



Fall 2025

HIST 103
INTRODUCTION TO THE
MEDIEVAL WORLD



Location:

Meeting Days: T-TH 4:30 pm – 5:45 pm

Professor Silvia Z. Mitchell

Email: mitch131@purdue.edu

Virtual office hours, by appointment

<https://purdue-edu.zoom.us/j/4382740154?pwd=ZkU0UXI0cHhMSlVHOEtQTkFzT2NtUT09>

Meeting ID: 438 274 0154

Passcode: 977590

Graduate Teaching Assistant

Course Description

This course is an overview of medieval history from the late Roman Empire to the birth of Renaissance Europe, encompassing the millennium from about 300 AD to 1500 AD. The course will explore political, religious, and social changes as well as economic, technological, and cultural developments.

By the end of the course, students will gain a sophisticated understanding of the large historical processes that took place during the period and identify those that have been formative in the development of European Civilization. As we explore the themes of the course, students will also develop an awareness of the complexity of human experience of the men and women who inhabited the medieval world.

Required Texts:

Barbara Rosenwein, *A Short History of the Middle Ages, Volume II: From c.900 to c.1500* 6th edition (University of Toronto, 2023).

Patrick Geary, *Readings in Medieval History*, 5th edition (University of Toronto, 2015).

Learning Outcomes

- A. identify and assess the large historical processes that transformed the European world from 300 AD to 1500 AD.
 - 1. Explain the geopolitical shift in the Mediterranean world after the dissolution of the Roman Empire in the West.
 - 2. Identify the three main civilizations that emerged by c. 700 A.D. and their political, cultural, and social characteristics.
 - 3. Identify the “Nations” that populated Western Europe from 500 A.D. to 900 A.D. and their political, cultural, and social characteristics.
 - 4. Articulate the causes and nature of the transformations that swept Europe after the 11th century and that culminated with the Renaissance in the 15th century.
- B. describe certain historical events of the period that had been formative to the development of Western Europe.
 - 1. Understand the causes and consequences of the first Crusade
 - 2. Identify the positive and negative impact of the Black Plague.
 - 3. Contextualize the so-called “Commercial Revolution.”
 - 4. identify at least three consequences of the rise of universities.
- C. become familiar with the techniques and skills historians utilize to interpret the past.
 - 1. Understand change over time (a major tenet of the discipline) as it applies to European civilization from 300 A.D. to 1500 A.D.
 - 2. Understand the difference between primary, secondary, and tertiary sources

Assignments and Evaluation:

Assignments for this course provide students the opportunity to build, improve, and expand their analytical skills and historical knowledge. Assessment, therefore, has been designed to evaluate content knowledge, critical writing ability, and engagement with the material as follows:

- 1. **A Midterm and a Final—essay format.** You will be given the exam questions one week in advance.

NOTE: I understand that there might be instances in which students will be unable to take the exam during the assigned date (see attendance policy below) either due to illness, academic, or family emergencies. If that is the case, you have ten days to make up the Exams. It is your responsibility to request a date for retaking it. Only justified absences will be considered.

- 2. **Evidence-based writing assignments (EBWA); two paragraphs or more.** Over the course of the semester, you will engage with critical analysis of the material; this could be answering a question I will pose or analyze a primary source. This will prepare you for the exams and will help you become familiar with the methodology used by historians. The purpose is to utilize “evidence” to understand the historical context that you are getting from the class lectures and the textbook.

I will post a prompt in the form of a question, or a statement and you will answer utilizing the “evidence” in the source. The Prompt will be posted a few days before the assignment is due. Only the material assigned for the course is allowed.

