Syracuse University

College of Arts & Sciences

Medieval and Renaissance Studies

Medieval and Early Modern Courses  
Spring 2023

Program Information (web)

Information about the [Minor](http://coursecatalog.syr.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=15&poid=7601&_ga=2.123395267.995535484.1554218502-768664213.1502988891) in Medieval-Renaissance Studies   
and the [Medieval-Renaissance Program](http://thecollege.syr.edu/academics/interdisciplinary/Medieval-Renaissance.html)

Courses

HOA 100 Selected Topics: World Art & Religions

[Glenn Peers](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/peers-glenn/)

This introductory course aims to provide students with an understanding and appreciation of ways in which art has played a role in our history and in our lives. In this class, we’re particularly interested in the aesthetic, social and ideological meanings of art and religion, and we’ll be using that set of themes to talk about and look at various aspects of what makes ‘art history.’ We’ll be focusing on exhibitions and museums here on campus from this same point of view, that is, the connections between religion and art. And we’ll use permanent and temporary exhibitions as ways not only to understand what art means and does, but also how museums help and hinder that significant work.

ENG 113 British Literature, Beginnings to 1789

[Morgan Shaw](https://thecollege.syr.edu/english-department/english-graduate-programs/ma-and-phd-students/morgan-shaw/)

This course will introduce you to British literature from the earliest Anglo-Saxon epics to the satire of the eighteenth century. We will read and analyze an array of literary works, attending to the transformation of English culture and identity over this vast 1000-year period. We will engage our course readings critically by situating them within their historical, political, and socio-cultural contexts. Given the nature of this course, we will also think critically about what it means to study the “beginning” of British literature and its various “truth(s).” Guided by these and other inquiries, you will develop your reading, analytic, and writing skills as we chart a contiguous course through the British literary canon.

JSP/REL 114 The Bible in History, Culture and Religion

[Jim Watts](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/watts-james-w/)

The Bible has been the most widely read literature in Western culture. It has influenced literature, law and politics as well as religious traditions. This survey of Jewish and Christian scriptures in English translation pays particular attention to the literary form of biblical books, their origins and original ancient Near Eastern and Hellenistic contexts, and their role in the development of Western religions and cultures.

ARC 133 Introduction to the History of Architecture I

[Jean-François Bédard](https://soa.syr.edu/live/profiles/18-jean-francois-bedard)

Themes, concepts, and problems in architectural history from ancient Egypt to 1500. The first part of a two-course sequence that serves as an introduction to a global history of architecture, this class begins with the monumental architecture of Ancient Egypt and ends around 1500 CE, a period which saw the waning of the Middle Ages in Europe. ARC 133 focuses in particular on architecture defined as the “art of building,” distinct from functional shelters or vernacular structures. Special attention is placed on the theoretical notions that ground this distinction—issues such as ritualistic use, transcendental geometry and proportion, symbolic ornament—elements that link architecture to other sciences and arts in a common pre-modern “world-view.”

REL/MES 165 Discovering Islam

[Tazim Kassam](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/kassam-tazim-r/)

Islam as a faith and a civilization. Understanding its origins, beliefs, rituals, and the historical development of its intellectual traditions in the pre-modern and modern eras, and its geographic, cultural and theological diversity today.

ENG 175 World Literature, 1000 to Present

[Harvey Teres](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/teres-harvey/)

Readings from major texts of the second millennium from Africa, Europe, Latin America, India, China, and Japan. Texts are explored in historical context, both past and present, with an emphasis on social and aesthetic values.

REL 186 Buddhism

[Gareth Fisher](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/fisher-gareth/)

Buddhism as a world religion: its origin in India, its spread to other parts of Asia, and consequent changes in doctrine and practice through the ages.

LIT 200 Selected Topics: The Care of the Soul

[Matthieu van der Meer](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/van-der-meer-matthieu-h/)

Did ancient people feel the same emotions as we do? How did people in the past cope with depression and anxiety? What makes people ultimately happy? Why did some medieval Christians think that angels don’t feel pity? These and similar questions are central to this course that focuses on conceptions of the 'soul', the force felt to animate and energize a human body for as long as it was considered alive, and to activate virtually all aspects of its behavior through time. The emphasis will lie on texts on the care of the soul and on the relationship between body and soul – the latter topic being especially important in Christian discourses regarding the bodily resurrection. Christian authors developed their theories with the terminology derived from earlier, non-Christian discussions. An important aspect of this course will be, therefore, the exploration of the cultural and religious transformations in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages regarding perceptions of the soul and the methods to direct it. In sum, the course will trace the various conceptions of the soul developed in the Greek, Roman and Medieval world. These conceptions have a surprisingly long afterlife and still impact how we pursue happiness today.

