MEDIEVAL STUDIES

Humanities Quadrangle, Rms. 431 & 438, 203.432.0672
http://medieval.yale.edu
M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Chair and Director of Graduate Studies
Emily Thornbury

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Additional affiliated faculty Adel Allouche (Emeritus), Felisa Baynes-Ross, Lucas Bender, Gerhard Bowering (Emeritus), Marcia Colish (Emeritus), John Dillon, Carlos Eire, Roberta Frank (Emeritus), Walter Goffart (Emeritus), Harvey Goldblatt (Emeritus), Eric Greene, Frank Griffl, Dimitri Gutas (Emeritus), Peter Hawkins (Emeritus), Subhashini Kaligotla, Christina Kraus, Traugott Lawler (Emeritus), Noel Lenski, Giuseppe Mazzotta (Emeritus), Alastair Minnis (Emeritus), Robert Nelson (Emeritus), Christiana Purdy Moudarres, Barbara Shailor (Emeritus), Gabrielle Thomas, Jane Tylus, 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, usually in the third year and one year thereafter.

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 502a / CPLT 582a / ENGL 545a / FREN 802a, Chaucer and Translation Ardis Butterfield
An exploration of the works of Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1340–1400), brilliant writer and translator. Using modern postcolonial as well as medieval theories of translation, memory, and bilingualism, we investigate how texts in French, Latin, and Italian are transformed, cited, and reinvented in his writings. Some key questions include: What happens to language under the pressure of crosslingual reading practices? What happens to the notion of translation in a multilingual culture? How are ideas of literary history affected by understanding Chaucer’s English in relation to the other more prestigious language worlds in which his poetry was enmeshed? Texts include material in French, Middle English, Latin, and Italian. Proficiency in any one or more of these languages is welcome, but every effort is made to use texts available in modern English translation, so as to include as wide a participation as possible in the course.
MDVL 533b / ENGL 533b, Medieval Drama  Jessica Brantley
This seminar explores the dramatic traditions of late-medieval England from many angles in order to construct a rich, contextual reading of theatrical culture in the period. The biblical cycle drama—sometimes known as Corpus Christi or mystery plays—forms the center of the course, and we consider evidence from all four extant cycles, while concentrating primarily on the N-Town plays. We read the cycle drama in the context of other important genres including liturgical drama, morality plays, saints' plays, mummmings and disguisings, and royal entries. Recent critical interest in the histories of performance leads us to consider the difference enactment makes to the literary objects we study. But we also think about what it means to read a medieval play, particularly how the visual imagination works for a solitary reader. To this end, we investigate medieval artistic forms that touch the drama without (perhaps) being properly theatrical: liturgy, pageantry, song, spectacle, recitation, book illumination, sculpture, and stained glass. We also attend to the physical forms in which medieval drama is preserved—i.e., the manuscripts in which we find the texts and performance records. Finally, we consider the legacies of medieval drama as engaged by contemporary playwrights, including Sarah Ruhl (Passion Play) and Branden Jacobs-Jenkins (Everybody).

MDVL 545a / HIST 545a, Medieval Towns  Paul Freedman
European towns from their transformations of the late Roman Empire to 1500. The political, religious, and commercial functions of towns, their government, and the degree of autonomy they possessed are the main topics covered. Comparisons among geographic regions with special attention to regions of precocious developmental and political autonomy such as northern Italy and Flanders.

MDVL 565a / ENGL 503a / HIST 800a, Circa 1000  Valerie Hansen and Emily Thornbury
The world in the year 1000, when the different regions of the world participated in complex networks. Archaeological excavations reveal that the Vikings reached L'Anse aux Meadows, Canada, at roughly the same time that the Kitan people defeated China's Song dynasty and established a powerful empire stretching across the grasslands of Eurasia. Europeans tried to figure out whether the Vikings were a sign of Doomsday, and if so, whether a series of cultural experiments might stave off the end-time, even as the Icelanders tried to decide whether they wanted to be European. In this seminar, students read interpretative texts based on archaeology and primary sources, prepare projects in teams, work with material culture, and develop skills of cross-cultural analysis. Mandatory field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York on the second Saturday of the fall term.

