

COL 243: Junior Colloquium  
BOGH-110, M/W 1:20-2:40pm

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## **Lives & Living: The ‘Middle Ages’**

Our theme is **Lives and Living**. Under this theme we will tackle intertwined philosophical, literary, and historical questions through works that defy easy generic or disciplinary categories. Together we will unpack how writers from the middle ages proposed one *should* live one’s life, and how writers conveyed the way persons *did* live their lives. We will do so by carefully reading an array of literary endeavors in which these ethical and historical questions are central concerns. In its simplest form, our recurring question for the semester will be:

**What does it mean to write a life?**

In addition to our semester-long theme, there are three operative ideas which tie together our readings. We will prepare you to **interrogate the idea of an era** – the fourth through fourteenth centuries – as **“middle.”** The idea of the Middle Era is attributed to the fourteenth-century poet Petrarch who called the Latin literature that was not classical, “middle” (i.e., in between the Classical and himself). Modern historians gradually inflated Petrarch’s idea about literature to an assertion about history. This is why we now characterize the political, economic, religious, and social practices of the peoples from the Euphrates to Ireland, and from North Africa to Scandinavia as “middle.” This idea supported (and still supports) the historical narrative of progress that is Modernity. We will interrogate this “modernist medieval” by working with *multiple* periodizations, chronologies, and historical narratives. Practically that means: starting *earlier* and *in the wrong place* for a “traditional” Middle Ages: in first-century A.D. North Africa. It also means an alternative geography: our attention is more firmly fixed upon the cultures of the Mediterranean, than on Europe. Furthermore, instead of dividing our semester into traditional medieval sub-periods, we have structured it in terms of *conversations* that follow ideas and projects across linguistic and geographic boundaries. These solutions come at a cost: entire regions, centuries, linguistic, and cultural traditions are skipped entirely. *We rely on you to remain constantly aware of the incompleteness of our course of study.*

We will equip you with a **habit of study attuned to** the one thing that *does* unite the regions and centuries of the traditional medieval: **the hand-copied codex**. You will train your selves and each other to begin interpretive readings aware of how – to the best of our knowledge – the texts you are reading were preserved, transmitted, received, circulated, and eventually printed and translated into contemporary English. Even in our own Digital Age, we remain wedded to the technology and practices of the book, or codex. This continuity in the technology of producing and transmitting ideas allows us to remain eerily in touch with our medieval cousins.

We will not shy away from **the question of ‘contemporary issues’**. The worlds created by & inflected in the texts we read are worlds with real questions and difficult answers. While insisting we must listen carefully, sensitively, and generously in our readings of these ancient, complex, and translated texts, we will not forget that morally bankrupt ideologies still look to a fantasized ‘medieval’ as a refuge, or as a source of political & rhetorical power. We seek to understand, but a persistent pursuit of understanding need not imply endorsement, nor preclude critique.

## Texts to Acquire

### Pre-ordered and available from R. J. Julia to Rent or Purchase:

The College of Letters is happy to provide micro-grant scholarships for textbooks

If you do not have the budget to get these required texts,  
please contact Eugenia Szady immediately to apply (eszady@wes; x2230)

- William Cook and Ronald Herzman, *The Medieval World View: An Introduction*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Oxford University Press, 2011)  
978-0195373684
- Pseudo-Callisthenes, *The Alexander Romance*, translated by Richard Stoneman (Penguin, 1991)  
978-0140445602
- Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, translated by Henry Chadwick (Oxford University Press, 2009 most recently)  
978-0199537822
- *The Qur'an*, interpreted by Abdel Haleem with English and Arabic (Oxford University Press, 2010)  
978-0199570713
- *Two Lives of Charlemagne* (= Einhard, *Life of Charlemagne* & Nokter, *Deeds of Charlemagne*), translated by David Ganz (Penguin, 2008)  
978-0140455052
- Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, Translated by P. Frankopan (Penguin, 2009)  
978-0140455274
- Al-Ghazzali, *Path to Sufism: His Deliverance from Error*, translated by R. J. McCarthy (Fons Vitae, 2000)  
978-1887752305
- Ibn Tufayl, *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, translated by Lenn E. Goodman (University of Chicago Press, 2009)  
978-0226303109

### Available for order from Cardinal Print and Copy (Instructions on Moodle):

- Course Reader 1
- Course Reader 2

## SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS & ASSIGNMENTS

M 9.02 Introductions

Read: from Cook and Herzman, *The Medieval Worldview* [hereafter: *C&H*]In this order: Chapter 2: "Classical," then Chapter 1: "The Bible,"  
then Chapter 3: "Early Christianity"

[Insert Date]

