HIST 341: Europe in the Middle Ages I

Instructor: Bruce O'Brien, Professor of History; Monroe 215; 654-1477; bobrien@umw.edu;
Office Hours: TTh 1-2, 5-6, or by appointment; Class meets in Monroe 210, TTh 2:00-3:15.

Course

This lecture and discussion class covers the history of European and Mediterranean peoples during the early Middle Ages, from the fall of the western Roman empire to the end of the Viking migrations. It will introduce students to major events and historical interpretations, focusing in particular on the collapse of the Roman frontier, the creation of barbarian successor states, the rise of the Islamic Caliphate, and the survival of the empire in the east (Byzantium). The course will make extensive use of primary sources from all three cultures (Germanic, Byzantine, Islamic), both as evidence of post-Roman civilizations and as material for training in the interpretation of medieval sources. Students will gain an understanding of the transformation of the ancient world in the Mediterranean in this period as well as refine their skills in reading and interpreting historical sources.

This course counts in the History major as well as in the Human Experience and Societies category of general education courses. In general terms of History major goals, students will gain an:

- ability to analyze sources and arguments
- ability to write with clarity about the past
- ability to consume and/or produce technological resources

For general education, students will gain:

- ability to explain human and social experiences and activities from multiple perspectives.
- ability to draw appropriate conclusions based on evidence.
- ability to transfer knowledge and skills learned to a novel situation.

Readings

Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: Illuminating the Dark Ages, 400–1000* (London, 2009).

Katherine Fischer Drew, trans., *The Lombard Laws* (Philadelphia, 1973).

Einhard, *Charlemagne's Courtier: The Complete Einhard,* trans. Paul Dutton (Toronto, 1998).

Other readings are supplied on here on Canvas.

Work

1. One 10-14 page research paper on the topic of your choice (topic approved by instructor by October 3, paper due in draft [printed out and brought to class] on November 28, revised draft due uploaded to Canvas on December 14).

2. Peer review of one other paper (due in class on November 30).

3. One-paragraph to one-page answers to questions about the readings and a couple of other short assignments, all ungraded, but receiving a check, plus, or minus. These are in large part how I determine your participation grade.

4. A midterm exam (i.d.) on October 12.

The Significance of Participation

Participation, which counts for 30% of the grade, will be based on on attendance and contributions to discussions as well as on short informal writing submitted in most classes. The level of participation expected of students will increase as the semester progresses. For this reason, it is imperative that students keep up on the reading. You will be called on to engage on issues throughout the term. At times you may be assigned a question for the following day's discussion, and will be expected to speak on the subject or lead a class discussion. Whenever readings are due, you should bring the appropriate book to class. *Always* bring Wickham, and be ready to discuss all aspects of the chapter assigned for that day.

Grading Principles

In this class, an A (93–100) or A- (90–92) mean that the work done is of excellent quality. B+ (88–89), B (83–87) and B- (80–82) mean that the work was well done, competent, even excellent in some ways, but that there is room for improvement. C+ (78–79), C (73–77), and C- (70–72) signify that the work was satisfactory in most respects, even good in some ways, but that there was much room for improvement. D+ (68–69) and D (60–67) are passing grades, but mean that much more could be done in most if not all areas of the work, but that it was not missing *in toto* any key aspect of the assignment. I assign grades based on a number of variables which, if they can be named (e.g., style, argument, research, etc.), cannot in reality be separated from the others. Each variable affects the others. Deficient style will vitiate argument; poor research will undermine argument, and so on. Students earning less than a C by mid semester will receive a notice of unsatisfactory performance.

As with all courses at UMW, this class will abide by the honor code. In particular, students should beware of committing plagiarism. Any questions concerning the boundary between legitimate and illegitimate appropriation of sources should be brought to the professor before assignments are turned in.

Grade

Research paper 50%, midterm exam 20%, and participation 30%.

Students with Disabilities

The Office of Disability Resources has been designated by the University of Mary Washington as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you receive services through that office and require accommodations for this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your approved accommodations. I will hold any information you share with me in strictest confidence unless you give me permission to do otherwise.

If you have not made contact with the Office of Disability Resources and have reasonable accommodation needs, I will be happy to help you contact them. The office will require appropriate documentation of a disability.

Other Resources

If you are depressed or stressed out and finding it hard to cope with school, the people around you, or life in general, I recommend visiting the Talley Center for Counseling Services: the Center can be reached at (540) 654-1053 (M-F 8-5), or you can stop by Lee 106. You may certainly speak with me beforehand if you are uncertain what the Center can offer.

For events and announcements from the History Department, as well as useful pages on research and writing, see the Department's News and Resources website.

Warning on Electronic Devices

You cannot have a laptop in class unless you have a specific accommodation for this. I have had to institute this ban because too often laptops have become distractions for users as well as for those around them. This ban also means that you need to take notes on the sources we will be discussing and bring these notes to class as memoranda. Alternatively, you can print them (if feasible). Phones must be turned off completely and placed in a box near the door for the duration of the class.

