

MEDIEVAL & RENAISSANCE STUDIES

417 Barnard Hall
212-854-2116
Director: Rachel Eisendrath

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.

Director

Gred Bryda (Assistant Professor of Art History)

Professors

Christopher Baswell (Professor of English)
Elizabeth Castelli (Professor of Religion)
Achsah Guibbory (Professor of English)
Najam Haider (Professor of Religion)
Kim Hall (Lucyle Hook Professor of English and Africana Studies)
Joel Kaye (Ann Whitney Olin Professor of History)
Keith Moxey (Professor Emeritus of Art History)
Peter Platt (Ann Whitney Olin Professor of English)
Rachel Eisendrath (Professor of English)
Deborah Valenze (Professor of History)

Associate Professor

Orlando Bentancor (Associate Professor of Spanish and Latin American Cultures)

Assistant Professors

Gregory Bryda (Assistant Professor of Art History)
Matthew Delvaux (Assistant Professor of History)
Matthew L. Keegan (Moinian Assistant Professor of Asian and Middle Eastern Cultures)
Seth Stewart Williams (Assistant Professor of Dance)

Senior Lecturers

Laurie Postlewate (Senior Lecturer in French)

Senior Scholar

Anne Lake Prescott (Emerita)

For Columbia University Medieval and Renaissance faculty, see [their website](#).

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 that are at least 41 credits in total 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-SR PROJECT and MEDR BC3999 DIRECTED RESEARCH-SR 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-SR PROJECT or MEDR BC3999 DIRECTED RESEARCH-SR 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.

Medieval and Renaissance Program Courses

MEDR BC3099 INDEPENDENT STUDY. 1.00-4.00 points.

MEDR BC3998 DIRECTED RESEARCH-SR PROJECT. 4.00 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

MEDR BC3999 DIRECTED RESEARCH-SR PROJECT. 4.00 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 UN2305 RENAISSANCE IN IMPERIAL SPAIN. 3.00 points.

The course will survey Renaissance art in Hapsburg Spain, considered in the wide geographical context of the extended and dispersed dominions of the different crowns of the Spanish monarchy, which connected the Iberian Peninsula with Italy, Flanders and the New World. It will concern visual art in its various media, mainly painting, sculpture and architecture, but also tapestries, prints, armor, goldsmithery and ephemeral decoration, among others. Works of the main artists of the period will be introduced and analyzed, giving attention to the historical and cultural context of their production and reception. The course will particularly focus on the movement of artists, works and models within the Spanish Hapsburg territories, in order to understand to what extent visual arts contributed to shaping the political identity of this culturally composite empire

AHIS W3230 Medieval Architecture. 3 points.
Not offered during 2024-2025 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 2024-2025 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.

AHIS GU4023 Medieval Art II: Castles, Cathedral, and Court. 4.00 points.

This advanced lecture course is intended for students with little or no background in medieval art of Latin ("Western") Europe. It provides a comprehensive introduction to a period spanning roughly one millennium, from Pope Gregory the Great's defense of art ca. 600 to rising antagonism against it on the eve of the Protestant Reformation. Themes under consideration include Christianity and colonialism, pilgrimage and the cult of saints, archaism versus Gothic modernism, the drama of the liturgy, somatic and affective piety, political ideology against "others," the development of the winged altarpiece, and pre-Reformation iconophobia. We will survey many aspects of artistic production, from illuminated manuscripts, portable and monumental sculpture, stained glass, sumptuous metalworks, drawings, and reliquaries to the earliest examples of oil paintings and prints. While this course is conceived as a pendant to Medieval Art I: From Late Antiquity to the End of the Byzantine Empire (AHIS GU4021), each can be taken independently of one another. In addition to section meetings, museum visits to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters, and The Morgan Library are a required component to the course. Students must register for a mandatory discussion section

Spring 2026: AHIS GU4023

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
AHIS 4023	001/13780	M W 1:10pm - 2:25pm 807 Schermerhorn Hall	Gregory Bryda	4.00	30/65

AHIS GU4027 Architecture in Western Europe 1066-1399. 3.00 points.

