MEDIEVAL STUDIES

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http://medieval.yale.edu
M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Chair and Director of Graduate Studies
Ardis Butterfield

Acting Chair and Director of Graduate Studies (2018–2019)
Jessica Brantley

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Lecturer Raymond Clemens

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 ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

The General Test of the GRE is required. A writing sample of ten to twenty pages should be included with the application.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PH.D. DEGREE

Languages required are Latin, French, and German. Latin may be replaced with Arabic, Greek, or Hebrew when appropriate. Proficiency in Latin, Arabic, Greek, and Hebrew is tested with an examination administered and evaluated by the program during the first term. Proficiency in French and German is demonstrated by passing the departmental examinations and should be achieved by the third term. 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 Latin, Arabic, Greek, or Hebrew.

COURSES

MDVL 536a / HIST 536a, Charters, Cartularies, and Archives  Paul Freedman and N. Raymond Clemens
An examination of medieval documentation and how to use it to answer questions about medieval politics, society, and religion. Charters are single documents representing transactions, ranging from wills to grants of rights to sales contracts. Cartularies are collections of documents that show how an institution (usually an ecclesiastical institution) acquired property; and they back up and prove rights over those properties. The course looks at archives and ways in which documents end up in archives, how they are organized, and what that can tell us about the issues they focus on.

MDVL 563b / CLSS 602b, Advanced Latin Paleography  Barbara Shailor
The challenges of using hand-produced Latin manuscripts in research, with an emphasis on texts from the late Middle Ages. Gothic cursive scripts and book hands ca. 1200–ca. 1500; fragments of unidentified codices; complex or composite codices with heavy interlinear and marginal annotations. Manuscripts and fragments selected largely from collections in the Beinecke Library. Prerequisite: CLSS 601 or permission of the instructor.
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 600b / MUSI 627b, The Liturgy, Ritual, and Chant of Medieval England (Sarum Use)  Bryan Spinks and Henry Parkes
This team-taught interdisciplinary travel seminar focuses on the rites, ceremonies, and music of the Use of Sarum (Salisbury), which was the predominant form of Christian worship in late medieval England. With particular attention to Salisbury Cathedral, as well as to surviving texts and material evidence pertaining to that foundation, it explores how liturgy was cultivated, documented, and experienced in the High Middle Ages. It considers the ritual intersections of community, architectural space, visual decoration, sound, movement, and written text. It also considers the significance of Sarum Use in the formation of the 1549 Book of Common Prayer and, more recently, as a resource for liturgical revival and renewal. Prerequisite: REL 682.

MDVL 611a, Medieval Latin for Sinners and Saints  John Dillon
This is an introductory reading course in Late Antique and Medieval Latin that is intended to help students interested in Christian Latin sources improve their reading ability. The primary objective is to familiarize students with Medieval Latin and improve their proficiency in reading and translating Medieval Latin texts. Students come to recognize the features (grammatical and syntactical) that make Medieval Latin distinct, improve their overall command of Latin by reviewing grammar and syntax, and gain an appreciation of the immense variety of texts written in Medieval Latin. Prerequisite: basic knowledge of Latin grammar and syntax, equivalent to the elementary Latin grammar courses offered by the Classics department (LATN 110, LATN 120).

MDVL 631a, Origins of Christian Art in Late Antiquity  Vasileios Marinis and 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 650a / HSAR 591a, Visions and Art in Medieval Europe  Jacqueline Jung
From the Book of Revelation to the Showings of Julian of Norwich (d. 1423), accounts of visions in the Christian tradition were inextricably intertwined with the visual arts. Through examinations of medieval texts, images, and material culture, in conjunction with modern analyses of related phenomena, this seminar explores the range of representational practices that helped medieval Christians summon up, make sense of, and communicate extraordinary moments of contact with the divine. We address such questions as the changes in visionary experiences over time, the role of language and literacy in the communication of such experiences, the impact of gender on visions, the variety and functions of other senses (especially touch and taste) in medieval visions, and the impact of visionary reports on the development of art. We begin by addressing the theoretical, cognitive, and anthropological facets of visionary experience before turning to medieval primary sources such as saints’ lives, accounts of otherworld journeys, miracle books, sermons, monastic chronicles, and individually composed vision books, and to modern interpretations by historians such as Caroline Bynum, William Christian, Peter Dinzelbacher, Jeffrey Hamburger, Barbara Newman, Giselle de Nie, and Jean-Claude Schmitt. Visual materials include both depictions of visions (such as Apocalypse manuscripts, paintings of the Temptation of St. Anthony, and renderings of Hildegard’s visions) and images that played a role in sparking visionary experience (such as Marian statues, crucifixes, Man of Sorrows images, and Baby Jesus dolls). Reading knowledge of German, French, and Latin is strongly recommended.