## HST 211 Medieval and Renaissance Europe

[Brian Brege](https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/directory/brian-brege)

This introductory survey traces Europe’s transformation during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, from roughly 300 CE to roughly 1500 CE. It begins as the Roman Empire slowly gave way to new societies in both East and West, and then follows the fortunes of these societies over more than 1000 years. It explores the religious, political, economic, social, cultural, intellectual, and artistic aspects of these societies and how they changed over time. Readings will include both primary sources (those written at the time) and secondary sources (by modern scholars). Students will learn to analyze these sources in order to find out what happened in this period, how people understood events, and how historians use evidence to explain the past. Requirements include reading and participation, midterm and final exams, and two papers.

LIT 241 Dante and the Medieval World

[Anne Leone](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/leone-anne/)

This course examines selected readings from the works of Dante (1265-1321), with a focus on the Comedy, depicting a salvific journey through the afterlife. By investigating the way in which the poem constructs its world – with recourse to the Bible, the Latin epics, religious iconography and the scientific tradition, readers may discover the powers and the limitations of their own knowledge. Students are asked to engage with the text through performance, recitation and other creative mediums. In English.

## HST 300 Special Topics: Queen Elizabeth I

## [Chris Kyle](https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/hist/Kyle,_Chris_R_/)

Elizabeth I: Cultural icon? Virgin queen? ‘Father/Mother’ of the nation? This course will examine the images, personality, words and actions of one of the most important monarchs in English history. How did Elizabeth manage to negotiate her rule of a patriarchal society as a ‘weak-willed woman’? Did she exploit her considerable political skills to benefit the country or simply to maintain her position on the throne? And what of those who sort to assassinate or replace her? How did she react to threats of foreign invasion, domestic rebellion and a barely concerned hostility among many in the governing classes? Using both early modern and modern iconography, we will explore the images and representations of Elizabeth to unravel her life and examine how she sought to portray herself and how others have seen her through the years.

## HST 300/HNR 360 Whose Middle Ages?

[Samantha Herrick](https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/directory/samantha-kahn-herrick)

This course examines two concurrent developments in medieval history and historiography. The first is scholarship reevaluating race (and ideas about race) in the European Middle Ages. Second is how ideas about race continue to frame discussions about the Middle Ages today, both in academia and in the broader culture. Examples include debates among medievalists about the study of race, and the misappropriation and misrepresentation of the Middle Ages by white surpremacists. By discovering that medieval Europe was more diverse than is generally assumed and that ideas about race go further back than most historical accounts recognize, students will better understand how the medieval era shaped the present and is being distorted in the present.

HOA 400/600 Selected Topics: Crusader Art

[Glenn Peers](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/peers-glenn/)

This class examines art and architecture produced when medieval Christians sought to claim and then possess land considered holy or dispossess non-Christians of desirable land. It takes the Holy Land experience of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as the center of this medieval phenomenon of crusading, but it treats areas of the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean also conquered and controlled by crusaders, like Cyprus, Greece and Sicily. It also looks at art and architecture produced in Western Europe in reaction to successes and failures of crusading. Such issues continue to resonate at a time of conflict and competition in the Middle East still, and the art history of the Middle Ages is an important means for understanding contemporary events.

HOA 300 Selected Topics: East Asian Art (Chinese Painting, c. 700-1800)

[Weitian Yan](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/research-associates/weitian-yan/)

This course is a survey of key monuments in the history of painting in China. Students will examine paintings of varied mediums, including mural, handscroll, hanging scroll, screen, album leaf, fan, and illustrated book. In lectures, we will explore the context in which these paintings were made, the development of personal styles, as well as the reception of these paintings. Additionally, students will discuss and analyze important recent literature in the field.

## HST 310 The Early Middle Ages

[Albrecht Diem](https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/directory/albrecht-diem)

This course provides a survey of the most important political, cultural and social developments in the period between 300 and 900, or roughly between the reign of Constantine and end of the rule of the Carolingian kings, mostly focusing on Western Europe. In this period falls one of the most dramatic historical breaks: the “Fall of the Roman Empire” and the “Beginning of the Middle Ages.” But was there really a “Fall of the Roman Empire?” When, how and why did the Roman Empire come to an end? This still ferociously debated question will play a central role in the course. Other topics will be the rise of Christianity, the development of medieval institutions (such as kingship, church structures, and feudalism), and the continuity and discontinuity of intellectual traditions. A special emphasis will be laid on reading and interpreting (translated) primary sources and on methods of historical research.

ENG 311 Literary Periods before 1900

[Dorri Beam](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/beam-dorri/)

Chronological periods or movements in literary history with a focus on texts written before 1900; issues of periodization.