This course explores architecture in Western Europe during the Middle Ages. The time frame starts with the conquest of England in 1066 and ends with the appointment of Gothic experts in 1399 to advise on the construction of Milan Cathedral towards the end of the Middle Ages. The first historical event coincides with the creation of architecture of a bewildering scale while the second reflects the end of building without architectural treatises or architectural theory - in a modern sense. The course will also introduce students to new digital technologies such as laser scanning and photogrammetry for the study of medieval architecture. No preliminary knowledge of medieval history or architectural history is needed, and no knowledge of digital technologies or specific computer skills is expected. The monuments selected belong to a period that starts when architecture moved away from Roman antique models and ends just before the re-adoption of Classical standards in the Renaissance. In this course the originality of medieval architecture, its relationship with earlier and later monuments, and the dramatic effort involved in its creation will be discussed. Major themes of medieval society such as pilgrimages, crusades, piety, the cult of relics, and the social and intellectual context of the Middle Ages are also part of this lecture. In the first weeks, important concepts of medieval society and its architecture will be presented in combination with a number of new technologies recently adopted in the field. These introductory classes will offer the foundations needed to understand artistic and architectural developments in the Middle Ages. While the course will focus on architecture, different media are included when they provide valuable information on the artistic and cultural context to which buildings belong. New technologies serve as a basis for a critical discussion about the changes in method introduced by new media and technologies in the field of architectural history

AHIS GU4031 Art of Italy: 1300-1520. 3.00 points.

This course is a survey of the art of Italy from the early fourteenth century until the onset of the Reformation. It will cover the major artists and cultural centers of the peninsula, examining them in the context of broader artistic currents and conventions of the period. Special attention will be paid to the social, political, and historical factors that led to changes in the visual arts as well as the impact of cultures beyond classical antiquity on the form and iconography of paintings and sculptures in the Early Renaissance. The lectures will provide students with a deeper understanding of the canonical works of Italian artists from Cimabue and Giotto to Leonardo da Vinci and Giovanni Bellini, of the development of new criteria for assessing the visual arts, of the relationship between artists, patrons, and audiences in the period. The readings, in turn, will familiarize them with key primary sources of the fourteenth and fifteenth century, as well as the writings of distinguished Renaissance scholars from the nineteenth century until the present

Classics

LATN UN3033 MEDIEVAL LANGUAGE # LITERATURE. 3.00 points.

Prerequisites: four semesters of college Latin or the instructor's permission.

Prerequisites: four semesters of college Latin or the instructor's permission. This course offers an introduction to medieval Latin literature in conversation with its two most important traditions, classical literature and early Christian culture. Illustrative passages from the principal authors and genres of the Latin Middle Ages will be read, including Augustine and biblical exegesis; Ambrose and poetry; Bede and history and hagiography; Abelard and Heloise and the 12th century Renaissance. The course is suitable both for students of Latin and of the Middle Ages

LATN GU4152 MEDIEVAL LATIN LITERATURE. 3.00 points.

Prerequisites: the instructor's permission.

Prerequisites: the instructor's permission. This course covers various topics in Medieval Latin Literature

English & Comparative Literature

ENGL UN3262 English Literature 1500-1600. 3 points.

(Lecture). This course aims to introduce you to a selection of sixteenth-century English verse and prose, from major works such as More's *Utopia*, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and Sidney's *Defense of Poesie*, to more occasional but illuminating excerpts. Although the classes will range widely across social, political and historical concerns, the focus will be on close reading of the texts. [NB This course fulfills the poetry requirement]

ENGL UN3336 SHAKESPEARE II. 3.00 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 UN3343 WOMEN IN RENAISSANCE DRAMA CULTRE. 4.00 points.

Concentrating on the drama of early modern England, this course will investigate a culture of surveillance regarding women's bodies in the period. We will give special focus to the fear of female infidelity, the theatrical fascination with the woman's pregnant body, and the cultural desire to confirm and expose women's chastity. We will read plays in which women are falsely accused of adultery, in various generic contexts (such as William Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* and *Much Ado About Nothing*), along with plays in which women actually commit infidelity (such as the anonymous *Arden of Faversham* and Thomas Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*). Focusing on a different play each week, we will ask: what does it take, ultimately, to believe women about their fidelity? At the same time, what is the effect of being doubted on women themselves? We will also give consideration to the particular resources of dramatic form, paying attention to moments in plays that coerce spectators themselves into mistaken judgments about women. We will supplement our reading of drama with pamphlets, advice literature, poems, church court cases, and ballads, in order to place these plays within a broader and more varied culture of female surveillance in early modern England. Finally, we will work to recover past strategies of liberation from this surveillance in the plays we read, in women's writing that warns against male betrayal, and in dramatic and historical instances of female cross-dressing

Spring 2026: ENGL UN3343

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
ENGL 3343	001/12901	T 12:10pm - 2:00pm 401 Hamilton Hall	Lauren Robertson	4.00	18/18

ENGL UN3873 Troilus and Criseyde. 4.00 points.

