

# Medieval History through Castles

Hist 294-04 Fall 2008  
MWF 1:20-2:10 HUM 215

Castles are one of the most recognizable features of medieval civilization, and many different historians, archaeologists, and medievalists have studied them. In this class we will discuss castles themselves and explore why they were important in the Middle Ages. We will also talk about how different historians work with sources, theories, and material objects to reconstruct the past. For example, a historian interested in military history takes a very different approach to castles than someone interested in gender history. Through a combination of readings about castles and about historical methods, we will be able to understand more about the medieval past and to analyze approaches to reconstructing, understanding, and writing about the past. Because this course will address larger issues about historical studies, it can be useful for students interested in many different periods by providing background on how to design and prepare for research projects.

## Contacting Me:

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## Course Materials:

Robert Liddiard, *Castles in Context: Power, Symbolism and Landscape, 1066-1500* (Windgatherer Press, 2005).

Matthew Johnson, *Behind the Castle Gate: From Medieval to Renaissance* (Routledge, 2002)

Additional readings are available online or will be handed out in class: see readings list for further details.

## Attendance and Participation:

Because this course will rely on your participation in class discussion and activities and your evaluation of the readings, you must come to each class prepared. To make the most of class time, please arrive on time. Your attendance and participation in class activities is required, and will compose 15 percent of your final grade. This grade will be based on a combination of your attendance record and your participation in discussion and other in-class activities. Remember, participation is not about just how often you speak, but also what you have to say. Asking an intelligent and thought-provoking question can be as much of a contribution as answering one.

### Course Grade:

Component	% of Final Grade	Due Date
Reading Responses	15%	Wednesdays
Participation	15%	Weekly
Preparatory Assignments	20%	See assignments for dates
Proposal Presentation	5%	17-21 November
Research Proposal	20%	December 5, in class!
Midterm	10%	10 October
Final	15%	Mon, Dec 8 1:30 - 3:30 pm

### Grading Policy

A	100-95	B	86-83	C	76-73	NC	65 and below
A-	94-90	B-	83-80	C-	73-70		
B+	89-87	C+	79-77	D	69-65		

### Reading Responses:

To succeed in this course, your active participation and engagement with the material on a weekly basis is essential. Every week you must write a response paper that will be due by the start of class on Wednesday. These responses should be one or two paragraphs in length. These papers amount to 15% of your final grade. No late responses will be accepted. There will be a total of ten responses. Your best nine responses will be counted towards your final grade. These responses can earn a 3 (above expectations), a 2 (satisfactory), or a 1 (unsatisfactory).

### Exams:

There will be two exams, a midterm and a final. Both will cover material covered up to that point. The second exam will require you to address questions relating to the entire scope of the class. The exams will ask you to think about medieval castles and also about the methodological approaches to studying the Middle Ages.

### Late Work and Absences:

You can miss three class sessions before your grade will be adversely affected. Absences due to university-sponsored events, hospitalization, death in the family, or other emergencies must be documented. I will allow late work only in such cases. If you have a planned excused absence, assignments and responses are still due on time—plan your time accordingly! You must bring your final project with you on the final day of class, no late papers will be accepted.

## SEMESTER PROJECT: PAPER PROPOSAL

The final project for this class is to create a research proposal for a possible future research paper on a topic relating to castles. This project is designed to help you develop the skills necessary (in any field) to find new research directions and to shape independent projects. Your goal is to find a question, not an answer. Over the course of the semester you will explore, elaborate on, and frame your question so that you would know how to do the research and find the answers should you choose to pursue it in the future.

Your research proposal will address several issues, including the specific research question that you have and the methodology that you plan to use. Pay particular attention to what types of questions you could ask about the topic and what disciplines of history or other fields you could use as support and as models for your own research.

For example, if I were interested in the topic of “Castle wells,” I would then work to frame and narrow to a specific topic, which would be the focus of my research proposal. Let’s say I decided to look at how wells appear in late medieval Romance literature. In the proposal I would explain why this question was significant, and what I hoped to learn from researching it. I would need to discuss my methodology-- Would I survey dozens of sources from different areas of Europe and look for broad patterns or would I look at the sources from a specific region and compare the literature with what we know about actual castles? It would also be important for me to acknowledge what work other people have already done on the topic, and where my proposed project would fit in to that work. Finally, a large portion of the proposal would be devoted to discussing what disciplines and fields and approaches to medieval history this project was related to. For example, if I looked at epic literature or the way that water resources were shown in poetry, I would be engaging in literary studies and cultural history. (However, if my topic had been about the myth that Jews poisoned wells, I would work in religious history, social history, and history of intercultural conflict. Similarly, if instead of looking at literature I had chosen practical issues, such as whether or not wells could be poisoned during war, then I would move into architectural and military history and use the results of archaeological excavations.)

