Mission

The Medieval and Renaissance program at Barnard College is designed to enable students to acquire both a broad knowledge of the European Middle Ages and/or Renaissance and a richer and more detailed understanding in one area of concentration chosen by the student. Students can elect to concentrate in one of the following disciplines: art history, history, literature, philosophy, romance languages and cultures, music, or religion. We encourage our students to take advantage of relevant courses taught at Columbia as well as at Barnard, with the result that more than sixty courses are currently listed as approved for the major.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students who graduate with a major in Medieval and Renaissance Studies will be able to attain the following outcomes:

- Demonstrate a broad knowledge of the European Middle Ages and/or Renaissance.
- Show they also have in-depth knowledge in their chosen concentration of study.
- Create an original research project centered in primary sources.

This program is supervised by the Committee on Medieval and Renaissance Studies:

Director: Rachel Eisendrath (English)

Professors: Christopher Baswell (English), Elizabeth Castelli (Religion), Achsah Guibbory (English), Kim Hall (English), Joel Kaye (History), Keith Moxey (Art History), Peter Platt (English), Anne Lake Prescott (English), Deborah Valenze (History)

Assistant Professors: Orlando Bentancor (Spanish and Latin American Cultures)

Senior Lecturer: Laurie Postlewate (French), Timea Szell (English)

Columbia University Faculty:

Professors: Peter Awn (Religion), Teodolinda Barolini (Italian), Susan Crane (English), Kathy Eden (English), Carmela Franklin (Classics), Jean Howard (English), Martha Howell (History), Christia Mercer (Philosophy), Stephen Murray (Art History), David Rosand (Art History), James Shapiro (English), Robert Somerville (Religion), Paul Strohm (English)

Associate Professor: Jo Ann Cavallo (Italian), Julie Crawford (English), Matthew Jones (History), Holger Klein (Art History), Adam Kosto (History), Pamela Smith (History)

Assistant Professors: Patricia Dailey (English), Molly Murray (English), Nesilhan Senocak (History)

Requirements for the Major

Major programs are established individually with a concentration in one of these disciplines: art history, history, literature, philosophy, romance philology, music, or religion. Each student, after consultation with the chair, chooses an adviser in her area of concentration who guides her in developing a sequence of courses to be taken in the field.

A minimum of 11 courses are required for the major in Medieval and Renaissance Studies:

- Five courses in the area of concentration;
- Two history courses for students who are not concentrating in history;
- Two courses in the other disciplines mentioned above for those who are;
- Two electives in areas outside the concentration, to be chosen in consultation with the adviser; and
- MEDR BC3998 Directed Research for the Senior Project and MEDR BC3999 Directed Research for the Senior Project, a two-semester program of interdisciplinary research leading to the writing of the senior essay.

(In some cases, a senior seminar in one of the departments may be substituted for MEDR BC3998 Directed Research for the Senior Project or MEDR BC3999 Directed Research for the Senior Project.)

Students are required to write an interdisciplinary senior essay based on two semesters of research in their field of concentration and in another discipline, carried out under the supervision of their area adviser and another from the second discipline. The choice of topic for this senior project and the appointment of a second adviser are determined in consultation with the area adviser and the chair of the program.

In addition to the language used to fulfill the general four-semester requirement for graduation, the student must have completed two semesters of a second language (or the equivalent) relevant to her area of concentration.

The following courses represent only a sample of those that can be taken to satisfy the program requirement. Other relevant courses may be taken with the permission of the chair.

No minor is offered in Medieval and Renaissance Studies.

**MEDR BC3998 Directed Research for the Senior Project. 4 points.**

Two semesters of supervised interdisciplinary research in Medieval or Renaissance Studies terminating in the writing of a senior essay. The program of research is determined in consultation with the chair and the guidance of the area adviser. It is supervised by the latter and an adviser from the second discipline involved in the project.

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**MEDR BC3999 Directed Research for the Senior Project. 4 points.**

Two semesters of supervised interdisciplinary research in Medieval or Renaissance Studies terminating in the writing of a senior essay. The program of research is determined in consultation with the chair and under the guidance of the area adviser. It is supervised by the latter and an adviser from the second discipline involved in the project.
Cross-Listed Courses

Art history and Archaeology

AHIS W3230 Medieval Architecture. 3 points.
Not offered during 2019-20 academic year.

