

HISTORY 378
THE END OF THE MIDDLE AGES:
PLAGUE, WAR, AND CULTURAL CHANGE IN LATE-MEDIEVAL EUROPE
SPRING 2008

Professor Ben R. McRee
Stager Hall Room 303
Campus Phone 4232
ben.mcree@fandm.edu

Office Hours
M 9:30-10:30
T 1:30-2:30
R 1:30-2:30

Texts

The following books may be purchased at the campus bookstore:

Christopher Allmand, *The Hundred Years War*
Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*
Desiderius Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly and Other Writings*
Rosemary Horrox, ed. *The Black Death*
Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*
Charles G. Nauert, *Humanism and the culture of Renaissance Europe*

Additional readings will be available on edisk.

Course Description

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries western Europeans experienced a series of calamities: overpopulation and food shortages, a protracted military struggle between England and France, and, most notably, the epidemic known as the Black Death. Those events resulted in a level of mortality that medieval Europeans—hardly unfamiliar with death—could scarcely have imagined. But that was not all. Europeans also witnessed new challenges to papal authority, religious orthodoxy, and established patterns of intellectual discourse. In this course we will examine these developments, the ways in which people of the time responded to them, and the impact they had on European society, economy, politics, and culture. Finally, we will consider the role they played in defining the end of the medieval era.

Course Requirements

PARTICIPATION—We will devote a considerable portion of class time to discussion of the material presented in the reading and lectures. The success of the course will thus depend to a great extent on your active and enthusiastic participation in class discussion. It is imperative that you come to class prepared. That means that you will have done the reading *and reflected on its significance*. Towards the end, I will ask you to prepare discussion questions and present them to the class from time to time, as noted in the schedule of classes. On those dates, you should write out (or type and print!) at least three questions appropriate for discussion and bring them to class. You may be asked to turn them in, so please write neatly and grammatically. Participation in class discussion will be evaluated as part of your grade for the course.

MEMOS—You will complete a short memo on five of the specially-indicated days in the schedule that follows, timed so that you complete at least three memos by spring break. A memo should offer a substantive commentary on one or more of the readings for the day. Your commentary might include personal reactions to the material; comparisons with readings from previous weeks; links to material you are studying in other classes; historical hypotheses suggested by the readings; or other sorts of responses. Use your imagination! There are really only two requirements for what goes into a memo: 1) *at least one direct quotation from the reading assigned for that day* (with page number(s) cited), and 2) *a question (or questions)* that calls for a thoughtful, interpretive response at the end. In evaluating your work I will look for indications that you have thought carefully about the reading, grappled with the ideas presented there, and applied your analytic and creative skills to the material. As for length and format, comments and questions should be 600-700 words long; should be typed and printed according to the instructions below (no e-mailed memos please); and should include your name and the date for which the memo is being submitted at the top. Memos will be collected at the beginning of the indicated class meetings. Memos turned in after the start of class but before 4:30 of the same day will be accepted with a penalty. No memos will be accepted after 4:30. If you will be unable to make it to class on a day for which you have prepared a memo, you should hand in your work in advance or arrange for a classmate to hand it in for you.

PRESENTATION—You will deliver a short oral presentation on an assigned topic. Presentations are intended to provide the class with useful information related to the main topic of the day; they should be 12-15 minutes in length and include three principal components:

- An introduction that gives useful background information and situates the topic in a broad historical context
- Important descriptive and factual information about the subject (the body of the presentation)
- A discussion of the significance of the topic for Tudor-Stuart history

Your greatest challenge will be striking an appropriate balance between factual information and interpretive commentary. You must provide enough information to bring your topic to life, but you must also help us to make sense of the material by commenting on its meaning. On the day of your presentation you will also hand in an annotated bibliography of the sources used in preparing your material. Please comment briefly on the nature of each source, the sort of information you drew from it, and how useful you found it to be. Your bibliography must include at least two print sources.

RESEARCH PAPER—Each student will also complete a research paper on some aspect of late-medieval history. This paper should be fifteen to twenty pages long and make use of both primary and secondary sources. You will complete a research proposal for this paper early in the semester. The proposal should be a two to three page paper in which you specify your topic and describe why it is important; identify and describe the leading sources available for the subject, both primary and secondary; and highlight the questions you hope to answer. You will also complete a source analysis early in the second half of the term. That analysis should be a three to five page critical discussion of two sources you plan to use, one primary and one secondary. The proposal and the analysis will be used in class writing workshops (see the schedule below), so it is important that they be completed on time. Research proposals, source analyses, and final papers

must be prepared in accordance with the instructions appended below. Late papers will be penalized. You must hand the research proposal, the source analysis, and the research paper itself to pass the course.

FINAL EXAM—There will be a comprehensive final examination. To pass the course you must earn a passing grade on the final. The date and time for the final will be announced by the Registrar. You must make yourself available to take the exam at the scheduled time during finals week.

