Press of America, 1999)
Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, trans. Barry Windeatt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)
Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot, the Knight of the Cart*
Usama ibn Munqidh, *The Book of Contemplation: Islam and the Crusades*, trans. Paul M. Cobb (Penguin Classics 2008)

N.B. we will mostly be reading excerpts from these, not the whole thing. So don't let the long list scare you. That is also why purchase is optional – pick up a copy if you find it interesting!

ASSIGNMENTS:

Primary Source Quizzes – There will be five short pop quizzes over the course of the semester about the primary source assigned as the day's reading. These are pass/fail, and you will need to answer two of three questions correctly to pass.

Essay 1 – You will choose one of two essay prompts from which to write a five-to-six (5-6) page essay. Your essay must substantially engage with primary sources and lectures from the course.

Final Essay – You will choose one of two essay prompts from which to write a seven-to-eight (7-8) page essay. Your essay must substantially engage with primary sources and lectures from the course.

Peer Reviews – We will peer review drafts for both essays in class. This is an important opportunity for you to both provide constructive feedback for your peers and to improve your own writing. Your grade will be determined by your being prepared with a draft to be reviewed and by providing substantial feedback to your peers.

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Participation: 10%
Primary Source Quizzes (x5): 20%
Essay 1 Peer Review: 10%
Final Essay Peer Review: 10%
Essay 1: 25%
Final Essay: 25%

ATTENDANCE AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

Attendance is, of course, expected. You cannot learn if you are not in class! However, I understand that things happen. If you find that you have to unexpectedly miss class for a reason such as illness, mental health, or a family emergency, all I ask is that you let me know. If you have any scheduled absences for religious holidays or for professional/family obligations, please let me know ahead of time. If you miss class, you may also wish to consult with peers for notes or come to office hours. If

you absolutely must miss a peer review day, let me know as soon as possible so we can ensure that you can still give and receive feedback on your work.

Similarly, if you have a valid reason, I am willing to accept late work in this class **if we have an arrangement prior to the deadline**. Please reach out to me if you need more time to complete an assignment and we will figure something out. Note that it is not necessary to have a complete and polished essay written for peer reviews – they are called drafts for a reason – so long as you have enough for the session to be useful (a bare minimum would probably be a robust outline). If we do not have an agreement prior to the deadline, you will receive a maximum of 50% on the late assignment.

COLLEGE NORMS AND EXPECTATIONS:

College may be a new environment for you, or you may already be familiar with how college works. Either way, there are often expectations that aren't always obvious, and I wanted to highlight a few of them which I hope will be helpful:

- **Ask questions:** It is always okay to ask me to clarify an assignment, expectation, or course policy. If you are wondering about something, someone else may be wondering too.
- **Use office hours:** Office hours are when I am available to talk to you and your chance to ask questions, get help, talk through course material, or just check in. My door will always be open during office hours – you can come at other times, but my door may be cracked open, which means I could be busy, or closed, which means I am away. If my office hours absolutely don't work for you, email me for an appointment.
- **Communicate early:** If something is getting in the way of your coursework, reaching out sooner is usually more helpful than waiting until the last minute. You do not need to share personal details you are not comfortable sharing.
- **Communicate professionally:** When emailing instructors, use a clear subject line, begin with a greeting, and include enough information for us to understand what you are asking. A simple “Hi Professor ____” followed by your question and your name is perfectly appropriate. Learning how to communicate professionally is part of college, and you are welcome to ask if you are unsure.
- **Be respectful:** Our classroom is a shared space and an intellectual community. Please listen and not talk while others are talking, and please engage with each other respectfully. We may not always agree with each other, but we all deserve to be heard and to be treated with empathy and dignity, no matter who we are. Please approach differing viewpoints with curiosity rather than judgement.
- **You can learn these norms as you go:** There is no expectation that you already know how everything works. Please ask rather than worry that you “should already know.”

MENTAL HEALTH AND ACCOMODATIONS RESOURCES:

Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing all students with reasonable access to learning opportunities and accommodations in accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you experience barriers to your

education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact Disability Support Services in the Central Academic Building, Suite 210, or at (210) 784-1335 or visit [our website](#) or email us at dss@tamusa.edu. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to, attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. I encourage you to communicate with me regarding any needs or accommodations as early as possible. If you have an accommodation letter on file with Disability Support Services already, please have them send it to me at your earliest convenience.

If you are experiencing emotional difficulties or mental health concerns, support is available to you through the Student Counseling Center (SCC). To schedule an appointment, visit [our website](#), call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120 between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM. All mental health services provided by the SCC are free and confidential (as the law allows). The Student Counseling Center provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. Crisis support is available 24/7/365 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331 or through the [TELUS student support App](#). The TELUS Student Support App provides a variety of mental health resources to include 24/7/365 support for in the moment distress, crisis support, an anonymous peer-to-peer support network, mental health screenings, podcasts, and articles to improve your mental wellbeing.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, TECHNOLOGY, AND AI:

While notetaking by hand is encouraged (it is well-known that handwriting notes better promotes processing and retaining information) laptop use is allowed, particularly to access readings.