Developed collaboratively and taught digitally spanning one thousand years of architecture.

AHIS W3407 Early Italian Art. 3 points.
Discussion Section Required.
Not offered during 2019-20 academic year.

An introduction to the origins and early development of Italian Renaissance painting as a mode of symbolic communication between 1300-1600. Artists include Giotto, Fra Angelico, Masaccio, Mantegna, and Leonardo da Vinci. Emphasis on centers of painting in Florence, Siena, Assisi, Venice and Rome.

Classics

LATN UN3033 Medieval Language and Literature. 3 points.
Prerequisites: four semesters of college Latin or the instructor’s permission.

This survey focuses on translation, grammatical analysis, and discussion of the literary and cultural contexts of medieval Latin prose and poetry. It includes widely read texts by major authors (e.g. Augustin, Boethius, Abelard and Heloise, Bernard of Clairvaux, Petrach) as well as lesser-known anonymous pieces (e.g. love lyric from the Cambridge Songs and the Carmina Burana, poetic satire from a rotulus, and a novel, the Historia Apollonii).

LATN GU4152 Medieval Latin Literature. 3 points.
Prerequisites: the instructor’s permission.

This course covers various topics in Medieval Latin literature.

English & Comparative Literature

ENGL UN3336 Shakespeare II. 3 points.
(Lecture). Shakespeare II examines plays from the second half of Shakespeare’s dramatic career, primarily a selection of his major tragedies and his later comedies (or “romances”).

ENGL BC3154 Chaucer Before Canterbury. 3 points.
Not offered during 2019-20 academic year.

Chaucer’s innovations with major medieval forms: lyric, the extraordinary dream visions, and the culmination of medieval romance, Troilus and Criseyde. Approaches through close analysis, and feminist and historian interpretation. Background readings in medieval life and culture.

ENGL BC3155 Canterbury Tales. 3 points.
Not offered during 2019-20 academic year.

Chaucer as inheritor of late-antique and medieval conventions and founder of early modern literature and the fiction of character. Selections from related medieval texts.

ENGL BC3158 Medieval Literature: Literatures of Medieval Britain. 3 points.
Not offered during 2019-20 academic year.

It’s easy to forget that medieval literature wasn’t always old and “quaint” as it seems to many of us today. For writers and artists of that era, they were modern, too. But they also imagined their own past and (like many of us) they often had a nostalgic yearning for that lost time. This course will explore a number of forms of medieval literature, mostly British but also some continental, as it explores versions of its past, and especially the ultimately tragic story of King Arthur. We will read across many medieval genres, including some little known today, like lives of saints. But the course will focus on narratives of quest: heroic, psychological, and erotic. We will also explore some of the often beautiful medieval manuscripts in which these texts were often copied. We will read most Middle English texts in the original language; we’ll study French and Latin texts in translation.

ENGL BC3163 Shakespeare I. 3 points.
A critical and historical introduction to Shakespeare’s comedies, histories, tragedies, and romances. Please note that you do not need to take ENGL BC3163: Shakespeare I and ENGL BC3164: Shakespeare II in sequence; you may take them in any order.

ENGL BC3164 Shakespeare II. 3 points.
Prerequisites: Enrollment limited to 60 students.
Critical and historical introduction to selected comedies, histories, tragedies, and romances by Shakespeare. Please note that you do not need to take ENGL BC3163: Shakespeare I and ENGL BC3164: Shakespeare II in sequence; you may take them in any order.

English (Barnard)

ENGL BC3136 Renaissance Epic. 3 points.
The epic tradition raises crucial questions about the interrelationship of literature and power. In telling the story of war and empire building, how does epic both promote and also challenge the cause of the winner? How does epic preserve a space for more lyrical forms of subjectivity? What does this literary form tell about the role of women, the nameless majority and the global ‘other’ in the West? In this course, we will trace the European epic tradition, studying Homer’s Iliad, Virgil’s Aeneid, Spenser’s The Faerie Queen and Milton’s Paradise Lost. Finally, we will read a contemporary poet’s reflection on this tradition, Alice Oswald’s Memorial: An Excavation of the Iliad.
ENGL BC3165 The Elizabethan Renaissance: The Complete Nondramatic Poetry of Marlowe and Shakespeare. 3 points.
In this course, we will read the complete nondramatic poetry of Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare, working closely through sonnets, epyllia (mini epics), and translations. How do Marlowe and Shakespeare put into play inherited and new ideas about history, gender, sexuality, politics, law, God, race, matter, print, and literary form (especially the sonnet)?