The intellectual goals of the course are to understand the manuscript evidence for the text and to be able to read Chaucer with precision: precision as to the grammatical structure, vocabulary, rhymes, and meter of the text. Being such an enlightened, close reader will help students in many, if not all, of their other courses, and will be invaluable to them in most any job they will ever have thereafter

ENGL UN3920 MEDIEVAL ENGLISH TEXTS. 4.00 points.

Prerequisites: the instructor's permission.

The class will read the poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in the original Middle English language of its unique surviving copy of circa 1400, and will discuss both the poem's language and the poem's literary merit. The class will read the poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in the original Middle English language of its unique surviving copy of circa 1400, and will discuss both the poem's language and the poem's literary merit

ENGL GU4263 Literature of the 17th C. 3 points.

This lecture course surveys the non-dramatic literature of seventeenth-century England, with particular attention to its prose writings. The course will focus on topics including the new politics of the Jacobean court; the tensions leading to the civil wars; the so-called "scientific revolution" and its discontents; and the challenges of the Restoration, including plague and fire. Authors studied will include Ben Jonson, Francis Bacon, John Donne, Aemelia Lanyer, George Herbert, Thomas Browne, Robert Burton, John Milton, Andrew Marvell, Margaret Cavendish, Abraham Cowley, and Katherine Philips.

ENGL GU4458 Young Romance. 3.00 points.

The literary mode we call "romance" has been enormously popular and influential from its origins in Hellenistic antiquity to current science fiction, and at all levels of textual ambition from popular culture to canonical literature. Within this mass of material, one constant element is romance's encounter with boundaries. This course will explore such boundary moments in texts from the 5th to the 20th centuries: boundaries and transgressions of desire (romances of marriage and adultery), of time (the reimagining of antiquity), of national foundation, of geography (settings in a fantasy east), of gender, and of class, indeed the boundary of the human and the monstrous

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 Queene* 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 BC3154 Chaucer Before Canterbury. 3 points.

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 historicist interpretation. Background readings in medieval life and culture.

ENGL BC3155 THE CANTERBURY TALES. 3.00 points.

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.

Spring 2026: ENGL BC3155

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
ENGL 3155	001/00178	M W 11:40am - 12:55pm 202 Milbank Hall	Eugene Petracca	3.00	15/35

ENGL BC3158 Medieval Literature: Literatures of Medieval Britain. 3 points.

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

Not offered during 2024-2025 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. 3.00 points.

Prerequisites: Enrollment limited to 60 students.

A critical and historical introduction to Shakespeares 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

Fall 2026: ENGL BC3163

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
ENGL 3163	001/00337	M W 8:40am - 9:55am Room TBA	Peter Platt	3.00	0/36

ENGL BC3164 SHAKESPEARE II. 3.00 points.

Prerequisites: Enrollment limited to 60 students.

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

Spring 2026: ENGL BC3164

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
ENGL 3164	001/00099	M W 8:40am - 9:55am 323 Milbank Hall	Peter Platt	3.00	12/60

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 17TH-CENTURY PROSE # POETRY. 3 points.

The seventeenth century was a century of revolution, giving birth to modern ways of thinking, and calling into question many of the old ways. In the early years, many were affected by melancholy, some believing the world was approaching the endtimes. England experienced plagues, particularly in London, and other catastrophes. So we might find some affinity with our own current situation, facing new challenges, our world turned upside down, which is what many people felt during that time. Out of all of this turmoil, however, came great literature including lyric poems by John Donne and others exploring love and desire, doubt and faith, sex and God. Donne also wrote a series of Devotions grappling with mortality over a course of 23 days when he was suffering from typhus or relapsing fever and almost died. Others turned to find solace in the natural world and friendship (Amelia Lanyer, Katherine Philips, Henry Vaughan). Robert Burton wrote a book on melancholy, which he kept adding to. Francis Bacon thought a revolution in science could redeem the world. Thomas Browne, a physician as well as writer, tackled the problem of intolerance and religious conflict. Thomas Hobbes thought only a firm (authoritarian?) government could reestablish peace and security, while Gerard Winstanley (a "Leveller") thought that owning land (and money) was the source of all war and misery. Transgressive women had their own ideas. The Quaker leader Margaret Fell defended women's right to preach. We will read selections from these and other writers, understanding them in their historical context and with a sense of their current resonance.