3. **Participation/Discussion Forums (DF):** Each week, as we move through the material for the class, you will engage with a primary source, class lectures, readings, and your classmates’ responses. The DF are similar to the EBWA with the difference that you will also engage with your classmates’ ideas. You will get credit for this activity, so it will add points to your overall grade.
4. **Information Literacy Assignment:** An information literacy assignment with an annotated bibliography of secondary sources submitted in the proper format and conforming to the tenets of peer reviewed academic publications for the discipline of history and other related humanities (i.e. art history, literature, etc.). Instructions and expectations will be made available with plenty of time. This assignment will deepen your research skills in the humanities.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION	Points	Due Dates
Exam: Midterm	15	Oct. 9
Exam: Final	25	TBA
Discussion Forums (DF) 6 @ 5 points each	30	Sept. 5, 19, 23 Oct. 17, 31 Dec. 5
Evidence-based writing assignments (EBWA) 4 @ 5 points each.	20	Sept. 11 October 2, 23 Nov. 6
Information Literacy Assignment (ILA)	10	Nov. 20
Final Grade Total	100	

WARNING: Even if you have the numerical grade to pass the course; missing a major assignment is an automatic failure. Major assignments are Exams, Information Literacy Assignment, and missing 50% or more of the EBWA.

Grading Scale—I have a policy of NOT rounding up grades. If you get 89.7, for example, you will earn a B+. To get the A- your total number of points would have had to add up to 90 and above.

100-98 = A+ 97-93 = A 92-90 = A- 89-88 = B+ 87-83 = B 82-80 = B-
 79-78 = C+ 77-73 = C 72-70 = C- 69-68 = D+ 67-63 = D 62-60 = D-
 59-0 = F

How to do well in class

Learning is a complex and gradual development. Historical processes are complex phenomena that cannot be comprehended by a simple date or event. The best way to approach the material is

to engage in active learning techniques. Note taking is the best way to consolidate knowledge and keeping up with reading assignments as well. Working through the material progressively is the best way to learn.

How to communicate with your professor and TA (and this applies to all your professors, so you may want to pay attention and evaluate yourself):

Your ability to function in whatever professional world you will enter upon graduation has to do with communication. What better way to start learning than with your professors and instructors. I expect the use of **proper email etiquette and proper titles** when emailing myself or the TAs. When addressing me, use Dr. or Professor followed by my last name. Your email should begin with a salutation such as “Dear Professor Mitchell” or “Dear Ms. Fish” or “Dear Mr. Huber.” A “Hello Dr. Mitchell” is acceptable. A hi without anything else is not. End with a proper closing, such as “Sincerely,” or “Yours.” Include your full name and do not give any personal information in your email such as your student number. Use an identifiable subject in your email: i.e. HIST 103, question about the exam.

Attendance and Make-Up Work Policy

We will take attendance, which is mandatory, and will excuse absences according to Purdue’s policies <https://catalog.purdue.edu/content.php?catoid=17&navoid=21832#classes> . Missing class will affect your grade as follows:

- 1-2 unexcused absences: no deduction
- 2-4 unexcused absences: 2 points deduction
- 4-6 unexcused absences: 5 points deduction
- More than 6 unexcused absences: 10 points deduction

Late work and Extensions Policy: Extensions will be granted when circumstances outside your control prevent you from submitting an assignment. You should talk to me if that is the case, hopefully in advance (although I understand that is not always possible). Late work without any sort of communication will be penalized or, in some cases, will not be accepted. If you miss a major assignment due to illness or an emergency, it is your responsibility to contact us and make alternative plans to complete the work.

Even if you have a numerical grade to pass the class, you must complete all major assignments. Missing a midterm or the final, for example, is an automatic failure. Missing more than two EBWA is also an automatic failure. Get in touch with me if your semester has been disrupted due to circumstances outside your control.

CLASS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND LAST-MINUTE COMMUNICATIONS (IN CASE OF EMERGENCIES) WILL BE DONE THROUGH BRIGHTSPACE. ENABLE NOTIFICATIONS.

Please, make sure you check the course website or allow notifications sent to you. This is the medium I will use to communicate with the class should some unforeseen circumstance comes up.

Academic Integrity:

I take Academic Integrity very seriously and will not hesitate to refer students to the Deans of Students Office if necessary.

