MEDIEVAL STUDIES

53 Wall Street, Rm. 310, 203.432.0672
http://medieval.yale.edu
M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Chair and Director of Graduate Studies
Emily Thornbury

Executive Committee R. Howard Bloch, Jessica Brantley, Ardis Butterfield, Stephen Davis, Paul Freedman, Jacqueline Jung, Vasileios Marinis, Robert Nelson, Emily Thornbury, Shawkat Toorawa, Jesús Velasco

Faculty associated with the program R. Howard Bloch, Gerhard Bowering, Jessica Brantley, Ardis Butterfield, Walter Cahn (Emeritus), Raymond Clemens, Marcia Colish (Emerita), Stephen Davis, John Dillon, Maria Doerfler, Marcel Elias, Lisa Fagin Davis, Roberta Frank (Emerita), Paul Freedman, Creighton Gilbert (Emeritus), Walter Goffart (Emeritus), Harvey Goldblatt, Frank Griffel, Valerie Hansen, Noel Lenski, Felicity Harley McGowen, Peter Hawkins (Emeritus), Samuel Hodgkin, Jacqueline Jung, Traugott Lawler (Emeritus), Ivan Marcus, Vasileios Marinis, Giuseppe Mazzotta, Robert Nelson, Christiana Purdy Moudarres, Barbara Shailor (Emerita), Emily Thornbury, Shawkat Toorawa, Jane Tylus, Kevin VanBladel, Jesús Velasco, Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan, Anna Zayaruznaya, Travis Zadeh

FIELDS OF STUDY
Fields in this interdisciplinary program include history, history of art, history of music, religious studies, languages and literatures, linguistics, and philosophy.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PH.D. DEGREE
Students are required to demonstrate proficiency in at least one medieval language of scholarship (Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, or Latin) and in two modern languages appropriate to their field of study. Language proficiency may be demonstrated either by passing a departmental examination within the first two years of study, or by achieving at least a High Pass in an advanced language or literature course, as approved by the DGS.

Students will design their programs in close contact with the director of graduate studies (DGS). During the first two years, students take fourteen term courses, and must receive an Honors grade in at least four term courses the first year. Students take an oral examination, usually in the fifth term, on a set of three topics worked out in consultation with the DGS. Then, having nurtured a topic of particular interest, the student submits a dissertation prospectus that must be approved by the end of the third year. Upon completion of all predissertation requirements, including the prospectus, students are admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree. What remains, then, is the writing, submission, and approval of the dissertation during the final two years.

Students in Medieval Studies participate in the Teaching Fellows Program in the third and fourth years.

MASTER’S DEGREES

M.Phil. See degree requirements under Policies and Regulations. The M.Phil. degree may be requested after all requirements but the dissertation are met.

M.A. (en route to the Ph.D.) Students enrolled in the Ph.D. program may qualify for the M.A. degree upon satisfactory completion of three terms of course work. Minimum requirements include a High Pass average in courses and passing the examination in Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, or Latin.

Terminal Master’s Degree Program Students enrolled in the terminal master’s degree program must complete either seven term courses or six term courses and a special project. One course must have a focus on the study of original manuscripts or documents. There must be at least one grade of Honors, and there may not be more than one grade of Pass. Students must maintain a minimum average of High Pass each term. Students must take two consecutive terms of a language relevant to the study of the medieval period, appropriate to the student’s particular needs and interests. Students must also demonstrate knowledge of one or more of Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, or Latin. For more information, please visit the program website: http://medieval.yale.edu.

COURSES

MDVL 506a / CLSS 856a / HIST 506a, Human Migration in Antiquity Noel Lenski
This course examines the processes of human migration in premodern societies with an emphasis on ancient Rome. It explores voluntary and forced migrations, their motivations, processes, and outcomes. Particular attention is paid to sources and problems in the period of late antiquity, when human migration helped drive the collapse of the Roman Empire.