MDVL 571a / CLSS 601a, Introduction to Latin Paleography  N. Raymond Clemens
Latin paleography from the fourth century CE to ca. 1500. Topics include the history and development of national hands; the introduction and evolution of Caroline minuscule, pre-gothic, gothic, and humanist scripts (both cursive and book hands); the production, circulation, and transmission of texts (primarily Latin, with reference to Greek and Middle English); advances in the technical analysis and digital manipulation of manuscripts. Seminars are based on the examination of codices and fragments in the Beinecke Library; students select a manuscript for class presentation and final paper.

MDVL 593a / HSAR 593a, The Body as Medium in Medieval Art and Culture  Jacqueline Jung
Since the publication of pioneering studies by Caroline Walker Bynum in the late 1980s, the European Middle Ages has come to be recognized not as an “age of spirituality” but as an emphatically body-oriented culture. The paradoxical bodies of Christ (at once wholly divine and wholly human) and his Virgin Mother were the subject of extensive speculation, scrutiny, and loving devotion in literature, theology, and art; the fragmented remains of the saints were housed in glittering containers for the faithful to venerate; and the living bodies of charismatic men and women became both the vehicles for their own communion with the divine and objects themselves for the devotional (or skeptical) gazes of others. It is the latter facet of medieval visual culture to which this seminar is dedicated. Although we look closely at works of art in various media (especially manuscript painting and sculpture), in which bodies function as representational signs, our main objective is to understand the variety of ways in which active, living bodies could serve as communicative media in spheres both public and private, religious and secular. Topics include the physical and sensory apparatus of the body in medieval science and medicine; the body as vehicle for the individual’s communication with God; the stigmatic body; the rapturous or possessed body as site of discernment; the tortured body as teaching tool; the self-punished body as mimetic spectacle; the courtly body as aesthetic object; and the dissected body as revelation of both personal virtues and cosmic forces. Reading knowledge of French and German is highly recommended but not required.

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 613a, Medieval Latin: Medieval Mystics from Bernard of Clairvaux to Thomas à Kempis  John Dillon
This reading course in Medieval Latin is intended to help students improve their command of Latin through working directly with medieval texts. We read selections from major mystics of the Middle Ages, including works by Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), Hildegard of Bingen's Scivias (ca. 1151/1152), the thirteenth-century Latin translation of Mechthild of Magdeburg's Das fließende Licht der Gottheit (Lux divinitatis fluens, ca. 1250–80), and Thomas à Kempis's Imitatio Christi (Imitation of Christ, ca. 1418–27). Prerequisite: one year of formal study of Latin, equivalent to LATN 110 and LATN 120 or LATN 125.
MDVL 621b / CLSS 624b / ENGL 521b / HIST 532b, Advanced Manuscript Studies  N. Raymond Clemens
This course builds on the foundation provided by MDVL 620 by focusing on both regional Latin hands and the vernacular hands that grew from the Latin tradition. The backbone of the course is Middle English paleography (no prior experience needed), but the course surveys French, Italian, Hebrew, and German hands as well. Prerequisite: MDVL 620 or MDVL 571 or equivalent study of Latin paleography strongly suggested.

MDVL 660a, HIST 540a, Introduction to Research in Medieval History  Paul Freedman
The seminar provides an introduction to research in medieval European history: often-used source genres, methods, and research tools. We focus on working with primary sources in original languages, occasionally in their original manuscript and early printed form. A working knowledge of a medieval language is, therefore, desirable. Yale is particularly fortunate in that the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library possesses much relevant material, including medieval manuscripts and early printed bibles.

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 666b / ENGL 502b, Old English II  Emily Thornbury
Readings in a variety of pre-Conquest vernacular genres, varying regularly, with supplementary reading in current scholarship. Current topic: the Exeter anthology of Old English poetry, comprising saints’ lives, lyrics, elegies, wisdom poetry, riddles, and more.