Purdue Honor Pledge: “As a boilermaker pursuing academic excellence, I pledge to be honest and true in all that I do. Accountable together—we are Purdue.”

Plagiarism or any sort of cheating will result in a failing grade for the entire course. Cheating can take many forms, including, but not limited to, passing someone else’s work for one’s own, copying from another student’s work during an exam, or using unauthorized material.

STATEMENT ON AI

In this course, students are responsible for their learning and will not develop the skills they need to achieve the learning outcomes of this course by relying on AI to do the work. For this reason, the use of AI is prohibited in this course.

ONLY MATERIAL FROM THIS COURSE SHOULD BE CONSULTED FOR YOUR ASSIGNMENTS.

Academic integrity is one of the highest values that Purdue University holds. Individuals are encouraged to alert university officials to potential breaches of this value by either emailing integrity@purdue.edu or by calling 765-494-8778. While information may be submitted anonymously, the more information that is submitted provides the greatest opportunity for the university to investigate the concern.”

Diversity & Inclusion

Purdue University is committed to maintaining a community which recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life. Purdue’s nondiscrimination policy can be found at: http://www.purdue.edu/purdue/ea_eou_statement.html.

Disclaimer:

In the event of a major emergency, the requirements, deadlines and grading policies are subject to changes that may be required by a revised semester calendar. Any such changes in this course

will be posted on Blackboard once the course resumes or can be obtained by contacting the professor via email.

Course Schedule:

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF THIS SCHEDULE WITH YOU AND REFER TO IT ON A REGULAR BASIS.

Date	Lecture and Discussion Topics	Readings	Assignments' Due Dates and Weekly Responsibilities
THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD: FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES (200s to 500s AD)			
August 26-28	Content and Expectations The Mediterranean World during the Roman Republic and Roman Empire	Syllabus Brightspace: Start reviewing material in the "Decline and Dissolution of the Western Roman Empire" Tab in Content Area. OPTIONAL READING: Geary, "Augustine of Hippo, City of God"	
September 2-4	The Roman Empire under Emperors Diocletian and Constantine	Brightspace: Review material in the "Decline and Dissolution of the Roman Empire" Tab. READING: Geary, "St. Perpetua, The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas"	
September 5			DF1—1 st post due by the end of the day; Responses to classmates by following Monday

September 9-11	Early Medieval Society in Western Europe	Brightspace: Review material in the “Decline and Dissolution of the Roman Empire” Tab. READING: Geary, “Jordanes, History of the Goths” AND “Tacitus Germania”	
September 11			EBWA #1 Western Europe after the dissolution of the Roman Empire Due Thursday by the end of the day
EUROPE AFTER ROME: THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES, 600-1000 AD			
September 16-18	Islam, Byzantium, and Europe	Brightspace: Start reading material in the “Europe after Rome” tab READING: Geary, “The Tomb of Childeric, Father of Clovis” AND “Salic Law” AND “Saint Benedict, Rule for Monasteries” OPTIONAL: “King Alfred”	
September 19			DF2—1st post due by the end of the class. Responses by following Monday.
September 23-25	Charlemagne, the Carolingians, and the Carolingian Renaissance	Brightspace: Reading material in the “Europe after Rome” tab	

		READING: Geary, “Einhard, The Life of Charlemagne” AND “Selected Capitularies”	
September 26			DF3--1st post due by the end of the class. Responses by following Monday
September 30-October 2	Viking, Magyar, and Muslim Invasions	Brightspace: Reading material in the “Europe after Rome” tab READING: Rosenwein: Chapter 4: Political Communities Reordered (c. 900-c.1050) Geary, “Dhuoda’s Handbook for her Son (Liber Manualis)” Finish reading Rosenwein chapter	
October 2			EBWA #2 Carolingian Renaissance
October 7-9	Europe after Rome and Review for Midterm and Midterm		
October 9	Midterm Exam—Bring Blue Books		
THE TRANSFORMATION OF EUROPE: FROM THE FLOURISHING MIDDLE AGES TO THE FIRST GLOBAL AGE			
October 14 FALL BREAK, NO CLASS			
October 16	New Technologies, Climate Change, and Demographic Improvements	Brightspace: Reading material in “The Transformation of Europe” tab.	

