

Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Lord of the Rings: The Middle Ages in the Modern World

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Course Description

Representations of the Middle Ages have played a crucial role in key moments in modern history, notwithstanding the fact that from its inception the term “Middle Ages” carried negative connotations. Renaissance humanists bewailed the fall of the Roman Empire and its replacement with “barbarian” kingdoms. Enlightenment philosophes abhorred the Middle Ages even more intensely than their Renaissance forerunners and decried medieval “superstition” and “barbarism.” Indeed, Enlightenment philosophes claimed they were bringing the light of reason into the world after an age where darkness had reigned—that is, the Middle Ages.

Course Description (cont.)

The image of the Middle Ages began to be rehabilitated as part of a rejection of the Enlightenment and its emphasis on reason. Nineteenth-century Romantics embraced the Middle Ages and sought inspiration for political and cultural renewal within medieval civilization. A host of nineteenth-century nationalist movements took inspiration from the Middle Ages, claiming that the roots of their peoplehood lay in medieval civilization. Once the medievalism of nationalist movements had rehabilitated the Middle Ages, nations employed medievalism to justify imperialism in Africa and the Middle East. As late as World War I, European nations were using medievalist rhetoric to vindicate their participation in the “War to End All Wars.” After World War I, authors such as J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis took inspiration from the Middle Ages to craft a new type of fiction. Through them and others, medievalism entered into popular culture, eventually inspiring movies, comic books, video games, along with a host of other cultural expressions.

This class will explore the complex history associated with the images of the Middle Ages crafted and utilized in the modern world, images that shaped and continue to shape it.

Course Objectives

The first goal of this course is to introduce students to how images of the Middle Ages were composed and employed in the service of modern ideologies, political systems, warfare, and imperial pursuits as well as providing inspiration for art, architecture, literature, and popular culture in the modern world. The second goal is to help them develop the necessary skills to make their engagement with any part of the past as fruitful as possible. In service of these goals, students will:

- Gain experience in working with, evaluating, and interpreting a variety of primary sources, including various types of documents, works of art, architectural monuments and other objects of human significance;
- Cultivate skills necessary to evaluate secondary sources, by identifying and assessing historical arguments and the evidence upon which they are based;
- Develop a familiarity with a variety of methodological approaches that characterize historiographical trends related to the subject;
- Determine the insights, limitations, and biases of the source materials;

Course Objectives (cont.)

- Comprehend the traditions that invest objects with significance and human reactions to meaningful objects;
- Understand and evaluate historical and social change;
- Analyze the origins of social institutions and social structures and their effects on human action;
- Learn how to fashion searching historical questions and mobilize sources to produce an argument in both discussion and written work;
- Develop strong writing skills to be able to clearly and effectively communicate historical analysis;
- Develop verbal skills in conversation with others in the colloquium setting.

Policies & Requirements

1. Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. Absences will only be excused for illness or family emergencies, with advance notice unless this is absolutely impossible. To make up an excused absence you should submit a quality 5-page response paper to the day's readings (generally due one week after the absence) and attend office hours to discuss missed material. *Unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade.*
2. Participation: Active participation, which includes contributing to discussion and listening to others, is both expected and highly valued. Students are to come to class fully prepared to engage actively in discussion of the week's topics. Active participation during discussions involves asking and responding to critical questions; simply attending class will not earn you an A grade in participation. Please remember to remain respectful, whether agreeing or disagreeing with your peers. You are welcome to submit requests for discussion based on a reading, theme, or question you are particularly interested in; they may either be posted to the class discussion board or emailed to me personally. I am happy to tailor our discussion to what interests you most.
 - a. Leading Discussion: As part of your participation in section, **each student will choose one class session during which they will open the first 20 minutes of discussion**, first giving any appropriate background to the sources and authors of the primary sources for the day, as well as providing a brief framework of how the primary source fit together and

their major themes (~ 5 min.) You will lead discussion for the next 15 minutes, based on series of questions (approx. 4 to 5) you have prepared in advance. I ask that that week, you read all reading responses posted online. I am happy to correspond or meet with discussion leaders to help you frame your approach.