Goals:

- \*Learning how to identify and evaluate the viability of research projects independently
- \*Practicing the planning process necessary for longer projects and independent work
- \*Learning how to find and evaluate scholarly sources
- \*Developing a sense of what work others have done on your topic and how your project fits into that work
- \*Expressing your ideas and interests in writing and through public presentation
- \*Using your knowledge of disciplines either within or outside of history to understand how their theories or methods would help you frame and better contextualize the project

## **PROJECT STAGES**

There are several stages of this project that will both help you structure the process of developing a topic and keep you on track for completing the final proposal on time and successfully. (Further assignment sheets will provide detailed instructions, formatting details, and evaluation guidelines). Together, these first four stages will be worth 20% of your final grade.

### **2-3 Page Proposal**

The first graded assignment associated with the development of your research proposal is a short (2-3 page) presentation of your potential research project. This assignment is to help you think about how to explain your area of research interest to others. This exercise will help you narrow down your interests, and to begin to explore possible ways of thinking about the final proposal. You will do peer reviews of the proposals in class; this will serve to both give you more feedback on your proposal and allow you to see the ways that other students are conceptualizing their potential projects. This exercise is due on September 22.

### **Annotated Bibliography**

This bibliographic exercise is the second stage of the research proposal; before you can fully explore what options will be open to you as a researcher, you need to have a clear sense of what work has been done already. For this assignment, you need to identify and survey the important works on your topic. Choose eight to ten secondary works such as academic books, articles, or essays. (You may only use one source from class in this bibliography.) This exercise is due on October 20.

### **State of the Field Draft**

Using your annotated bibliography and any additional work that you have found, write a 2-3 page explanation of what other scholars have worked on related to your topic. Rather than an author-by-author list (like the bibliography), this summary should focus on presenting the major themes, methods, questions, or sources that the scholars have developed or explored in relation to the topic. This section should have a general main point that will help your reader understand how your question fits into what other scholars have already done. This is a new way of framing the ideas from the bibliography, and will become a part of the larger research proposal. This is due on November 3.

### **Methodology Draft**

Since one of the goals of this class include gaining familiarity with different approaches to historical questions and fluency in discussing them, a major component of the proposal will be to explicitly discuss what disciplinary methods (social history, archaeology, environmental history, etc.) will inform and help you shape your project. Every project will draw from a different range of these methods, and have different reasons for doing so. Your goal in this 2-3 page draft is to explain this to your readers. This section will also become a part of the larger proposal. This is due on November 10.

## **Class presentation**

You will present your proposals to your classmates during the week of 14-21 November. (Note that there will be one evening session for presentations). This is your opportunity to explain your project to others, and to get suggestions and advice from your peers. The project does not need to be finished at the time of presentation—use the class discussion as a way of focusing and clarifying your proposal. You will have 10 minutes to present your project, with 5 minutes for questions and answers. This presentation will be worth 5% of your grade.

## **Research Proposal**

In the formal proposal, you will draw all of your background work together in order to explain the potential project (and why it matters) to others. This will demonstrate to others that you have a well-developed and feasible research project. The research proposal should be **10-12 pages** in length, with an additional bibliography. It is worth 20% of your final grade. This is due in class on December 5 and will not be accepted late.

Topics that you need to address in the proposal (this is one possible order of topics, but is not mandatory):

**Question**—what do you want to find out?

**Background**—what do we need to know about the past in order to understand your project? What do we already know about your topic?

**Sources**—Where will your data come from?

**Methodology**—what will you do with your data? How will you tackle the project? What historical disciplines (history of war, gender history, etc.) will your project be based on?

**State of the field**—what other people have done and how your projects fits with this work.

**Significance**—why is it important to study this topic? What could your answer contribute?

The instructor reserves the right to amend this syllabus to better facilitate students' learning.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

W 27 Aug. Introduction: What is History?

F 29 Aug. What Were Castles?

Johnson, "Introduction: Casting Our Eyes upon Sconces"

W 3 Sept. "The Castle Story" (reading response due)

Liddiard, ch. 1 "From Functionalism to Symbolism" and 7, "Rethinking the Castle Story."

## **ARCHAEOLOGY and MATERIAL CULTURE**

F 5 Sept. Hillforts and the Goals of Archaeology

Newman, Conor "Reflections on the Making of a 'Royal Site' in Early Ireland"  
*World Archaeology*, Vol. 30, No. 1, (Jun., 1998), 127-141.

M 8 Sept. Castle 1—Housesteads

W 10 Sept. Using Archaeology: Hadrian's Wall (reading response due)

Hodgson, N. and P.T. Bidwell, "Auxiliary Barracks in a New Light: Recent Discoveries on Hadrian's Wall." *Britannia*, vol. 35 (2004), 121-57.

## **POLITICAL HISTORY**

M 15 Sept. Castles and Politics

Bachrach, Bernard S. "The Angevin Strategy of Castle Building in the Reign of Fulk Nerra, 987-1040." *The American Historical Review* 88, no. 3 (June 1983), 533-60.

W 17 Sept. The Norman Conquest (reading response due)

Pounds, N. J. G. "The Castle in Politics and War" in *The Medieval Castle in England and Wales: A Social and Political History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 26-53.