### Conversation I: How is a *Life* Told? (ca. 1<sup>st</sup> c. - 5<sup>th</sup> c.)

W 9.04 Pseudo-Callisthenes, *The Alexander Romance*, Book I (pp. 35-86)M 9.09 Pseudo-Callisthenes, *The Alexander Romance*, Books II & III (pp. 87-159)W 9.11 *Gospel According to Mark* (NRSV translation) [Course Reader 1]M 9.16 Perpetua (and Anon.), *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* [Course Reader 1]W 9.18 Augustine, *Confessions*: Books 1-9 (pp. 1-178)Read: *C&H* Chapter 4: "Augustine"M 9.23 *Confessions*: Books 10-13 (pp. 179-305)W 9.25 No Reading: Comparative Discussion of first four texts asking "What is a *Life*?"

### DUE THURSDAY 9/27, 11.59p – ESSAY 1 : Traditional 6p Essay ("Close Reading")

### Conversation II: Living Together (ca 6<sup>th</sup>c. - 9<sup>th</sup> c.)

M 09.30 *Regula Benedicti* (Rule of Benedict) [Course Reader]Read: *C&H* Chapter 8: "Western Monasticism"W 10.02 *Regula Benedicti* (Rule of Benedict) + a few Psalms [Course Reader 1]M 10.07 *Qur'an* (Suwar: 90-114, 7, 1, 74, 17-19, 21)Read *C&H* Chapter 6: "Islam"W 10.09 *Qur'an* (Suwar: 2, 3, 4, 8, 30)M 10.14 Einhard, *Life of Charles*Read: *C&H* Chapter 7: "The West after the Collapse"W 10.16 Dhuoda, *Handbook for William*: Books 1-3; 10-11 [Course Reader 1]Read: *C & H* Chapter 9: "The First Medieval Synthesis"

Th 10.17 COL Master Class with Susanna Elm (UC Berkeley)—4.30 p.m.

Conversation III: Telling a Good Life (ca. 11<sup>th</sup> c. – 12<sup>th</sup> c.)

M 10.21 FALL BREAK

W 10.23 Anna Komnena, *Alexiad*: Prologue (pp. 1-7); Book 1 (pp. 29-38; 48-49) & 3 (85-99)

Read: *C&H* Chapter 5: “Byzantium”

**DUE THURSDAY 10/24, 11.59p – ESSAY 2 : Traditional 6p Essay (“Historical Argument”)**

M 10.28 Anna Komnena, *Alexiad*: Book 5 (*all*), Book 10 (*all*), and Book 15 (pp. 455-473)

W 10.30 Al-Ghazzali, *Path to Sufism: His Deliverance from Error (al-Munqidh min al-Dalal)*

M 11.04 Ibn Tufayl, *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* (pages 95-119)

Read Moodle-posted selections on “*Al-Andalus*”

W 11.06 Ibn Tufayl, *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* (pages 120-166)

M 11.11 Abelard, *Ethics* (selection) [Course Reader 2]

Read: *C&H* Chapter 10: “Church, State, and Society”

W 11.13 Abelard, *Historia Calamitatum* [Course Reader 2]

Conversation IV: Live, Love, Tell (ca. 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> c.)

M 11.18 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (selection) [Course Reader 2]

Read: *C&H* Chapter 11: “The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century”

W 11.20 Ibn Hazm, *The Ring of the Dove* (selection) [Course Reader 2]

M 11.25 Marie de France, “*Laüstic*” (various translations) [Course Reader 2]

W 11.27 THANKSGIVING BREAK

M 12.02 Boccaccio, *Decameron* (Day 5, story 4 and Day 3, story 4) [Course Reader 2]

W 12.04 Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales* (Prologue + Miller) [Course Reader 2]

F 12.13 Concluding Discussion and Rare Book Room Visit (Olin Library)

**FINAL ASSIGNMENT:**

**“Mock” Comps Essay (max 1800 words) & Oral Exam**

*(scheduled between Nov. 25 and Dec 12)*

## DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

### I. Oral Presentation Skills

- 1) One **Textual History**: a succinct but informed **5-minute Presentation** in which you convey the significant textual history of one reading (i.e. the history of its transmission in manuscripts, then critical editions, then translations). Tell us:
  - a. Who would/might have read this text in the ‘medieval’ period (i.e., manuscripts)?
  - b. Who decided this text was significant, and when (i.e., crit. edition & print edition)?
  - c. Who adapted the text into the form we are studying right now (i.e., translation)?
- 2) One **Discussion Facilitation**:
  - a. Students will be paired and assigned to lead the discussion for a particular class
  - b. Each pair will meet with the instructors to collaborate on a discussion plan before the relevant discussion. This involves:
    - i. ... carefully reading the relevant textbook chapter (if one is assigned).
      1. Kick off the discussion by highlighting for classmates essential/key concepts that should have been grasped
      2. Explain one or two particularly difficult concepts, or note a concept that you hope will come up / be examined in discussion
    - ii. ...preparing to lead discussion (bring to meeting with profs) by deciding:
      1. What is the “big takeaway” that the class should get from this text?
      2. What passages need to be addressed in discussion, either because they are particularly difficult, or are key for the “big takeaway”?
      3. The Plan: concoct two ways to get from passages to takeaway.