MDVL 660b / HIST 540b, Introduction to Research in Medieval History  Anders Winroth
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 661b, Medieval Hagiography: Reading the Saints  N. Raymond Clemens
This course examines the lives of the saints and their cults in the late antique and medieval period (to 1500) in Western Christian culture. We attempt to isolate what is unique to medieval Western Europe and what features are common across cultural and chronological boundaries. We examine the attributes of the saints—their special powers and relationship with a transcendent power. We pursue some of the differences between men’s and women’s treatment at the hands of their hagiographers. Finally, we pay special attention to the saints’ relics (body parts) and how they were treated, what powers they had, and how one determined their identity and authenticity.

MDVL 662a / CPLT 655a / NELC 655a, Medieval Baghdad  Shawkat Toorawa
The founding of Baghdad in the mid-eighth-century by the ascendant ‘Abbasid dynasty (ruled 750–1258) ushered in a period of intense scholarly, administrative, and artistic activity. The rulers patronized poets and prose writers and supported translation from Greek,
Persian, and other languages into Arabic; learned individuals hosted intellectual discussions (and meals and drinking sessions) late into the night at their homes; the literati spent entire nights in bookstores voraciously reading everything they could lay their hands on; theologians and philosophers debated the nature of reality and of God; scientists tested theories in engineering, medicine, and mathematics; and travelers reported their discoveries from China and India. We read works by and about Baghdadis, including how they overthrew the preceding Umayyad dynasty and how they built the legendary Round City. We read travel accounts, geographies, and graffiti; and we read tales from the Arabian Nights. We see how paper, books, and writing changed Baghdad, Islamic society, and human knowledge; and how Arab-Islamic society’s contributions changed the world.

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 664b, History of Medieval Christianity: Learning, Faith, and Conflict  Samuel Loncar
This course explores the diversity of Western Christianity from the end of antiquity to the start of the early modern period. Central themes include the development of theology, concepts of reform, mysticism, gender, and relations between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. In lectures and sections the class investigates a broad range of primary sources, including written texts, visual images, architecture, and music. The medieval age witnessed constant change and innovation in church and society and was transformed by its encounters with religions and cultures beyond Europe. Area III.

MDVL 665a, 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: late antique romance in Anglo-Saxon England, with readings including Apollonius of Tyre, Legend of the Seven Sleepers, and Andreas.

MDVL 667b / FREN 812b, The Old French Fable and Fabliaux  R. Howard Bloch
A study of Marie de France’s 103 animal tales and some of the anonymous “Ysopets” as well as of the 170 comic verse tales whose veins of satire, parody, comedy of language, situation, character, and farce are at the root of the European comic tradition. We read the fables and the fabliaux against the background of twelfth- and thirteenth-century social, religious, and literary culture. Fables to be read in the bilingual (Old French and English) edition of Harriet Speigel and fabliaux in the recently published bilingual edition, with translations by Ned Dubin. Conducted in English.

MDVL 668a, The Gawain Poet  Jessica Brantley
The course offers a contextual study of four of the greatest (and most enigmatic) Middle English poems—Pearl, Patience, Cleanness, and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. At its center is British Library MS Cotton Nero A.x, the single medieval book that contains them all. In addition to reading the poems closely in their manuscript context, we examine associated artworks, from the twelve illustrations in the Cotton MS that constitute a medieval reading of the poems, to St. Erkenwald, a poem preserved elsewhere that some argue was written by the same author. Finally, we think about the modern reception of the poems through a serious engagement with scholarly debate surrounding them, and also through comparative work with translations.

MDVL 669a, Jewish History, Thought, and Narratives in Medieval Societies  Ivan Marcus
Research seminar that focuses on the two medieval Jewish subcultures of Ashkenaz (northern Christian Europe) and Sefarad (mainly Muslim and Christian Spain).

MDVL 670b / HIST 600b / JDST 802b, Jewish Everyday Life in the Middle Ages  Micha Perry
Medieval Jewish history has been based primarily on written sources and hence has tended to concentrate on the intellectual male elite, institutions, and events. In recent years, historians are increasingly interested in everyday, or quotidian, history, looking beyond the intellectual elite to society as a whole and using, alongside texts, archaeology and the material world. Following the “material turn,” this seminar focuses on Jewish material culture, using archaeology and art history in the service of cultural history. Among the subjects considered are the Jewish quarter and street; the synagogue; the ritual bath (mikve); the cemetery and gravestone; book culture; charters; jewelry; fashion; and food.