Liddiard, chapter 2 "Castles, Conquest, and Authority"

F 19 Sept. Castle 2: The Tower of London

## **HISTORY OF WAR**

M 22 Sept. **Proposals Due: In-Class Peer Review**

W 24 Sept. Introduction to Medieval Military History

Burkholder, Peter, "Popular [Mis]conceptions of Medieval Warfare" *History Compass*, 5/2 (2007): 507–524.

France, John. "Recent Writing on Medieval Warfare: From the Fall of Rome to c. 1300." *The Journal of Military History* 65, No. 2 (April, 2001), 441-73.

F 26 Sept Seige Warfare

Liddiard, ch. 4, "The Castle at War"

Kennedy, Hugh. "Siege Warfare in the Crusader Lands" in *Crusader Castles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 98-119.

M 29 Sept. Crusader Castles part 1

Ellenblum, Ronnie. "The Distribution of Frankish Castles during the Twelfth Century" in *Crusader Castles and Modern Histories*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 146-164.

Ehrlich, M. "Crusaders' Castles – the Fourth Generation: Reflections on Frankish Castle-building Policy during the 13<sup>th</sup> Century." *Journal of Medieval History* (May 2003), 85-93.

W 1 Oct Crusader Castles part 2 (reading response due)

Genequand, Denis. "From 'Desert Castle' to Medieval Town: Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi (Syria)." *Antiquity* 79, no. 304 (June 2005), 350-61.

Rosser, John, "Crusader Castles of Cyprus." *Archaeology* 39, no.4 (Jul/Aug 86), 33-47.

F 3 Oct Castle 3: Crac des Chevaliers

**HISTORY OF TECHNOLOGY**

M 6 Oct Castle Technology

White, Lynn Jr. "The Study of Medieval Technology, 1924-1974: Personal Reflections" *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 16, No. 4. (Oct., 1975), 519-30.

Chevedden, Paul E. "The Invention of the Counterweight Trebuchet: A Study in Cultural Diffusion." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 54 (2000), 71-116.

W 8 Oct Film—Medieval Siege

F 10 Oct      MIDTERM

## **HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE**

M 13 Oct      Understanding Castle Architecture

Coldstream, Nicola. "Architects, Advisers and Design at Edward I's Castles in Wales." *Architectural History* 46 (2003) 19-36

Liddiard, chapter 3, "Architecture and Power"

W 15 Oct      Castle 4: Caernarfon (reading response due)

Fradley, Michael, "Space and Structure at Caernarfon Castle." *Medieval Archaeology*, 50 (2006), 165-78.

F 17 Oct      No class: Fall Break!!

## **ENVIRONMENTAL and LANDSCAPE HISTORY**

M 20 Oct      Landscape History **Annotated Bibliography Due!**

Muir, Richard. "Landscape History and Landscape Heritage" in *Approaches to Landscape* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999).

W 22 Oct      Castles in Context—Landscapes (reading response due)

Liddiard, ch. 5 "Lordly Landscapes"

Johnson, ch. 2, "Watery Landscapes"

F 24 Oct      Environmental History

Worster, Donald. "Doing Environmental History." In *The Ends of the Earth*, ed. Donald Worster, appendix. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

Ervynck, Anton. "Medieval Castles as Top-Predators of the Feudal System: An Archaeozoological Approach." *Chateau Gaillard* 15 (1992) 151-59.

## **SOCIAL HISTORY**

### M 27 Oct      What is Social History?

Tilly, Louise. "Social History and Its Critics (in Problems in Social History: A Symposium)." *Theory and Society* 9, no. 5 (September 1980), 668-70.

Couvares, Francis G. "Telling a Story in Context; Or, What's Wrong with Social History?" *Theory and Society* 9, no. 5 (September 1980), 674-76.

Tilly, Charles. "Two Callings of Social History." *Theory and Society* 9, no. 5 (September 1980), 679-81.

Stearns, Peter. "Social History Present and Future." *Journal of Social History*, Fall 2003, 37.1, 9-20.

### W 29 Oct      Knights and Castles in Broader Society (reading response due)

Coss, Peter, "The Role of Chivalric Knighthood in English Society." in *The Knight in Medieval England: 1000-1400*, 100-134.

### F 31 Oct      The Society in Castles

Johnson, chapter 3, "The Ordering of a Medieval Castle" and 6, "Beyond the Pale."

## **WOMEN'S HISTORY and GENDER HISTORY**

### M 3 Nov      Men and Women in the Middle Ages      **State of the Field draft due**

Fenster, Thelma. "Preface: Why Men?" in *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, ix – xiii. London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

### W 5 Nov      Women in Castles (reading response due)

Coulson, Charles, "Female Castellans" in *Castles in Medieval Society: Fortresses in England, France, and Ireland in the Central Middle Ages*. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003), 297-338.

### F 7 Nov      Gender History

Karras, Ruth, "Mail Bonding: Knights, Ladies, and the Proving of Manhood," in *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 20-66.

