HIST 6120: Readings in Medieval History  
Rulers and Regions in Medieval Europe, 900-1300

Fall 2016
His 6120-101 (#43048)
M 7:00-9:30pm
Dunbar 2207 (after 1st class, History Seminar Room)

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Hours: M 12-1 W 11-12

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will examine the history of medieval Britain, France, Scandinavia, and the Low Countries from c.950-1350, covering both classic works and cutting-edge scholarship. It will focus on the theme of "rulers and regions." It will include the development of distinct regions, including the rise of principalities, attempts to establish royal power, notions of ethnicity, political identity, and order. It will also consider the possibilities for doing research on the various regions in and around the “countries” of northwestern Europe.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: This course will prepare doctoral and master’s students to take research seminars on medieval history. This course will also help MA students and PhD students develop their readings for comprehensive examinations. For those interested in medieval studies, this course will also familiarize them with scholarly debates in medieval history. For non-medieval historians, the course will provide grounding in European schools of historical thought that influence medieval history generally.

REQUIRED BOOKS (for purchase, in paperback unless otherwise noted):
REQUIRED READINGS (for purchase, select one of the following):

REQUIRED READINGS (not for purchase; available digitally):

COURSE FORMAT: The course will be conducted in weekly seminars, which will include extensive discussion, student presentations, as well as some instructor presentations. Various written assignments will culminate in a historiographic paper, on a topic chosen by the student in consultation with the instructor. Advanced students may prepare a research paper based on sources for a particular region. Discussions will focus on assigned readings for each week.

GRADE COMPONENTS: Class participation and presentations, 30%; book reviews/précis, 30%; final paper 40%. You must complete all elements of the course to receive a passing grade. All late submissions will be penalized, in fairness to students who complete the assignments in a timely fashion. The grade scale is as follows: 93-100 = A, 87-92 = BA, 83-86 = B, 77-82 = CB, 73-76 = C, 67-72 = DC, 60-67 = D, and less than 60 = F.
ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: Much of your grade will be determined by your efforts in our weekly meetings. Mere attendance during class hours will not receive credit towards participation, which should instead be indicated through vocal outbursts giving evidence of cognition; in other words, you must talk about your ideas, your reflections on the readings, and the comments of others in class. To be an effective participant, you will need to complete all readings and translations prior to class. A class that only meets once per week cannot be skipped, if you wish to receive a satisfactory grade. Attendance is mandatory, absences must be documented and excused (preferably in advance). More than one absence could result in a lower course grade. Participation will count for 30% of the grade and includes presentations.

BOOK REVIEWS and PRECIS: Students will write three short (3-5 page) analytic book reviews, one due on Oct 31 (concerning regions), the other two on any works listed as “recommended readings” under each major course “theme” and due on the date the work is listed. These reviews will count for 30% of the final grade. As part of this assignment, students will also deliver an oral report (approximately 10 minutes) on the book they review in class, explaining its content and relevance to the required reading for that week. Students who choose to review a book not in English will have that review count as doing two in English. I am willing to discuss possible substitute works for those listed below, but all such works must be approved in advance. The schedule of works to review will be determined during the second week of class, so that students may obtain copies of the works well in advance. A short Précis of the narrative of a medieval history textbook is due in week two, which will provide early feedback on writing.

HISTORIOGRAPHIC PAPER: In consultation with the instructor, students will prepare a historiographic paper, preferably directly related to the four main themes of the course. The paper should take the form of either a historiographic essay (a critical evaluation of the strengths/weaknesses of previous historical approaches to a topic) or a bibliographical essay (a critical synthesis of standard works on a given subject) and it should deal with seven to ten items at a minimum. Students may use sample topics provided by Prof. Berkhofer as starting points or develop their own topic in consultation him. Either way, students are expected to develop their own bibliography. Students must have met with Prof. Berkhofer and submitted a proposed topic by week three and must submit and preliminary bibliography of works being considered by week five. Students preparing for research may write a "needs and opportunities" section of their paper, which explains possible avenues for future research; advanced students may substitute a research paper with instructor permission. Every paper will have a bibliography of relevant historical works (if about possible research, this will include archival sources, source editions, and finding aids). The narrative portion should be 15-20 pages and bibliography as necessary and the paper will be due at the end of the class. This paper will count for 40% of the final grade.

PAPER SUBMISSION POLICY: You are also responsible for providing an electronic copy of your final paper in addition to submitting a hard copy (due when you hand it in). This electronic copy must be readable by MSWord.

Students with Disabilities: You should register your disability with Disabled Student Resources and Services, (269-387-2116 or www.drsrs.wmich.edu). You should discuss any accommodation with them and they will give you a card listing the approved accommodation, which you should show to the instructor. This process should be completed by the end of the second week of class.
Late Work: Make-up exams will be given only for valid, university-approved written excuses, at the instructor's discretion. Make-up exams must be taken as soon as possible after the original test, preferably the day the student returns to class, at a time chosen by the instructor (usually my office hours). Unexcused late papers will be penalized two full letter grades per day they are late (e.g., a "B" paper will become a "D" paper).

Email/IP Policy: Students should use their WMU email address for all correspondence related to this course. Students will not reproduce any portion of course materials (including notes on lecture) without the instructor’s express written permission.

READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week 0 (Sep 5): No class (Labor Day). Please review website in e-learning.

THEME 1: The Problem of Origins and Definitions

Week 1 (Sep 12): Narratives of Nations?


Week 2 (Sep 19): Continental Continuity or Discontinuity? Insularity: Exceptional or Exaggerated?

Required Reading: Read either 1) Fleming, Britain After Rome or 2) Dunbabin, France in the Making or 3) Winroth, The Age of the Vikings or 4) Higham and Ryan, The Anglo-Saxon World in their entirety.

Recommended Reading: Read one of the others.

Week 3 (Sep 26): Thinking About Regions in Northwest Europe


**THEME 2: Princes and Principalities from the 10th to the 13th Century**

Week 4 (Oct 3): Dynasty and Lordship I: Before England


Week 5 (Oct 10): Dynasty and Lordship II: Before France


Week 6 (Oct 17): Comparing Kings


Week 7 (Oct 24): Comparing Queens and Countesses


Week 8 (Oct 31): Regional Identity vs. Royal Power in the thirteenth century

Required Reading: Read ONE of the following sets of works and come prepared to report on them in class (you may substitute another region with Prof. Berkhofer’s permission):

**Book Reviews scheduled for all students in this week**


Thomas N. Bisson, “Unheroed Pasts: History and Commemoration in South Frankland before the Albigensian Crusades” *Speculum* 65, no. 2 (1990), 281-308


**THEME 3: Comparative Approaches to Rulers and Regions**

Week 9 (Nov 7): Comparing Peoples: Ethnicity, Assimilation, Identity


Week 10 (Nov 14): Comparing Laws: Literacy, Orality, and Culture


**THEME 4: Cities in and as Regions**

Week 11 (Nov 21): Flanders: Economic Engine of the Northwest?
Required Reading: Murray, *Bruges: Cradle of Capitalism, 1280-1390* (entire)


Week 12 (Nov 28): Paris and the “Île de France”

Required Reading: John Baldwin, *Paris, 1200* (entire)


Week 13 (Dec 5): London: A City of Cities?


Recommended: Come prepared to discuss your final paper.

**FINAL PAPER DUE**