Spring 2026: ENGL BC3166

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
ENGL 3166	001/00151	M W 10:10am - 11:25am 409 Barnard Hall	Achsah Guibbory	3	25/30

ENGL BC3167 MILTON. 3.00 points.

How and why might we read Milton now? And how do his writings and thinking intersect with issues in our present moment? We will read his influential epic *Paradise Lost* after reading selections of Milton's earlier poetry and prose (attack against censorship, defenses of divorce, individual conscience, toleration, complicated issues of political and religious liberty). He wrote about these matters as he was involved in the English Civil war, an advocate of liberty (we will consider what kind, for whom?) and revolution, which Americans would embrace as inspiration and to justify the American Revolution. We will critically read Milton's literary and political texts within the contexts of religious, political, and cultural history of early modern England and Europe but also colonial and revolutionary America—asking difficult questions, and with a sense of how Milton's writing connects to present issues of our time

ENGL BC3169 Renaissance Drama. 3 points.

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, astonishingly 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 BC3246 WRITING THE MEDIEVAL SELF. 3.00 points.

The late Middle Ages and early Renaissance saw an explosion in the use of the first-person singular "I" by European writers of narrative texts. Although these narratives – among them dream visions, philosophical allegories, spiritual autobiographies, and straight-up novels – do not always correspond to modern ideas about autobiography, they nonetheless demonstrate a growing interest in such "autobiographical" topics as personal identity, sexual difference, mental illness, and disability, even as they experiment with a variety of literary forms and raise fundamental questions about the relationship between truth and writing. Writers will include Augustine, Dante, Boccaccio, Chaucer, Christine de Pisan, Thomas Hoccleve, Julian of Norwich and Teresa de Cartagena, among others. No foreign language experience is required for this course, but knowledge of Latin or Romance languages may be useful

ENGL BC3297 UNSILENT VOICES: THE MEDIEVAL LYRIC IN EUROPE. 3.00 points.

From the fall of the Western Empire to the Protestant Reformation, a period of over 1000 years, poets in Europe produced an extraordinarily rich and varied body of lyric poetry that continues to exert a major influence on world literature today. While some of this poetry is religious in nature, a great deal also addresses such diverse themes as desire, selfhood, politics, gender, and humanity's relation to the non-human world. In this class we will examine medieval lyrics originally composed in a number of languages including but not limited to Old and Middle English, Latin, Occitan, Hebrew, Arabic, Italian, French, German and Portuguese. Aspiring polyglots welcome, but all readings will be provided in English translation. This course presumes no previous knowledge of medieval history or literature

AFEN BC3817 Black Shakespeare. 4.00 points.

This course examines Shakespeare's role in shaping Western ideas about Blackness, in processes of racial formation, and in Black freedom struggle. As one of the most enduring representations of a Black man in Western art Shakespeare's Othello will be a focal point. However, this course will examine other "race" plays as well as works perceived as "race-neutral" in tandem with Black "respeakings" of Shakespeare's works. This class is antiracist in intent and is shaped by several interlocking questions: What is Black Shakespeare? Can creators and scholars separate Shakespeare from the apparatus of white supremacy that has been built around his works? What are the challenges for BIPOC actors performing Shakespeare on the dominant stage? What are the challenges and obstacles for BIPOC scholars working on Shakespeare in academia? Can performing Shakespeare be an activist endeavor

Spring 2026: AFEN BC3817

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
AFEN 3817	002/00753	T 4:10pm - 6:00pm 405 Barnard Hall	Kim F Hall	4.00	9/15

French (Barnard)

FREN GU4425 Medieval Animals, Human and Other. 3.00 points.