- b. Reading: You are expected to come to each class meeting having read the assigned pieces. While the reading list looks long and time consuming, **you will never have to read more than 100 pages for the week.** In addition, I will help you develop skills necessary to read strategically in order to be prepared for class, while not paying equal attention to every word of the readings.
- c. Meeting: Please sign up for an appointment with me in office hours before Week 4. This meeting is only so that I may come to know you and your interests and to give you the opportunity to give me any feedback you would like.
- d. Lateness: Lateness to class will result in a drop in your participation grade. The grades of late assignments will be lowered one-third of a grade for each day that they are late (i.e. a B+ will be lowered to a B if one day late, to a B- if two days late, and so on). Extensions will only be granted for documented family or medical emergencies or university-approved absences.
- e. Use of Electronics: There is no place for cell phone use in this class. Laptops are allowed for note taking and readings access only. If laptop use become problematic, I reserve the right to ban them from class.

Writing Assignments

1. Reading Response (Due 11:59pm Sunday night): *Goal —> To give practice in fashioning historical arguments by using evidence from source materials.* Every week I will post a question to which you must write a response that will be no less than 300 words and no more than 500 words. My question will be from a selection of the readings and will ask you to take a position and argue why your position is accurate, according to the readings in question. I will have you post these responses by 11:59 Tuesday night and you are encouraged to read your classmates' responses before coming to class;

Writing Assignments (cont.)

2. Primary Source Analysis (Due Week 4): Goal —> *Familiarize you with working with primary and secondary sources and the research skills needed to evaluate and analyze them.* Choose a primary source or small set of primary sources (document, artwork, object) in consultation with me and write a 900-1500 word analysis of the object. Formulate appropriate questions about it and argue for the answers you believe are most reasonable. Consult other primary sources and secondary sources as well as class notes in your interpretation of the object, citing them appropriately with footnotes and a bibliography.
3. Annotated Bibliography (Week 6): Goal —> *Practice the skills necessary to enter into a scholarly debate by determining the state of research and current debates in a particular field.* Choose **five secondary sources** related to a set of primary sources you would like to work with on a final paper. Read and evaluate the secondary literature and submit a written record of your work. **The bibliography should concentrate on what the author argues and what evidence is used.**
4. Thesis Statement and Introduction (Week 7): Goal —> *To begin articulating your own argument, based on your own evaluation of the primary sources and in conversation with the secondary sources related to them.* Submit a thesis statement that expresses the heart of your argument about the primary sources you will analyze and an introduction that appropriately introduces an educated and interested reader, not familiar with the specifics of your primary source set.
5. Rough Draft (Week 9): Submit a completed rough draft of your final paper, 3,000-4,500 (10-15 page) in length. Your paper should make a historical argument regarding your topic and include references to primary and secondary sources. You must cite these sources appropriately throughout your paper and provide a bibliography. As often as you can, you should include other opinions on your topic that you reject, justifying your decisions with solid reasons.
Comments and corrections will be returned to you by week 10.
6. Final Paper Due Friday, March 26, 2021

Grading Breakdown

- Participation = 25%
 - General = 20%
 - Leading Discussion = 5%
- Writing Assignments = 75%
 - Reading responses = 20%
 - Primary Source Analysis = 15%
 - Annotated Bibliography = 15%
 - Final Paper = 25%

Resources

- Honor Code: All students are responsible for fully understanding and complying with the Honor Code. If you have any questions about plagiarism and the Honor Code, you should speak directly with me and/or visit: <http://judicialaffairs.stanford.edu>;
- Students with Documented Disabilities: Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (Phone: 650-723-1066, Web: <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae>);
- History Writing Specialist: The History Department employs a dedicated writing specialist, Donna Hunter, to help students in crafting historical writing pieces. Donna is available to consult on history assignments at any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming a topic to revising a final draft. You can contact her directly at dhunter@stanford.edu;

Resources (cont.)