## HST 313 French Revolution: Sun King to the Guillotine

[Junko Takeda](https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/hist/Takeda,_Junko/)

What caused the French Revolution? How did an absolutist regime transform into the First Republic? How did the ideals of democracy, equality and liberty lead to Terror? How did Napoleon rise out of the ashes of the French Revolution? The class will examine the social and cultural foundations of the Old Regime, the contradictions of the French state, and the grievances of various social groups. It will then study radical transformations in French society, politics and culture generated in the age and movement known as the Enlightenment. How did Enlightenment thinkers redefine concepts such as reason, nature, civilization and sociability? How did Enlightenment ideals regarding universalism and human rights impact politics, state, and culture? Commerce and the market? The arts, morals, and manners? How did they lay the groundwork for reform while also creating a new vocabulary for the exclusion of others? The final segment of the class will study the transition from reform to revolution. What political languages were in play at the start of the revolution? How did women and slaves participate in revolutionary upheaval? The class will examine the development of the Terror, Robespierre’s Republic of Virtue, and the rise of Napoleon. What was the impact and legacy of the Revolution on nineteenth century conservatism and romanticism? On future revolutions, socialism, totalitarianism? On the present? Course documents will include novels, political treatises, images, plays and operas. Authors include Voltaire, Diderot, Montesquieu, Beaumarchais, Tocqueville, Robespierre, and others.

HOA 320 Italian Renaissance Art

[Sally Cornelison](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/cornelison-sally-j/)

Survey of Italian art and architecture from c. 1200 to 1550 with an emphasis on style, patronage, artistic techniques, and the social, political, and devotional contexts of works by major artists and architects.

MES/REL/SAS 364 Muslim Poets, Singers and Storytellers

[Tazim Kassam](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/kassam-tazim-r/)

Through folksongs, mystical chants, storytelling or illustrated manuscripts, Muslims have expressed their love for words in diverse languages and cultures around the world. This course will focus on the power and role of words in the Islam including the Qur’an and Islamic poetry, calligraphy, travel narratives, philosophical texts, chants and songs.

LIT/ARB/MES 336 Arabic Cultures

[Rania Habib](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/habib-rania/)

Arabic culture through geography, literature, religion (Islam and other religions), ethnic groups, social divisions, films, the media, music, art, food, gender issues, and everyday life.

## HST 357 Early Modern England

[Chris Kyle](https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/hist/Kyle,_Chris_R_/)

This course examines the political, cultural and social history of Early Modern England. Topics covered will include the power and image of the monarchy (cases studies - Henry VIII, Elizabeth I and Charles I); the role of the printing press in both ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture; the impact of crime and the treatment of criminals; the importance of London as a center of commerce and culture; the myth and reality of Shakespeare and the role of the theater; witchcraft and the dominance of religion in everyday life; and the role of women in a patriarchal society. The course will emphasize reading, discussion, visual culture and the use of primary sources.

## HST 377 History of Venice

[Brian Brege](https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/directory/brian-brege)

This course will examine the history of one of the world’s most famous cities. Today the city is known as a major tourist destination. But for many centuries, Venice was one of the economic powerhouses of Europe and on the frontlines of the conflict between Western Latin Christendom and Islam. Venice was also duly famous throughout the late medieval and early modern periods for its republican form of government. After a brief introduction to the origins of Venice as a Byzantine outpost in the lagoons of the northwestern Adriatic, this course will examine the development of Venice as a colonial and trading power, the evolution of its republican form of government, the peculiar configuration of its society, and the role of art and ritual in Venetian life. The final part of the course will be devoted to a consideration of Venice’s role in the world after its fall as an independent republic. Among other topics we will consider are the Romantic preoccupation with Venice, the development of mass tourism, and the city’s response to looming ecological catastrophes.

SPA 400 Bandits, Captives, and Pirates in the Early Modern Mediterranean

[Ana Méndez-Oliver](file:///C:\Users\adiem\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\L2SUVSQG\Anne%20Leone)

This course discusses three emblematic figures of early modern society in the Mediterranean in Spanish literature – the Bandit, the Captive, and the Pirate. Students examine these three figures both in the historical context of the period, as well as various early modern texts: from theater, the picaresque novel, pirates accounts, and testimonies of captives, among other texts.

LIT 400 Dante’s Inferno

[Anne Leone](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/leone-anne/)

In this discussion-based course, we engage in an intensive reading of Inferno – the first canticle of Dante’s influential masterpiece, the Commedia, which depicts the author’s journey towards his own (and his readers’) salvation. The work has fascinated readers for over 700 years, in part because of tensions built into its architecture: written for an Everyman and at the same time intensely personal, it depicts a terrifying system of punishment in Hell, yet a universe in which God is love. While the poem is a synthesis of diverse literary, philosophical, scientific and theological traditions ranging from classical antiquity until the author’s day, it was also a radical experiment that pushed the limits of Christian doctrine and aimed to shake the foundations of the literary traditions on which it claimed to stand. By investigating the way in which the poem constructs its world, readers may begin to discover both the powers and the limitations of their knowledge. Can we begin to understand medieval culture through the lens of this monumental work, or does the poem show us the limits of our understanding? Can we identify with Dante’s Everyman, and appreciate the poet’s genius, at the same time that we may criticize some of his positions? Discussion in Italian. Readings in Italian and English.