ENGL BC3166 Seventeenth-Century Prose and Poetry. 3 points.
Not offered during 2019-20 academic year.

The seventeenth-century produced great lyric poetry exploring love and desire, doubt and faith, sex and God. It was also a century of intellectual, political, and religious revolutions, giving birth to modern ways of thinking. We will read poetry by John Donne, Amelia Lanyer, George Herbert, Robert Herrick, Andrew Marvell, but we will begin with extended contemporary attention to Donne, whose poetry continues to influence contemporary poetry. For science, politics, religion, and philosophy and how they are intertwined, we will read prose by Francis Bacon (on "modern experimental science") and Thomas Browne (on science and faith), Thomas Hobbes (government as the solution to a brutish life) and the radical "Levelers" (early communists), "mad" Margaret Cavendish, and the Quaker Margaret Fell (defense of women's right to preach). Fascinating readings, understood in their historical context with a sense of their current resonance.

ENGL BC3167 Milton. 3 points.
Paradise Lost and selections of Milton's earlier poetry and prose (defenses of free press, divorce, individual conscience, political and religious liberty) read within the context of religious, political, and cultural history (in early modern England and Europe but also, to some extent in America), but with a sense of connection to present issues. Ends with Mary Shelley's Frankenstein as rewriting of Paradise Lost.

ENGL BC3169 Renaissance Drama. 3 points.
BC: Fulfillment of General Education Requirement: Literature (LIT).
Not offered during 2019-20 academic year.

Prerequisites: Enrollment limited to 25 students.
This class will examine English drama at the moment when it arose as a major art form. In Renaissance London, complex plays emerged that reflected the diverse urban life of the city, as well as the layered and often contradictory inner life of the individual. This poetically rich theater was less concerned with presenting answers, and more with staging questions—about gender, race, religion, literary tradition, love, sex, authority, and class. In this course, we will try to tap into this theater’s cosmopolitan, enlivened poetics by studying not only Shakespeare, but also the various other major authors who constituted this literary world: Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Thomas Dekker, Thomas Middleton, John Webster, and the female playwright Aphra Behn.

ENGL BC3998 Senior Seminars: Human & Other Animal Identities. 4 points.
Prerequisites: Sign up through the "SR Seminar" section of myBarnard. Enrollment limited to Barnard senior English majors.
In this seminar, we will engage in an interdisciplinary study of intersections of human and non-human animal identities in selected literary, philosophical and theoretical texts. We will examine how constructions and representations of non-human animal identities confirm understandings and experiences of human ones, including racialized and gendered identities and study the ways in which non-human identities challenge claims to human exceptionalism. Some of the topics along which the readings will be arranged include liminality, (mis-)recognition, metamorphoses, suffering, as well as love. Readings include Aristotle, Euripides, Ovid, Montaigne, Descartes, Shakespeare, Kafka, Woolf, Morrison, Coetzee, Szymborska, Hughes, Haraway, and Derrida and essays by contemporary scholars such as Kim Hall and Karl Steel. Some class time will be devoted to the process of writing the thesis at all significant critical junctures.

French (Barnard)
FREN BC3021 Major French Texts I. 3 points.
Medieval, Renaissance, and Classical literature in their cultural context. FREN BC1204: French Intermediate II or the equivalent level is required.

Fall 2019: FREN BC3021

Course Number | Section/Call Number | Times/Location | Instructor | Points | Enrollment
---|---|---|---|---|---
FREN 3021 | 001/08229 | M W 11:40am - 12:55pm | Laura | 3 | 24/30
| 307 Milbank Hall | 13 | 3 | 001/08238 | 7:40pm - 8:55pm | Laurie | 3 | 24/30
| 325 Milbank Hall | 13 | 3 | 001/08292 | 3:30pm - 4:45pm | Laurie | 3 | 24/30

FREN BC3023 The Culture of France I. 3 points.
Not offered during 2019-20 academic year.

Historical analysis of mentalités from the Middle Ages to the reign of Louis XIV through symbol, structure, and self-presentation. FREN BC1204: French Intermediate II or the equivalent level is required.

FREN BC3029 Laughter in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. 3 points.
Not offered during 2019-20 academic year.