MDVL 510b / ENGL 501b / LING 501b, Beowulf and the Beowulf Complex Emily Thornbury
A close reading of Beowulf in Old English, within the modern and medieval critical landscapes. Prerequisite: a strong working knowledge of Old English (typically ENGL 500, or the equivalent).
MDVL 513b / CLSS 872b / HIST 513b / NELC 683b / RLST 619b, Law and History, Law in History: Premodern Civilizations through the Lens of Legal Historiography  Mariá Doerfler and Travis Zadeh

This seminar invites students into a comparative exploration of the intersection of law, history, and historiography in the ancient and premodern world. Sessions explore these links across a variety of linguistic and geographic settings, including those of ancient and medieval India, China, Persia, Greece, and Rome, as well as in different political, religious, literary, and archaeological contexts. The seminar constructs the category of law expansively to encompass civic, religious, and hybrid forms of legislation. In the process, we seek to explore, inter alia, questions of the relevance of history for the study of law, history’s deployment in the context of legal writings, and law’s concomitant relevance for historiography; the use of theoretical models, including those forged in modern and postmodern contexts, for the study of law and legal historiography; and the implications of discourses about law and history in premodernity for contemporary, post-secular societies.

MDVL 577b / ITAL 577b, Women in the Middle Ages  Christiana Purdy Moudarres

Medieval understandings of womanhood examined through analysis of writings by and/or about women, from antiquity through the Middle Ages. Introduction to the premodern Western canon and assessment of the role that women played in its construction.

MDVL 585a / HIST 535a, Problems in Church History, 800–1500  Paul Freedman

The course runs chronologically from the Carolingian Empire and its form of imperial church governance through the ecclesiastical reform of the eleventh century, monastic orders and their proliferation in the twelfth century, the emergence of the papal monarchy, and challenges to church authority from secular rulers and popular, sometimes heretical, movements. It ends with the upheavals of the late Middle Ages, specifically the Great Schism of 1378–1417 and the failed conciliar movement of the fifteenth century. Among the sources to be considered are cathedral and monastic cartularies, archival documents, saints’ lives and other biographies of church figures, and records indicating the position of the church in the secular world, including education, commerce, city planning, and jurisdictional conflicts.

MDVL 590b / HIST 590b / JDST 764b / RLST 777b, Jews in Muslim Lands from the Seventh through the Sixteenth Century  Ivan Marcus

Introduction to Jewish culture and society in Muslim lands from the Prophet Muhammad to Suleiman the Magnificent. Topics include Islam and Judaism; Jerusalem as a holy site; rabbinic leadership and literature in Baghdad; Jewish courtiers, poets, and philosophers in Muslim Spain; and the Jews in the Ottoman Empire.

MDVL 596a / HIST 596a / JDST 761a / RLST 773a, Jewish History and Thought to Early Modern Times  Ivan Marcus

A broad introduction to the history of the Jews from biblical beginnings until the European Reformation and the Ottoman Empire. Focus on the formative period of classical rabbinic Judaism and on the symbiotic relationships among Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Jewish society and culture in its biblical, rabbinic, and medieval settings.

MDVL 603a / HIST 603a / JDST 806a / RLST 616a, Jews and Christians in the Formation of Europe, 500–1500  Ivan Marcus

This seminar explores how medieval Jews and Christians interacted as religious societies between 500 and 1500.

MDVL 620b, Latin Paleography  Staff

This course introduces students to the three components of medieval Latin paleography — literacy, connoisseurship, and description — while also addressing the general challenges of working with hand-produced medieval codices and fragments. Examples selected largely from collections in the Beinecke Library. A working knowledge of Latin is helpful but not required.

MDVL 658b / CPLT 969b / FREN 658b / NELC 684b / SPAN 658b, Law and the Science of the Soul: Iberian and Mediterranean Connections  Jesús Velasco

This seminar suggests a research project to investigate the affinity between the legal discipline and the science of the soul, or, if you wish, between the science of the soul and the body of law. The point of departure for our framing argument — the existence of this affinity — is that at different moments in history, the legal science (in the form of legal scholarship, religious law, or even legislation) has toiled to appropriate cognitive processes (the external senses, for instance) and post-sensorial operations (imagination, fantasy, memory, etc.). However, this appropriation has become, at different moments in history, so naturalized, so dissolved, so automatized, that it has become invisible for us, and that, because of this invisibility, the affinity can continue doing a political work that is not always evident to us readers, citizens, and clients of the law. In this seminar we read Iberian and Mediterranean primary sources from different confessions, in different languages, and within different legal and political backgrounds — from pre-Socratic thinkers to al-Ghazali, from Averroes and Maimonides to Alfonso X, from Parisian theologians to Spinoza, etc. Likewise, we read theoretical work that allow us to conceptualize the kind of research we are doing.

