

History 332: Cultural Encounters in Premodern Europe

Prof. Cotts
Office: Olin E207
Office Hours: MW 2:00-3:30, Th 4:00-5:00

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Medieval Europe was not a monolithic or entirely isolated civilization but an uneasy synthesis of alternative cultural possibilities. This course considers moments of cross-cultural contact, conflict and negotiation during the millennium before the “age of discovery” that was allegedly inaugurated by Columbus’ voyages. We will discuss the convergence of Germanic, Christian and Classical streams of culture in early medieval civilization, and then explore violent confrontations with other cultures, especially as represented by the Crusades. Other topics for consideration include the conversion of the Germanic peoples to Christianity, the place of long-distance trade in linking distinct civilizations, and thirteenth-century missionary efforts in Asia. Assigned secondary literature will approach the issue of cultural assimilation and the role of ecological factors in conditioning cultural interactions.

Books for Purchase

- Jerry Bentley, *Old World Encounters: Cross-Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times* (Oxford) ISBN: 0-19-507640-0
- Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge). ISBN: 978-0521546188
- Allen and Amt, eds., *The Crusades: A Reader* (Broadview). ISBN: 978-1442600027
- *The Heliand*, trans. G. Ronald Murphy (Oxford). ISBN: 978-0195073768
- *Vinland Sagas: The Norse Discovery of America*, ed. Sigursson, trans. Kunz (Penguin). ISBN: 978-0140447767
- *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley (Penguin). ISBN: 9780141441436

Course Requirements

1. **Attendance and class participation (15% of course grade).** You are expected to attend all class meetings and to participate vigorously, insightfully, and respectfully in class discussions. While attendance and participation represent 15% of the course grade, non-attendance is grounds for *failing the course*. If you have a legitimate reason for missing a meeting (defined as a medical or family emergency or a college-related extracurricular activity) please provide the appropriate documentation from the Dean of Students. If you feel uncomfortable speaking in class, please come chat with me about how we can create an encouraging environment in which you can share your ideas with your colleagues.
2. **Three short papers.** These will be standard college essays asking you to make arguments about the readings assigned in the course. Details will and questions will be provided.
3. **Two papers on independent reading.** The first is a four page interpretation of a book-length primary source, the second a four page evaluation of a secondary source; you will choose your sources from a list that will be distributed early in the semester along with additional details about the assignments.
4. **A final examination (take-home).**

Schedule of class meetings and reading assignments

WEEK ONE: Approaches to cultural encounters, ancient and modern

September 1: Introduction, nuts-and-bolts session

3 World history, integrated hemispheres, and the Other

- Jerry Bentley, *Old World Encounters*, 3-28
- Herodotus, *The Histories*, selections from Book II (through CLEo)

WEEK TWO: Multicultural Rome in the Eurasian Context

8 The world context at the end of the Roman Empire

- Bentley, 29-66
- Selections from Chinese accounts of the Middle East and Roman Empire at: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/eastasia/romchin1.html>
- Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, 11-22 (through CLEo)

10 Cultural currents in Roman Europe, and their modern political implications (?)

- Pliny, letter to Emperor Trajan on the Christians at: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/pliny1.html>
- Tacitus, selections from *Germania* at: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/tacitus-germanygord.html>
- Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe*, 63-92 (through CLEo)

WEEK THREE: The Multicultural Mediterranean

15 The cultural trajectory of the “Greek East” and the isolation of the west

- Barbara Rosenwein, *A Short History of the Middle Ages*, 30-39, 49-66
- Procopius, selections at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/550byzsilksilk.html>
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/procop-wars4-9.html>
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/procop-deaed1.html>

17 The rise of Islam and the reconfiguration of the Mediterranean

- Rosenwein, *A Short History of the Middle Ages*, 66-75
- The *Qur'an*, suras 1, 47 and 48 (through CLEo)
- Accounts of the Muslim conquest of Iberia in Olivia R. Constable, ed., *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources* (through CLEo)

WEEK FOUR: The Conversion of the Germanic peoples to Christianity

22 Germanic religion

- Selections from the *Royal Frankish Annals* (through CLEo)
- *The Heliand*, 1-61; 74-7

24 Christ as warrior chieftain

- *The Heliand*, 135-37, 146-98

WEEK FIVE: Early European Expansion? The Norse Experience

29 The Norse in the North Atlantic, and the Problem of Cultural Contact

- Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, 1-56

October 1 The Norse in America

- *Vinland Sagas*, 49-105

*****FRIDAY, October 2: FIRST PAPER DUE*****

WEEK SIX: The Crusades I: Conquest and colonization around the year 1100

6 The First Crusade and its intellectual background

- *The Crusades: A Reader*, 19-20, 25-80

8 The Crusader States

- *The Crusades: A Reader*, 81-124

WEEK SEVEN: Scientific thought across medieval cultures

13 NO CLASS

15 Greek science and its diffusion

- David C. Lindberg, *The Beginnings of Western Science*, 161-90, 203-06, 215-23
- Adelard of Bath on astronomy at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/adelardbath1.html>

WEEK EIGHT: The Crusades II: The Twelfth Century

20 The Second and Third Crusades

- *The Crusades: A Reader*, 125-77
- Graham Loud, "Some Reflections on the Failure of the Second Crusade," *Crusades* 4 (2005): 1-14 (through CLEo)

22 From farce to tragedy? The Fourth Crusade

- *The Crusades: A Reader*, 179-96, 221-61
- Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, 56-69

WEEK NINE: Religious conflict and minorities in high medieval Europe

27 Spain and the *Reconquista*

- *The Crusades: A Reader*, 297-339

29 The challenge of heresy and dissident groups

- R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*. 1-65 (through CLEo)

WEEK TEN: Cross-cultural contact in the Mongol Age

November 3 The "nomadic empire" of the Mongols

- Bentley, 111-64

5 Missions and merchants in the thirteenth century

- Selections from Innocent IV, William of Rubrock, John of Plano Carpini, and Marco Polo (through CLEo)

*****Friday, November 6: SECOND PAPER DUE*****

WEEK ELEVEN: Asia and the Medieval Imagination

10 The image of the Holy Land

- *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, skim intro; read 43-119

12 Self and Other in Mandeville

- *Travels*, 120-190

WEEK TWELVE: The beginnings of European expansion

17 New contacts, old cultures

- Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, 70-144

19 Accounts of early contacts

- Christopher Columbus, selections from the *Diaries* (through CLEo)
- Bartolomé de las Casas, selections from *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (through CLEo)

WEEK THIRTEEN: The new order of the early modern world

December 1: Expansion, conversion, and genocide

- Bentley, 165-84
- Crosby, 195-216

3 The impact of the New World on the European imagination

- Montaigne, “On Cannibals” (through CLEo)
- Thomas More, selections from *Utopia* (through CLEo)

WEEK FOURTEEN: Implications

8 The Atlantic Slave Trade and the Modern World

- Robert Harms, *The Diligent: A Voyage Through the Worlds of the Slave Trade*, xi-xxi, 3-28 (through CLEo)
- Olaudah Equiano, selections from *The Interesting Narrative* (through CLEo)

10 A modern reflection on premodern encounters

- Jonathan Riley-Smith, “Islam and the Crusades in History and Imagination, 8 November 1898–11 September 2001,” *Crusades* 2 (2003): 151-67

*****THIRD PAPER DUE at 4:00pm*****

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18: Think Piece due at 11:00am