### II. Written Presentation Skills

- 3) **Discussion Scribe**. Instead of doing “reflection posts” you will take turns taking notes on class to help each other recall the insights gained and passages cited from course discussions. This collaborative resource will aid your preparation for Junior Comps.
  - a. Each student will choose one discussion for which to be a “scribe”.
  - b. As a scribe you will write up a list of points made in class discussion.
  - c. Your notes will not be a transcript, but a succinct recap of discussion: try to capture the main points of your colleagues’ contributions, passages cited, and insights gained about those passages.
  - d. Models and instructions about format for submission will be provided on Moodle.
- 4) Three **Critical Essay / Oral Exam** assignments
  - a. The first two essays are ‘traditional’ COL colloquium essays 5-6 pp. (double-spaced, 12 pt Times, 1” margins, etc, etc.)
    - i. The first essay must be built around a close reading of a single passage.
    - ii. The second essay must be constructed to make a historical argument.
    - iii. If there is a specific kind of essay you would like to write instead, talk to us.
  - b. For the third essay, during the last two weeks of classes you will do a “mock comps”-style exam, imitating the Junior Comps procedure. You will receive a prompt and then have 15 hours (9am – midnight) to write an essay (max 1800 words). You will then take a 20-minute in-person exam during final exam week.
  - c. Paper submission strictures: We will only accept papers uploaded to Moodle in the format: “243-yourlastname-1” for the first, then “-2” and “-3” for the next two. Lateness will be noted in your end-of-the-semester evaluation. Missing papers will result in failing of the course (unless an incomplete has been granted by both Profs.).

## Important STATEMENTS

### **Evaluations:**

Thorough written evaluations about both your written work (timeliness, content, and form) and about your in-class presence and participation are offered in place of letter grades.

### **Class attendance:**

Your presence in class is essential to your success and that of the colloquium. In addition to coming to *every* class prepared, come to class in a timely manner. Avoid absences unless there is a family or health emergency, a specific religious holiday that you honor, or an athletics conflict.

### **Plagiarism, Paraphrasing, and Recycling papers:**

We all (students & profs) abide by the Honor Code. Plagiarism is a violation of the Honor Code. Aside from the obvious “presentation of another person’s words, ideas, images, data, or research as one’s own,” plagiarism also includes “paraphrasing or using any content or terms coined by others without proper acknowledgment,” as well as submitting “the same work for academic credit more than once without permission.” Acknowledge your sources, including papers *you* have written. <[wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/standardsregulations/studentconduct.html](http://wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/standardsregulations/studentconduct.html)>

### **Accommodations:**

We are committed to making our classroom accessible, as expressed in, but not limited to:

- *accommodations of technology in the classroom.* Devices that are important aids to learning are permitted, but you must first alert us to the fact that you would like to use a laptop or E-Reader. Devices not discussed are not permitted; cell phones must be silenced & stowed.
- *accommodations for students with disabilities.* If you haven’t yet, please help make our course accessible by contacting Crystal Rose Hill ([chill01@wesleyan.edu](mailto:chill01@wesleyan.edu)) for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. Disability Resources is located in North College, room 021, or call 860-685-5581. See active link on Moodle.
- *accommodations for athletics schedules.* Student athletes must make *both* their professors *and* coaches aware of conflicts from the beginning of the semester. This must be done both verbally, and in writing *before the end of Add/Drop.* Updates (playoffs) must be given ASAP.
- *accommodations for students committed to observing religious holy days (holidays).* Questions about the holidays should be directed to the University Chaplains; students who have questions about attendance, assignments, or participation should consult with their Class Dean, as well as speaking to us (your Profs.) about any anticipated conflicts *before the end of Add/Drop.*
- *accommodations for diversity of belief, identity, background, & body* are the responsibility of us all. We pledge to do what we can to model and maintain an atmosphere where ideas and paradigms are debated and challenged, while we all maintain respect for difference.
- *an open invitation to discuss with us how to improve these statements,* and a classroom atmosphere that is challenging and communal. We look to partner with you in pursuing the task at hand with rigor and energy, while projecting and protecting true belonging & welcome.