How did medieval people separate themselves from other (non-human) animals? Was it the ability of humans to talk, use tools, exercise rationality or something else? We will consider these questions in the first unit of this class, in which we'll look at cases of what Agamben calls "the anthropological machine"—the ways in which humans have distinguished themselves from other species. Why do some bestiaries (catalogues of animals) include human animals but not others? How did medieval people understand Genesis and the notion of 'dominion' given to humans over the rest of creation? In the next unit, we will turn to talking animals, both in medieval philosophical texts and in literature. Do they speak differently from human animals? Do humans speak differently when speaking of them (for example, do texts about parrots or other bird mimics start to 'parrot' other texts?). We next turn to cases of metamorphosis (human to animal or vice versa) and hybridity (in which a single body is both human and animal). What do these texts reveal about what is proper to the human and how does the body play a role in shoring up species identity? In a final unit, we turn to assemblages—conglomerations in which human and nonhuman animals act together. We will look both at chivalry (knight horse) and at medieval lovers, who are often surrounded by birds

French (Barnard)

FREN BC3021 MAJOR FRENCH TEXTS I. 3.00 points.

Prerequisites: Satisfaction of the language requirement or the equivalent. An exploration of the early periods of French literary creation (Medieval-17th century) through works of fiction, poetry, and theatre. Special attention is given to texts that use tradition to bring about change, to provoke, to contest social norms, and to test the expected parameters of literary expression

Fall 2026: FREN BC3021

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
FREN 3021	001/00494	M W 1:10pm - 2:25pm Room TBA	Caroline Weber	3.00	0/22

FREN BC3023 The Culture of France I. 3 points.

Not offered during 2024-2025 academic year.

Prerequisites: Satisfaction of the language requirement or the equivalent. Historical analysis of *mentalites* 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 BC3025 Theater of the Classical Age. 3 points.

Prerequisites: Prerequisites: Satisfaction of French language requirement or permission of the instructor.

This course will provide a detailed introduction to the three great French dramatists of the seventeenth century, rightly known as the golden age of French theatre. Reading several canonical works by each of these three playwrights-Corneille, Racine, and Molière-students will closely examine the thematic concerns (the relationship between love and duty, the individual and the state, free will and divine providence; the problems of hypocrisy, dishonesty, sexual jealousy, and avarice; the nature of kingship and the extent or the limits of royal control; the differences between prescribed gender roles for men and for women; the recourse to and reworking of mythological and Biblical sources) the plays set forth, and the rhetorical strategies they employ (from classical, Greco-Roman devices such as metaphor, apostrophe, irony, preterition, prosopopeia, and anagnorisis to the specifically French metrical pattern of the alexandrin). *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 2024-2025 academic year.

Prerequisites: Satisfaction of the language requirement or permission of the instructor.

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 mentalites 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.

Prerequisites: Satisfaction of the language requirement or permission of the instructor.

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 2024-2025 academic year.

Prerequisites: Satisfaction of the language requirement or permission of the instructor.

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 2024-2025 academic year.

Prerequisites: Satisfaction of the language requirement or permission of the instructor.

Interdisciplinary exploration of the literature and culture of the *Grand Siecle*.

History

HIST GU4083 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 2024-2025 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*

HIST GU4356 Montaigne and the Modern Self. 4.00 points.

This seminar, which focuses on Montaigne's Essays, is one of a series on the history of the modern self. The series has included seminars on figures like Pascal, Rousseau, and Tocqueville, and will continue to expand

History (Barnard)

HIST BC1062 Introduction to the Global Middle Ages. 4.00 points.

This course introduces students to medieval history and the methods historians use to study and communicate about the past. Medieval history has traditionally centered on Western Europe, but this course also integrates new approaches to the Global Middle Ages, including attention to connectivity, comparative studies across contexts, and a survey of world literatures. Topics include Late Antique transformations to the Roman world, the Germanic migrations, and the rise of Christianity; the Islamic Conquests, the Carolingian Renaissance, and the Viking expansion; the Crusades, the Black Death, and the rise of early modern empires. Students will learn to read primary sources, assess scholarly arguments, and incorporate interdisciplinary approaches. This course will require visits to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Met Cloisters

Fall 2026: HIST BC1062

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HIST 1062	001/00499	T Th 11:40am - 12:55pm Room TBA	Matthew Delvaux	4.00	0/56

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

BC: Fulfillment of General Education Requirement: Historical Studies (HIS).

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 # SOCIETY. 4.00 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: GREAT WEN'TO WRLD CIT. 4.00 points.

Prerequisites: Permission of the instructor. Enrollment limited to 15. Preregistration required.

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

Italian

ITAL GU4091 DANTE'S DIVINA COMMEDIA 1. 4.00 points.

ITALIAN MAJORS AND ITALIAN DEPT GRADUATE STUDENTS MUST REGISTER FOR SECTION 001.