Note: This syllabus is subject to change based on the discretion of the instructor.

Calendar

August

29 Introduction to the course.

31 Framing the Early Middle Ages.

Reading: Wickham, *Inheritance*, chapter 1

September

5 The Empire

Reading: Wickham, *Inheritance*, chapter 2; Abinnaeus Archive.

See Assignments for today's question (and all other questions related to readings)

7 Culture and Belief in the Christian Roman World

Wickham, *Inheritance*, chapter 3; *Theodoret, Prologue and Life of Symeon Stylites*

12 Crisis and Continuity, 400–550

Wickham, *Inheritance*, chapter 4; Anonymous Valesianus, part 2, and Sidonius, Letters, 1.2.

14 The Merovingian World, 500–751

Wickham, *Inheritance*, chapter 5; 'The Conversion of Clovis: Gregory of Tours, History of the Franks'; selected letters.

19 Visigoths and Lombards, 550–750

Wickham, *Inheritance*, chapter 6; Drew, *The Lombard Laws*, “Foreword” and “Introduction.”

21 Legislating for Lombards

Drew, *The Lombard Laws*: Rothair’s Edict (pp. 39–130 and notes)

26 Lombard Society

Drew, *The Lombard Laws*: Laws of Grimwald, Liutprand, Ratchis, and Aistulf (pp. 131–238 and notes).

28 Island Cultures, 400–800

Wickham, *Inheritance*, chapter 7; Anglo Saxon Chronicle: The Feud of Cynewulf and Cyneheard.

October

3 Culture, Belief, and Political Etiquette, 550–750

Wickham, *Inheritance*, chapter 8; *Valerius of Bierzo, Narrations*.

Paper Topics Must Be Approved by Today.

5 Workshop on Medieval Research

Reading TBA. I have put together a dossier to show the development of one of my own papers, from abstract, to draft, and finally to publication.

10 Peasants and the Economy; Power of the Visual

Wickham, *Inheritance*, chapters 9 and 10; Polyptique of Marseilles

12 Midterm exam.

17 Fall Break

19 Byzantine Survival, 550–850

Wickham, *Inheritance*, chapter 11; Miracles of St. Artemios.

24 Rise of the Muslims, 570–750

Wickham, *Inheritance*, chapter 12; The Murder of Uthman dossier: Sebeos and Tabari.

26 Byzantine Revival, 850–1000

Wickham, *Inheritance*, chapter 13; *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De administrando imperio*.

31 Abbasids and Umayyads, 750–1000

Wickham, *Inheritance*, chapter 14; *Al-Tanukhi, Table Talk of a Mesopotamian Judge*

November

7 The State and the Economy: Eastern Mediterranean Exchange Networks, 600–1000

Wickham, *Inheritance*, chapter 15; The Farmers' Law

9 The Carolingian Century, 751–887

Wickham, Inheritance, chapter 16; Dutton, *Charlemagne's Courtier : "Introduction"'and "Life of Charlemagne*."

14 Thinkers and Writers and Readers in the Carolingian Period.

Einhard, *Charlemagne's Courtier*: "Charters," nos. 7, 11–12; "Complete Correspondence" (pp. 131–65); "Correspondence with Lupus of Ferrières" (pp. 166–84).

16 Einhard: Courtier, Abbot, and Author.

Wickham, *Inheritance*, chapter 17; Einhard, *Charlemagne's Courtier*: Einhard, *Translation and Miracles of the Blessed Martyrs, Marcellinus and Peter* (Dutton, pp. 69-130). *Bonus Response for Extra Credit*--see list of questions for details.

21 The Tenth-Century Successor States

Wickham, *Inheritance*, chapter 18; *Dudo of St. Quentin, History of Normans*.

23 *Thanksgiving Break*

28 'Carolingian' England, 800–1000

Wickham, *Inheritance*, chapter 19; The development of the hall at Goltho, Lincolnshire: Goltho 1, Goltho 2, Goltho 3.

Draft of Research Paper due in class (hard copy): exchange to do peer review with another student; peer review form is here.

30 Outer Europe

Wickham, *Inheritance*, chapter 20; *Theitmar, Chronicle*

Peer Reviews of Research Papers exchanged on Nov. 21 due in class today; late peer reviews will hurt your participation grade.

December

5 Aristocrats between the Carolingian and the 'Feudal' Worlds

Wickham, *Inheritance*, chapter 21; *Odo of Cluny, Life of Gerald of Aurillac*

7 The caging of the Peasantry, 800–1000; Trends in European History, 400–1000

Wickham, *Inheritance,* chapters 22-23; The Saxon Stellinga dossier: Nithard's *Histories* (introduction, Histories, notes), *Annals of St Bertin* (introduction, annals), Annals of Xanten, Annals of Fulda.

14 Final exam period: Thursday, 14 December, 3:30-6:00pm: There is no final exam and we do not meet. Rather, final papers are due by 6 PM on Canvas, submitted as a pdf, doc, or docx.