The use of AI is forbidden. This course is designed to help you build your skills as readers and writers, which cannot happen if you rely on AI. The texts that we will read are complex, nuanced, and written by people from a time, place, and perspective far from our own. They require deep attention, imagination, and empathy for us to grasp their world and to think about our own world with them, qualities which we will seek to build and which an AI summary abjectly fails to provide. AI also cannot improve your writing. Clear communication and finesse with language remain vital skills, which we will work on by peer reviewing both essay assignments in class. If AI wrote your essays, then workshopping your writing gets you nothing and you will waste the opportunity to receive valuable feedback from both your peers and myself. I understand that life happens and that you may find yourself pressed for time on an assignment – if that is the case, let me know and see the policy on late assignments. I guarantee that you will be better served asking for an extension or help from either me or your peers than turning to AI. Any use of AI will qualify as academic dishonesty, plagiarism, and a violation of the university's standards of academic integrity. The point, however, is not that you will receive academic sanctions. The point is that **if you use AI for your coursework, the only person you cheat is yourself.**

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Important dates:

10/7: Essay 1 Peer Reviews

10/14: Essay 1 Due

11/25: Final Essay Peer Reviews
12/2: Final Essay Due

This schedule is subject to modification if necessary throughout the semester. You will receive at least one week's notice of any change that needs to be made to this schedule.

Week 1: Introduction

M, 8/24: What were the Middle Ages?

W, 8/26: The Shadow of Rome

Start Augustine, *Confessions*, Books I (Chapters 1-5, 9-12), II, III, V, VII, IX
Bennett and Bardsley, p. 1-10, 23-32

Week 2: Late Antiquity

M, 8/31: Constantine, Conversion, and Christianity

Augustine, *Confessions*, Books I (Chapters 1-5, 9-12), II, III, V, VII, IX
Bennett and Bardsley, p. 11-22

W, 9/2: Rome in the East

Procopius, *The Secret History*, excerpts
Bennett and Bardsley, p. 61-82

Week 3: The Near East

M, 9/7: No class – Labor Day

W, 9/9: The Islamic World

Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Deliverance from Error*
Bennett and Bardsley, p. 83-107

Week 4: Early Western Christendom

M, 9/14: Barbarian Kingdoms

Beowulf
Bennet and Bardsley, p. 33-47

W, 9/16: Monastic Culture

The Rules of Benedict, excerpts
Bennett and Bardsley, p. 48-60

Week 5: The Carolingians

M, 9/21: Charlemagne's Empire

General Capitulary of the Missi
Bennett and Bardsley, 108-132

W, 9/23: Invasion and Fragmentation

Dhuoda, *Handbook for William*, Prologue, Books 1, 3-5, 10
Bennett and Bardsley, 133-149

Week 6: Political Rearrangements

M, 9/28: Feudalism

Fulbert of Chartres to William of Aquitaine; Galbert of Bruges, *The Murder of Charles the Good*

Bennett and Bardsley, 150-155

W, 9/31: The Holy Roman Empire

Liutbrand of Cremona, Embassy to Constantinople
Bennett and Bardsley, 156-164

Week 7: Sacred Authority

M, 10/5: Popes and Kings

Letters from Gregory VII and Henry IV
Bennett and Bardsley, p. 217-240

W, 10/7: ***Essay Peer Reviews***

Week 8: The Medieval Economy

M, 10/12: Rural Life

Bennett and Bardsley, p. 165-189

W, 10/14: Cities, Rivers, and Trade

Bennett and Bardsley, p. 190-216

Essay 1 Due

Week 9: Piety, Society, and the Self

M, 10/19: Popular Religion, Pilgrimage, Monasticism

The Miracles of Saint Foy
Bennett and Bardsley, p. 240-264

W, 10/21: Women's Devotions

Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, excerpts
Bennett and Bardsley, p. 256-257, 263-264

Week 10: Medieval Culture

M, 10/26: Learning

Heloise, Letters II and VI
Bennett and Bardsley, p. 333-349

W, 10/28: Arts and Literature

Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot*, excerpts
Bennett and Bardsley, p. 349-365

Week 11: Regulating Religious Difference

M, 10/31: Heresy, Sanctity, Dissent

Peter Waldo in the Chronicle of Laon; Innocent III, *Cum ex injuncto*
Bennett and Bardsley, p. 248-250, 289-295

W, 11/2: Lateran IV

The Canons of the Fourth Lateran, 1, 3, 4, 20-28, 38-52, 63-71
Bennett and Bardsley, p. 240-248

Week 12: Creating Institutional Power

M, 11/9: The Inquisition

Bernard Gui, Inquisitor's Manual

W, 11/11: Royal Power in Britain and France

The Magna Carta
Bennett and Bardsley, p. 309-332

Week 13: Crusade

M, 11/16: Mobilizing Christendom

Urban II speech, begin Usama ibn Munqidh, *The Book of Contemplation*, Parts I and II
Bennett and Bardsley, p. 265-276

W, 11/19: Crusader Culture in the Latin East

Usama ibn Munqidh, *The Book of Contemplation: Islam and the Crusades*, Parts I and II
Bennett and Bardsley, p. 277-289

Week 14: Beyond Europe

M, 11/23: Exploring the East: The Mongol Archive

“The Mongol Archive”: *Letters to Louis IX*, William Rubruck, *Journey to the East*

W, 11/25: ***Final Essay Peer Reviews***

Week 15: The End of Medieval Europe

11/30: Crisis: Famine Plague

Pistoia Plague Ordinances; The Confession of Agimot of Geneva
Bennett and Bardsley, p. 366-395

12/2: Towards early modern Europe

Final Essay Due