- Hume Center for Writing and Speaking: The Hume Center offers support for a range of assignments, from historiographies, source reviews, and research papers, to grant proposals, fellowship applications, and job letters. Consultants will meet with students at any stage in the writing process to work on brainstorming, focusing a topic, developing a thesis statement, organizing an argument, integrating sources, drafting, or revising. To learn more, visit <http://hume.stanford.edu>; to make an appointment, visit <http://sututor.stanford.edu>.

Readings

Week 1 — Enlightenment Medievalisms

Readings: Norman F. Cantor, "Chapter One: The Quest for the Middle Ages," *Inventing the Middle Ages: the Lives, Works, And Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century* (New York: W. Morrow, 1991), 17-47; Otto Gerhard Oexle, "The Middle Ages through Modern Eyes. A Historical Problem: The Prothero Lecture," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9(1999), 121-42; Joseph Richardson, "Enlightenment historians and the problem of the medieval." in *The Medieval World and the Modern Mind*, Michael Brown and Stephen H. Harrison, eds (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 77-100; Raedts, Peter G.J.M.. "Representations of the Middle Ages in Enlightenment historiography." *Medieval History Journal* 5, no. 1 (2002): 1-20; Martin Nadeau, "'Gothic' kingship on stage in Revolutionary France," in *Medievalism and manière gothique in Enlightenment France*, Peter Damian-Grint, ed (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2006), 181-99;

Recommended: Richard Schaefer, "True and False Enlightenment: German Scholars and the Discourse of Catholicism in the Nineteenth Century," *The Catholic Historical Review* 97:1 (2011), 24-45;

Readings (cont.)

Week 2—Romantic Medievalisms

Readings: Walter Kudrycz, "Chapter 3: Golden Ages and Perfect Presents: Romanticism, Idealism and the Middle Ages," in *The Historical Present: Medievalism and Modernity* (London: Continuum: 2011) 55-80; Clare A. Simmons, "Romantic Medievalism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medievalism*, Louise D'Arcens, ed (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 103-118; Christopher Dawson, "The Origins of the Romantic Tradition," in *Mediaeval religion: (the Forwood lectures 1934) and other essays* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1934), 121-54; Veronica Ortenberg, "Chapter 2: Gothic Thoughts," in *In Search of the Holy Grail: the Quest for the Middle Ages* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), 27-51;

Week 3—Nationalism and Medievalism

Readings: Hans Kohn, "Romanticism and the Rise of German Nationalism," *The Review of Politics* 12:4 (1950), 443-72; Walter Pohl, "National Origin Narratives in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy," in *Manufacturing Middle Ages: Entangled History of Medievalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Patrick J. Geary and Gábor Klaniczay, eds (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 13-50; Karen O'Brien, "Roman, Gothic and medieval women: the historicisation of womanhood, c. 1750-c. 1804," in *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 110-151;

Week 4—Medievalism, European Imperialism, and the First World War

Readings: Jonathan Riley-Smith, "Chapter 3: Crusading and Imperialism," in *The Crusades, Christianity, and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 45-61; Aimee E. Barbeau, "Christian Empire and National Crusade: The Rhetoric of Anglican Clergy in the First World War," *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 85:1 (March 2016), 24-62; Elizabeth Siberry, "Chapter 4: Crusading warfare" and "Chapter 5: First world war," in *The New Crusaders: Images of the Crusades In the Nineteenth And Early Twentieth Centuries* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 73-103;

Readings (cont.)

Week 5—The Medievalism of the NAZIs

Readings: Fabian Link and Mark W. Hornburg, “‘He Who Owns the Trifels, Owns the Reich’: Nazi Medievalism and the Creation of the ‘Volksgemeinschaft’ in the Palatinate,” *Central European History* 49:2 (2016): 208-39; David I. Kertzer and Gunnar Mokosch, “The Medieval in the Modern: Nazi and Italian Fascist Use of the Ritual Murder Charge,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 33:2 (Fall 2019), 177–196; Jeremiah J Garsha, “Dictating the Past: The Capture of Medievalism in Nazi Propaganda and the Roots of the Holocaust,” *Ex Post Facto: Journal of SFSU History Students*, 19 (Fall 2010), 131-147; Norman F. Cantor, “Chapter Three: The NAZI Twins: Percy Ernst Schramm and Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz,” *Inventing the Middle Ages: the Lives, Works, And Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century* (New York: W. Morrow, 1991), 79-117;