MDVL 670b / NELC 669b, Near Eastern Manuscript Research  Kevin van Bladel
Introduction to research using manuscripts in Near Eastern languages. Topics include codicology, palaeography, manuscript history, textual criticism and edition, and a variety of other matters specific to Near Eastern manuscripts. Prerequisites: reading ability in one premodern Near Eastern language and permission of the instructor.

MDVL 731a, Origins of Christian Art in Late Antiquity  Felicity Harley
This course examines the origins and development of Christian art in the visual culture of Roman late antiquity, ca. 200–ca. 500 CE. Its aim is to introduce students to key developments in the history of Christian art through the close study of images preserved on a range of objects in different media (including frescoes, glassware, sculpture, coins, textiles, mosaic) made for a variety of purposes. The course involves visits to the Yale Art Gallery and focuses on the importance of situating objects within their larger social and cultural context through the analysis of primary source evidence, which may include archaeological, iconographic, epigraphic, and textual sources (Jewish, early Christian, and other contemporary Roman texts). Topics include the literary and archaeological evidence for early Christian attitudes to visual representation; contexts of manufacture; the social and economic basis of patronage; Roman political influence on Christian iconography; development of new genres of imagery; and the role of imperial patronage in the transformation of civic spaces.

MDVL 771b, Francis and Clare of Assisi  Staff
In the early thirteenth century, the question of poverty came to the fore in medieval Christianity. Many people rebelled against the structures of the vastly profitable world of trade and asked if it could still be reconciled with Christian values. The most influential figures of this movement were two young people from Assisi in central Italy: Francis and Clare, both later canonized by the Catholic Church. In them we find sincere efforts to live true Christian discipleship according to the rules of the Sermon on the Mount. In this course we explore their biographies and thought. The sources we read were written both by themselves and by their hagiographers. We seek to determine the extent to which this material is reliable or not and, in addition, aim to construct a historical and theological image of Francis and Clare as we examine enduring and unresolved questions about them. Prerequisites: one of REL 712, REL 713, REL 714, or REL 715, and a course in theology; or sufficient background from previous studies; or permission of the instructor.

MDVL 773a, Core Texts of Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham  Staff
Scholasticism is somewhat like hard-core training for the brain: scholars of the High Middle Ages used Aristotelian philosophy to express Christian belief. Despite later generations mocking the allegedly widespread inflexibility of scholasticism, a closer examination of the doctrines reveals the diversity of theological approaches. In this course, we follow the works of two extraordinary thinkers: Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican in the thirteenth century, and William of Ockham, a Franciscan of the fourteenth century. While Aquinas trusted in the possibilities of reason to resolve most theological problems, the latter questioned whether reason was able to grasp faith. Together, we closely read texts from both authors, seeking to explore their presuppositions, arguments, and conflicts. This approach both helps us to understand a foreign world and presents challenges for our contemporary thought. Prerequisites: one of REL 712, REL 713, REL 714, or REL 715, and a course in theology; or sufficient background from previous studies; or permission of the instructor.
As in Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, mystical experiences—intellective and bodily—are integral to Christianity, beginning with accounts of divine encounters and visions in the Bible. Mysticism, however, is by no means a uniform set of beliefs or practices. It has always occupied a contested place in the western churches, ranging from sanctity worthy of canonization to heresy, censure, and persecution. Indeed, the nature of mysticism within the realm of religious experiences remains hotly debated, especially in the recent work of historians, theologians, anthropologists, and scholars of gender and sexualities. Mystical experiences knew no institutional, doctrinal, societal, or gender boundaries. Those who have left accounts of their experiences—textual, visual, or musical—include theologians and laity, women and men, elites and common folk. We examine a broad range of textual sources, including tracts, devotional works, sermons, and vernacular literature, as well as art and music. Authors and movements are studied in their historical and social contexts, focusing on themes such as sacraments, hierarchies of knowing and sensing, the role of the symbolic, gender, and narratives of the body. The course draws on a wide range of disciplinary perspectives to broaden the range of questions investigated. Prerequisites: REL 712, REL 713, REL 714, or REL 715, and an introductory course in theology; or permission of the instructors.