## HST 401 Hermits, Lepers, Heretics… Minorities and Marginal People in the Middle Ages

## [Albrecht Diem](https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/directory/albrecht-diem)

How diverse and inclusive were medieval societies? How did they deal with people of different believes, sick or disabled people, queer people or non-conformists? Was the medieval world a world of repression and structural violence against minorities or were there also spaces that fostered diversity and tolerance? Can observations on the Middle Ages help us understanding and resisting modern forms of othering and discrimination?

We will discuss these questions and develop individual research projects that are based on studying and contextualizing medieval primary sources and engaging with recent scholarship on medieval diversity.

FRE 405 French Culture in Age of Louis XIV

## [Amy Wyngaard](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/wyngaard-amy-s/)

Study of French literature, aesthetics and culture of absolutism.

ENG 421 Cultural Production and Reception before 1900

[Stephanie Shirilan](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/stephanie-shirilan/)

Global virus epidemics, drought, flood, deforestation, toxic water and air, food-insecurity: these are but a few of the effects of climate-change brought on or accelerated by human agents, and Shakespeare has much to say about them. His plays witness and reflect on a period of radical transformation of deep-set ideas and the social and cultural institutions (gender, church, city, state, family, market, etc.) that housed them. Reading a selection of Shakespeare’s plays and poetry, we will explore ways that meditations on the natural world shape his reflections on these social and political transformations, and vice versa. Our investigations will be guided by attention to the relationship between form and matter in Shakespeare’s work and in the early modern period. To that end, our reading of the plays will emphasize dramatic technique and foreground aspects of theatrical performance, which we will consider through experiments in staging and performance wherever possible. Together, we will learn to read, observe, and listen for the ways that live, embodied, multisensory theatrical experience shapes our capacity to observe and imagine the dynamism of Shakespeare’s natural worlds. This course will address the interests of students in the sciences and theater/literary studies alike. No prior Shakespeare experience required.

REL 620 Textual Scripts in the Study of Religion

[Virginia Burrus](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/burrus-virginia/)

PHI 710 Seminar in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy

[Christopher Noble](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/noble-christopher/)

ENG 730 Graduate Seminar: Ovid & Shakespeare: Sex, Race

[Antonio Tiongson](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/antonio-tiongson/)

Languages

ARB 102 Arabic II

[Violette Humsi](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/part-time/humsi-violette-f-/)

Continuing proficiency-based course, which develops communicative abilities in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in culturally authentic contexts. Activities are conducted in Arabic.

ARB 202 Arabic IV

[Violette Humsi](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/part-time/humsi-violette-f-/)

Continuing proficiency-based course, which further refines and expands linguistic skills in culturally authentic contexts. Incorporates reading, discussing, and analyzing texts as a basis for the expression and interpretation of meaning.

Conducted in Arabic.

GRE 102 Ancient Greek II

[Matthieu van der Meer](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/van-der-meer-matthieu-h/)

Continuing course with emphasis on morphology and syntax. Introduction to examples of unsimplified Ancient Greek prose of the classical period, read and interpreted within the cultural con-text of ancient Greek society.

HEB 102 Hebrew II

[Michal Downie](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/part-time/downie-michal/)

Continuing proficiency-based course which develops communicative abilities in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in culturally authentic contexts. Activities are conducted in Hebrew.

HEB 202 Hebrew IV

[Erella Brown Sofer](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/part-time/brown-erella/)

Continuing proficiency-based course which further refines and expands linguistic skills in cultur-ally authentic contexts. Incorporates reading, discussing, and analyzing texts as a basis for the expression and interpretation of meaning. Conducted in Hebrew.

[Collapse section LAT 102 - Latin II](javascript:submitAction_win0(document.win0,'SSR_CLSRSLT_WRK_GROUPBOX2$0');)LAT 102 Latin II

[Matthieu van der Meer](https://thecollege.syr.edu/people/faculty/van-der-meer-matthieu-h/)

This course will continue your introduction to a language that served a tiny village on the Tiber River in Italy, then a massive empire that reached from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf, from Scotland and Germany to Morocco and Sudan. Long after it ceased to be spoken, it served Europe as the international language of diplomacy, education, and professional skills, such as law, medicine, science, and theology into modern times. The Latin language will open your eyes to elements of world culture and history, social, philosophical, and artistic understanding, and the roots of language itself, including your own native language, whatever that may be.