Week 6—Medievalist Architecture

Readings: Jan M. Ziolkowski, “Britain and the Making of the American Middle Ages,” v. 3, 107-148; Veronica Ortenberg, “Chapter 3: Romantic Visions,” in *In Search of the Holy Grail: the Quest for the Middle Ages* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), 51-68; Robert R. Taylor, “Introduction,” *The Castles of the Rhine: Recreating the Middle Ages in Modern Germany* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1998) 1-21;

*Field trip to Napa Valley or Zoom session with
Dario Sattui, founder of Castello di Amorosa winery, Calistoga, California*

Week 7—Medievalism in Literature: J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis

Readings: Norman F. Cantor, “Chapter Six: The Oxford Fantastists: Clive Staples Lewis, John Ronald Ruel Tolkien, Frederick Maurice Powicke,” *Inventing the Middle Ages: the Lives, Works, And Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century* (New York: W. Morrow, 1991), 205-44; Charles Connell, “Reading the Middle Ages: The ‘Post-Modern’ Medievalism of C. S. Lewis,” *Sehnsucht: The C.S. Lewis Journal* 1:1 (2007): 19-28; Douglas A. Anderson, “‘An industrious little devil’: E.V. Gordon as friend and collaborator with Tolkien,” in *Tolkien the Medievalist*, Jane Chance, ed (London: Routledge: 2003), 15-25; Verlyn Flieger, “‘There would always be a fairy-tale’: J.R.R. Tolkien and the folklore controversy,” in *Tolkien the Medievalist*, Jane Chance, ed (London: Routledge: 2003), 26-35; Andrew Lazo, “A kind of mid-wife: J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis—sharing influence,” in *Tolkien the Medievalist*, Jane Chance, ed (London: Routledge: 2003), 36-49; Christine Chism, “Middle-earth, the Middle Ages, and the Aryan nation: myth and history in World War II,” in *Tolkien the Medievalist*, Jane Chance, ed (London: Routledge: 2003), 63-91;

Readings (cont.)

Week 8—The Middle Ages in Film

Readings: Kevin J. Harty, "Introduction," *The Reel Middle Ages: American, Western And Eastern European, Middle Eastern, And Asian Films About Medieval Europe* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1999), 3-9; Bettina Bildhauer and Anke Bernau, "Introduction: The a-chronology of medieval film," *Medieval Film*, Bettina Bildhauer and Anke Bernau, eds (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 1-19; Bettina Bildhauer, "Chapter 20: Heart and Clock: Time and History in The Immortal Heart and Other Films about the Middle Ages," in *A Companion to the Historical Film*, Robert A. Rosenstone and Constantin Parvulescu, eds (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 407-24;

Movies: *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928); *The King* (2019);

Week 9—Medievalism and E-Sports

Readings: James Cook, "Sonic Medievalism, World Building, and Cultural Identity in Fantasy Video Games," in *Studies in Medievalism XXIX: Politics and Medievalism*, Karl Fugelso, ed (Melton: Boydell & Brewer, Limited, 2020), 217-37; *Digital Gaming Re-Imagines the Middle Ages*, Daniel T. Kline, ed (London: Routledge, 2014), excerpts;

Games: Check out one of the games listed from the library and play it for an hour: "Dante's Inferno"; "Assassin's Creed"; "Medieval Total War";

Week 10—Retreating into Medievalism Today: The Society for Creative Anachronism and the Benedict option

Readings: Michael A. Cramer, "Chapter One: A Brief History of the SCA" and "Chapter 2: Creative Medievalism," in *Medieval Fantasy As Performance: the Society for Creative Anachronism And the Current Middle Ages* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 1-49; Rod Dreher, "Chapter One: The Great Flood," "Chapter 2: The Roots of the Crisis," "Chapter 3: A Rule for Living," and "Conclusion," *The Benedict option: a strategy for Christians in a post-Christian nation*, (New York, NY: Sentinel, 2017), 70-77 and 237-45;