In computing your grade the following weights will be given to your work:

Memos	20%
Participation	20%
Presentation	10%
Research Paper	30%
Final Examination	20%

ATTENDANCE—Attendance and punctuality are expected. Excessive absences or tardiness will adversely affect your grade. If you miss more than three class meetings, your average for the semester will be reduced by five percent for each absence beyond the third. For four absences, for example, you would incur a five percent penalty, for five absences a ten percent penalty, and so on. Arrival after attendance has been taken will count as half an absence for this purpose.

Instructions for Preparing Memos and Research Paper

- Written work must be printed at the highest quality possible, double-spaced (equivalent to a line spacing of 20 to 24 points), have reasonable margins (about one inch), and use one of the following fonts (or a reasonable facsimile):

12 point Baskerville	12 point Times
10 point Courier	10 point Palatino
- Number your pages—do it by hand if you have to.
- Type your name in the upper right-hand corner of the first page.
- Include a word count at the end of your memo or essay (but don't count notes or bibliography).
- Use a staple or paper clip to fasten the pages together.
- Include a bibliography of works cited in your essay.
- Use proper references for any quotations or examples you include. Historians favor footnotes (i.e., notes at the feet of the appropriate pages), so you should put your references in that form in your research paper. You may use footnotes or parenthetical references in the text for your memos.
- Be sure to spell-check and proofread your work carefully before handing it in.
- Memos and essays are due at the beginning of class. All late work will be marked down. No memos will be accepted after 4:30 on the day they are due.

Class Meetings and Assignments

- January 23 Introduction to the Course
- January 28 *The Name of the Rose* I
Eco, Beginning-Prime, 2nd day (pp. 5-140)
Reports: Benedictine monasticism
Peter Abelard
Roger Bacon
- January 30 *The Name of the Rose* II
Eco, Terce, 2nd day-After Compline, 3rd day (pp. 141-284)
Reports: Franciscan monasticism
Waldensians
Albigensians
Memos
- February 4 *The Name of the Rose* III
Eco, Night, 3rd day-Nones, 5th day (pp. 285-438)
Reports: Marsiligo of Padua
Spiritual Franciscans
Joachim of Fiore
- February 6 *The Name of the Rose* IV
Eco, Vespers, 5th day-End (pp. 439-560)
Reports: John XXII
Clement V
Louis of Bavaria
Memos
- February 11 Rural Life
Find, define, and explain the significance of 5 terms related to peasant manorial life in England and France in the 13th century (e.g. heriot, demesne)
- February 13 Role-Play: Lords and Peasants During the Early Fourteenth Century
Independent Research for Role-Playing Exercise
- February 18 Paper Workshop I: Research Proposals
Research Proposal Due
- February 20 The Face of Plague
Horrox, Nos. 1-9
Discussion Questions

- February 25 Religious and Human Explanations
Horrox, Nos. 29-55, 68-75
Memos
- February 27 Scientific Explanations
Horrox, Nos. 56, 58-63
Discussion Questions
- March 3 Coping With Plague
Horrox, Nos. 64-67, 80-86, 91-95
Supplementary Readings: Smail, “Accommodating Plague in
Medieval Marseilles”
Memos
- March 5 Plague and the Church
Horrox, Nos. 87-89, 104-111
Supplementary Readings: Platt, “Like People, Like Priest”
Discussion Questions
- March 10 Land and Labor After the Plague (Role-Play Redux)
Horrox, Nos. 96-103, 112-119
Discussion Questions
- March 12 Post-Plague Outlooks
Horrox, Nos. 76, 120-125
Supplementary Readings: Platt, “Architecture and the Arts”
Memos
- SPRING BREAK**
- March 24 *The Seventh Seal*
- March 26 Paper Workshop II: Source Review
Source Review Due
- March 31 Interpreting Plague
Supplementary Readings: Cohn, “The Black Death: End of a
Paradigm”
Supplementary Readings: Getz, “Black Death and the Silver Lining”
Memos
- April 2 Europe at War I
Allmand, introduction, chapters 1-3
Discussion Questions

- April 7 Europe at War II
 Allmand, chapters 4-7, conclusion
 Memos
- April 9 Scholasticism and its Discontents
 Supplementary Readings: Ozment, “The Interpretation of Medieval
 Intellectual History”
 Discussion Questions
- April 14 The Mystic Alternative
 Julian of Norwich, Long Text chapters 1-51 (pp. 41-124)
 Memos
- April 16 Birth of Humanism
 Nauert, introduction, chapters 1-3
 Memos
- April 21 Humanism in the North
 Nauert, chapters 4-5
 Discussion Questions
- April 23 Christian Humanism
 Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*
 Memos
- April 28 The End of the Middle Ages
 Supplementary Reading: Huizinga, “The Violent Tenor of Life,”
 “Pessimism and the Ideal of the Sublime Life,” “Religious
 Thought Crystallizing Into Images”
 Discussion Questions
- April 30 Research Reports
 Final Essay Due

Final Examination