		<p>READINGS: Rosenwein, Chapter 5 Highlights AND “Economic Networks in Europe and Beyond”</p> <p>Geary, “Cluniac Charters”</p>	
October 17			<p>DF4--1st post due by the end of the class.</p> <p>Responses by following Monday</p>
October 21-23	Political Transformations and the First Crusade; Reconquista, Norman Conquest	<p>Brightspace: Continue with “The Transformation of Europe”</p> <p>READING: Rosenwein, chapter 5: “The Formation of Towns and Cities” AND “Urban Arrangements” AND “Church Reform and Its Aftermath” to the end of the chapter</p>	
October 23			<p>EBWA #3 Crusading Movements</p>
October 28-30	Intellectual, Commercial, and Cultural Transformations	<p>Brightspace: Continue with “The Transformation of Europe”</p> <p>READING: Rosenwein, READ ONLY THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS: Chapter 6: “European Ambitions and their Limits” AND “The Church in the World” AND “Taxes,</p>	

		Inventories, and Other Mechanisms of Control” Geary, “The Rule of Saint Francis of Assisi” and “Clare of Assisi Testament	
October 31			DF5--1st post due by the end of the class. Responses by following Monday
		Brightspace: Continue with “The Transformation of Europe”	
November 4-6		The Black Death and other Crises Chapter 7, “New Inter-City Conflicts” and “Xenophobia” Chapter 8: From “The Black Death” to “The Great Western Schism” Geary, “The Black Death”	
November 6			EBWA #4 The Black Death
November 11-13	INFORMATION LITERACY ASSIGNMENT	Brightspace: Continue with “The Transformation of Europe”	
November 18-20	INFORMATION LITERACY ASSIGNMENT	Brightspace: Continue with “The Transformation of Europe”	

November 20			Information Literacy Assignment Due by the end of the day
November 26-28	THANKSGIVING WEEK— NO CLASS MEETING	<p>Brightspace: Continue with “The Transformation of Europe”</p> <p>READING: Rosenwein, Chapter 6: READ ONLY THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS from Rosenwein: Chapter 6: “The Culture of the Courts” AND “Urban Guilds Incorporated” AND “Gothic Art and Architecture” AND “Material Culture: The Making of an Illuminated Manuscript”</p>	
December 4-6	European Renaissances and the <u>R</u> enaissance with Capital R.	<p>Brightspace: Continue with “The Transformation of Europe”</p> <p>READING: Rosenwein, Chapter 7, “The Elasticity and Rigidity of Europe” and its subsections.</p> <p>Chapter 8, “Renaissance Italy” AND “The Northern Renaissance.”</p> <p>Geary, “Magna Carta” AND “Las Siete Partidas” AND one of the following two: “Florence: Catasto of 1427” OR “Gregorio Dati, Diary”</p>	

December 5			DF6: 1st post due by the end of the class. Responses by following Monday
December 9-11	New Routes, Exploration, and Political Developments REVIEW for the exam	Brightspace: Continue with “The Transformation of Europe” READING, READ ONLY THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS from Rosenwein, Chapter 7, “Winners and Losers in the Profit Economy” AND “New Money” AND “Strengthened Monarchs and Their Adaptations” to the “Road to Avignon” Chapter 8: “The Hundred Years’ War (1337-1453” AND “King and Princes, Knights and Citizens” AND “Discontent in Town and Countryside” AND “New Horizons” to the end of the chapter Geary, “The Trial of Joan of Arc”	
Finals Week—December 15-20. Final Exam time and day, TBA Bring Blue Books			