Explores both the traditional comic forms of early French literature (farce, sottie, fabliau, burlesque, grotesque) and comedic elements of serious genres such as chanson de geste, saint's lives, and romance. An investigation into the mentalités of the Middle Ages and Renaissance through an understanding of what made people laugh. FREN BC1204: French Intermediate II or the equivalent level is required.

FREN BC3032 Women and Writing in Early Modern France. 3 points.
Examination of cultural and literary phenomena in 15th through 17th century France, focusing on writings by and about women. FREN BC1204: French Intermediate II or the equivalent level is required.
FREN BC3033 Literature of the French Renaissance and the Baroque. 3 points.
Not offered during 2019-20 academic year.

Prerequisites: FREN BC1204: French Intermediate II or the equivalent level is required.
Experimentation and discovery in the arts, in science and technology, and in the understanding of the human experience. Explores how the works of French poets, prosateurs, and playwrights reflect both the vibrancy and splendor of the time, as well as the struggle of an era preoccupied with death and rebirth.

FREN BC3034 French Baroque and Classical Literature. 3 points.
Not offered during 2019-20 academic year.

Prerequisites: FREN BC1204: French Intermediate II or the equivalent level is required.
Interdisciplinary exploration of the literature and culture of the Grand Siècle.

History

HIST W4083 Crime and Punishment in the Middle Ages. 4 points.
Priority given to majors and concentrators, seniors, and juniors.

Prerequisites: the instructor's permission.
How a society defines crime, and how it deals with the criminals tells us a lot about the moral values, and the political and economic structure of that society, as well as its internal conflicts, superstitions, and fears. Often supposed to be a barbaric community of ignorant unruly men governed by greedy kings and popes, the medieval society in the popular culture is often an inspiration to the grotesque representations of violence and torture. Even an intellectual like Michel Foucault did not hesitate to advance a theory of medieval punishment, albeit a terribly wrong one, as one that focuses on the body and spectacle. This course is designed to trace the origins of the modern criminal legislation and practices to the Middle Ages, some of which were jury trial, public persecution, and prisons. How did these practices come about, and under which social conditions? The focus of the course will be on violent crimes, such as murder, robbery, assault and suicide, and some particularly medieval crimes like sorcery, blasphemy and sodomy. The geographical scope will be limited to England, Italy and France. The class discussions are expected to take the form of collective brainstorming on how the political powers, social classes, cultural values, and religious beliefs affect the development of criminal legislation and institutions. Whenever possible the weekly readings will feature a fair share of medieval texts, including trial records, criminal laws, a manual for trying witches, and prison poetry. Field(s): *MED

HIST W4101 The World We Have Lost: Daily Life in Pre-Modern Europe. 4 points.
Not offered during 2019-20 academic year.

What was daily life like for the "average" European in pre-industrial society? This course will examine the material circumstances of life in Europe from 1400-1800, and will investigate how historians are able to enter into the inner life and mental world of people who lived in past. How did people respond intellectually and emotionally to their material circumstances? The readings and discussions in the course aim to examine such questions, with an eye both to learning about the material conditions of life in pre-modern Europe, and to understanding the techniques by which historians are able to make the imaginative leap back into the mental world of the past. Field(s): *EME

History (Barnard)

HIST BC1062 Introduction to Later Middle Ages: 1050-1450. 4 points.

Social environment, political, and religious institutions, and the main intellectual currents of the Latin West studied through primary sources and modern historical writings.

Fall 2019: HIST BC1062

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HIST BC3062 Medieval Economic Life and Thought ca 1000 to 1500. 4 points.

Prerequisites: Permission of the instructor. Enrollment limited to 15.
Preregistration required.
Traces the development of economic enterprises and techniques in their cultural context: agricultural markets, industry, commercial partnerships, credit, large-scale banking, insurance, and merchant culture. Examines usury and just price theory, the scholastic analysis of price and value, and the recognition of the market as a self-regulating system, centuries before Adam Smith.

HIST BC3062 Medieval Economic Life and Thought ca 1000 to 1500. 4 points.

Prerequisites: Permission of the instructor. Enrollment limited to 15.
Preregistration required.
Traces the development of economic enterprises and techniques in their cultural context: agricultural markets, industry, commercial partnerships, credit, large-scale banking, insurance, and merchant culture. Examines usury and just price theory, the scholastic analysis of price and value, and the recognition of the market as a self-regulating system, centuries before Adam Smith.