Prerequisites: SECTION 001: reading knowledge of Italian. SECTION 002: none.

ITAL GU4092 DANTE'S DIVINA COMMEDIA 2. 4.00 points.**ITAL GU4079 BOCCACCIO'S DECAMERON. 3.00 points.**

While focusing on the Decameron, this course follows the arc of Boccaccio's career from the *Ninfale Fiesolano*, through the Decameron, and concluding with the *Corbaccio*, using the treatment of women as the connective thread. The Decameron is read in the light of its cultural density and contextualized in terms of its antecedents, both classical and vernacular, and of its intertexts, especially Dante's *Commedia*, with particular attention to Boccaccio's masterful exploitation of narrative as a means for undercutting all absolute certainty. Lectures in English; text in Italian, although comparative literature students who can follow with the help of translations are welcome

Fall 2026: ITAL GU4079

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
ITAL 4079	001/12152	T 4:10pm - 6:00pm Room TBA	Teodolinda Barolini	3.00	0/20
ITAL 4079	002/12565	T 4:10pm - 6:00pm Room TBA	Teodolinda Barolini	3.00	0/20

Music

MUSI GU4060 MEDIEVAL MUSIC DRAMA. 3.00 points.

In this seminar we will study examples of music drama from the tenth century to the fourteenth, taking into account both the manuscript sources and methodological questions raised by performative works at the intersection of literature, music, and ritual

MUSI GU4113 Medieval Mediterranean Love Songs. 4.00 points.

This seminar will focus on love poetry in the medieval western Mediterranean. Readings will consist primarily of medieval lyric in Old Occitan, Galician Portuguese, Old French, Italian, and Castilian in conversation with concurrent kindred forms of the lyric in classical Arabic and medieval Hebrew from medieval Iberia and Italy. Most weeks will include listening examples but a background in music is not a prerequisite. All texts will be available in translation; originals will also be made available. We will emphasize close reading and analysis, often addressing the relationship between text and music

Philosophy (Barnard)

PHIL UN2201 HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY II. 4.00 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 2026: PHIL UN2201

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
PHIL 2201	001/00366	T Th 11:40am - 12:55pm 405 Milbank Hall	Caroline Bowman	4.00	77/80

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.

\nCourse 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, Berkeley, 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.

RELI W4171 Law and Medieval Christianity. 4 points.

Prerequisites: the instructor's permission.

An introduction to the importance of Church law for the study of medieval Christianity through readings in both primary and secondary sources (all in English or English translations). Topics will be selected, as the sources permit, to illustrate the evolution of Western canon law and its impact both as a structural and as an ideological force, in medieval Christianity and in medieval society in general.

Spanish

SPAN UN3368 The Spanish Inquisition. 3 points.

Founded to combat Christian heresy in the late fifteenth century but based on previous medieval models, the Spanish Inquisition is notorious as an institution of religious persecution. Converts from Judaism and Islam to Christianity, not to mention a host of other minority Christian communities, often fell under inquisitorial suspicion. The interrogation and censorship tactics employed by inquisitors and their agents to police these communities sometimes but not always entailed violence. Punishments for those convicted of infractions similarly ranged widely, from the notorious *auto-de-fé* to more minor acts of contrition. In this course, we will study these inquisitorial procedures and their underlying theological presuppositions. We also will examine how the “Holy Office,” as it the inquisition was likewise known, fit into the broader religious and political cultures of the Iberian world during the sixteenth century. That is, both Catholic and Protestant reformers of the period often emphasized inquisitorial violence in order to smear their adversaries or make Spain seem backward, while some apologists for Spanish empire and orthodoxy insisted upon the noble intentions driving inquisition. These early modern tensions have shaped our late modern understanding of inquisition history. Over the course of the semester we will aim to test these “black” and “white” legends of Spanish inquisitorial and imperial violence not only against a range of primary sources and archival documents from the sixteenth century, but also against our own presuppositions about tolerance and intolerance, religious freedom, and the relationship between religion and secularism in the present. Readings include inquisitorial case archives, polemical and pedagogical works by Nicolas Eimeric, Hernando de Talavera, Tomás de Torquemada, and other early inquisitors and their critics, and articles and book chapters by modern scholars such as Christine Caldwell Ames, Wendy Brown, Michel Foucault, Carlo Ginzburg, Henry Kamen, Doris Moreno, and others.