MDVL 663a, From House Churches to Medieval Cathedrals: Christian Art and Architecture to the End of Gothic  Vasileios Marinis

This course examines the art associated with, or related to, Christianity from its origins to the end of Gothic. It analyzes major artistic monuments and movements in a variety of regions, paying particular attention to how art shapes and is shaped by the social and historical circumstances of the period and culture. The class considers art in diverse media, focusing on painting, sculpture, architecture, and decorative arts. Trips to the Yale Art Gallery and the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library are included. The course aims to familiarize students with key monuments of Christian architecture, sculpture, painting, and related arts, analyzing each within its particular sociocultural and theological perspective. The course stresses the importance of looking at works of art closely and in context and encourages students to develop skills of close observation and critical visual analysis. Additionally, students are encouraged to examine the ways parallel developments in Christian theology, dogma, and liturgy are influenced by art. Prerequisites: basic knowledge of Christian history and familiarity with the Bible.
MDVL 665a / ENGL 500a / LING 500a, Old English I  Emily Thornbury
The essentials of the language, some prose readings, and close study of several celebrated Old English poems.

MDVL 680a, The Churches of the East: Syrian Orthodox and Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Churches  Bryan Spinks
This course gives an introduction to the different churches of the East. It examines the Christological controversies that caused the divisions between the Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, and Church of the East, using primary documents in English translation. It then focuses on the liturgies of the Syrian Orthodox and Ethiopian Tewahedo Orthodox Churches, using primary liturgical texts, classical commentaries, and secondary sources from modern liturgical scholarship.

MDVL 712a, History of Early Christianity: Origins and Growth  Gabrielle Thomas
This course introduces students to early Christianity from apostolic times through the eighth century. It examines the social, political, and religious context of early Christianity; its expansion and Imperial adoption; the character of its life, worship, and mission; the formation of the Christian scriptures; the articulation and defense of a central body of doctrine; church councils and creeds; the monastic movement; and early Christian art. In conversation with influential theologians of the period, we ask questions about ways in which early Christian identities are formed and explore how power is used and distributed in this process. Students are exposed to a range of primary sources and modes of historical study. This course serves as essential preparation for the study of Christian history and theology in later historical periods. Above all, it provides an opportunity to consider early Christianity on its own terms and to discover how it continues to shape the lives of Christian communities today.

MDVL 736a, Medieval Latin Workshop  John Dillon
This course is intended as a community-driven survey of medieval and/or ecclesiastical Latin for students at YDS and GSAS interested in improving their command and reading proficiency of Late Antique, Medieval, and Christian Latin (and Latin generally). The selection of texts is determined by the students enrolled, supplemented by the instructor: students are required to contact the instructor in advance and propose an appropriate Latin text—something relevant to their studies, dissertation subject, etc. Ideally, all students enrolled have at least two full sessions/one week dedicated to their author/text. Depending on enrollment, the instructor assigns passages of appropriate length (e.g., material for one or two sessions or more) from the students’ proposed texts. The students and instructor work through the texts together in a seminar format. The course thus is a Latin survey, but its contents are determined by the students and keyed to their needs. Prerequisite: basic knowledge of Latin grammar and syntax, equivalent to LATN 110 and LATN 120. Students who intend to take this course must contact the instructor before the first class session so that readings can accommodate all students.

MDVL 946a / CPLT 658a / ENGL 699a / ITAL 946a, Early Modern Ecologies: Representing Peasants, Animals, Labor, Land  Jane Tylus
To what extent does writing about the land and depicting landscapes in early modern Europe reflect a new interest in engaging the boundaries between the human and nonhuman? What does it show about the commitment of artists and intellectuals to representing cultures and environments not necessarily their own? And how did writers and artists seek to legitimize their intellectual labors by invoking images of agricultural work? Since antiquity, artists have often chosen to make the countryside and its human and nonhuman denizens symbols of other things: leisure, song, exile, patriotism, erotic sensibilities, anti-urbanism. Early Christianity in turn embraced the desert—and the countryside—as a space for spirituality. We explore these origins and turn to the early modern period, when such interests exploded into poems, novels, plays, and paintings—a period that coincided with new world discoveries and new possibilities for “golden ages” abroad. We read works by Virgil, St. Jerome, Petrarch, Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, Tasso, Seamus Heaney, and others, and take at least one trip to a local gallery (in New Haven or New York). Finally, we explore recent work in ecocriticism and environmental studies in order to grapple with ancient and early modern understandings of the natural world.