HIST BC3064 Medieval Science and Society. 4 points.
Prerequisites: Permission of the instructor. Enrollment limited to 15.
Preregistration required.
The evolution of scientific thinking from the 12th to the 16th centuries, considering subjects such as cosmology, natural history, quantification, experimentation, the physics of motion, and Renaissance perspective. At every point we link proto-scientific developments to social and technological developments in the society beyond the schools.
HIST BC3360 London: From Great Wen to World City. 4 points.
Prerequisites: Permission of the instructor. Enrollment limited to 15. 
Preregistration required.
Social and cultural history of London from the Great Fire of 1666 to the 1960s. An examination of the changing experience of urban identity through the commercial life, public spaces, and diverse inhabitants of London. Topics include 17th-century rebuilding, immigrants and emigrants, suburbs, literary culture, war, and redevelopment.

Fall 2019: HIST BC3360

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Italian

ITAL W4091 Dante's <i>Divina Commedia</i> I. 4 points.
ITALIAN MAJORS AND ITALIAN DEPT GRADUATE STUDENTS MUST REGISTER FOR SECTION 001. Not offered during 2019-20 academic year.

Prerequisites: SECTION 001: reading knowledge of Italian. SECTION 002: none.
A year-long course in which the "Commedia" is read over two consecutive semesters; students can register for the first, the second, or both semesters. This course offers a thorough grounding in the entire text and an introduction to the complexities of its exegetical history. Attention not only to historical and theological issues, but also to Dante's mimesis, his construction of an authorial voice that generations of readers have perceived as "true," and the critical problems that emerge when the virtual reality created in language has religious and theological pretensions. SECTION 001: Lectures in English, text in Italian; examinations require the ability to translate Italian. SECTION 002: Lectures in English, examinations in English; students who can follow lectures with the help of translations but who cannot manage the Italian should register for this section.

ITAL W4092 Dante's <i>Divina Commedia</i> II. 4 points.
ITALIAN MAJORS AND ITALIAN DEPT GRADUATE STUDENTS MUST REGISTER FOR SECTION 001. Not offered during 2019-20 academic year.

Prerequisites: SECTION 001: reading knowledge of Italian. SECTION 002: none.
A year-long course in which the "Commedia" is read over two consecutive semesters; students can register for the first, the second, or both semesters. This course offers a thorough grounding in the entire text and an introduction to the complexities of its exegetical history. Attention not only to historical and theological issues, but also to Dante's mimesis, his construction of an authorial voice that generations of readers have perceived as "true," and the critical problems that emerge when the virtual reality created in language has religious and theological pretensions. SECTION 001: Lectures in English, text in Italian; examinations require the ability to translate Italian. SECTION 002: Lectures in English, examinations in English; students who can follow lectures with the help of translations but who cannot manage the Italian should register for this section.

Philosophy (Barnard)

PHIL UN2201 History of Philosophy II: Aquinas to Kant. 4 points.
Prerequisites: PHIL UN2211 Required Discussion Section (0 points). PHIL UN2101 is not a prerequisite for this course. Exposition and analysis of the metaphysics, epistemology, and natural philosophy of the major philosophers from Aquinas through Kant. Authors include Aquinas, Galileo, Gassendi, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant. This course has unrestricted enrollment.

Spring 2020: PHIL UN2201

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PHIL V3237 Late Medieval and Modern Philosophy. 3 points.

BC: Fulfillment of General Education Requirement: Reason and Value (REA).

Prerequisites: One philosophy course or permission of the instructor. Course not offered in Fall 2016, will be offered in Spring 2017 Study of one or more of the major philosophers from the Renaissance through the 18th century. Sample topics: substance and matter; bodies, minds, and spirits; identity and individuation; ideas of God; causation; liberty and necessity; skepticism; philosophy and science; ethical and political issues. Sample philosophers: Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Conway, Locke, Berkely, Hume, Kant.

Religion

RELI V3140 Early Christianity. 3 points.
Examination of different currents in early Christianity. Discussion of gnosticism, monasticism, conflicts of gender and class, and the work of writers such as Origen and Augustine.

RELI W4170 History of Christianity: Topics in Pre-Modern Papal History. 4 points.
Prerequisites: the instructor's permission. An examination of a series of episodes that are of special consequence for papal history in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Readings in both primary and secondary sources in English translation.