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HISTORY 706 MEDIEVAL MONASTICISM

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY ♦ AUTUMN SEMESTER
2011

Tuesday 3:30-5:18
Journalism 291

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A. Course Description & Objectives

This is a graduate seminar in the history and historiography of monasticism in the Middle Ages, primarily in the Latin West, but with some attention to the Byzantine world. The reading load in this course will be heavy, and students will be expected to take considerable initiative in selecting readings and contributing to – and leading – our class discussions. We will begin by establishing a basic timeline for the development of Christian monasticism and by discussing historiographical trends since the seventeenth century, and then dive into the growing corpus of contemporary literature. Here we will confront new directions in research on religious communities in the Middle Ages.

B. Class Participation and Written Assignments

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: [50%]

I expect you to attend *each session* of the course, and more importantly, to be prepared to discuss the week's readings. Attendance is required, and each student is expected to play an active role in class meetings. Each student will take primary responsibility for motivating the discussion of one monograph and one journal article, beginning with a two-page *evaluation* of the book's primary ARGUMENT and SOURCES. One student will also be the designated respondent for each of these readings, so it is important that your two-page evaluation be circulated one week before you present! A whole-group discussion will then follow. We will meet in my office at least one week prior to the appropriate class session to discuss your plan for the discussion. Your grade will be based, not only on your presentation and response, but also on your active and informed participation in the open discussion. A seminar like this can be one of the most stimulating intellectual experiences of your graduate career IF you put the work in to prepare the reading!

BOOK REVIEW: [25%]

Write a formal review of a book on medieval monasticism written in the last 10 years. This must *not* be the same book you presented in class – but it may be one that another student presented! JSTOR offers thousands (+) of examples – and we will discuss the elements of a

good book review in class. You should consult at least two published reviews of your chosen book (attach copies to your review when you submit). Your review should be between 1500 and 2000 words and follow the format for book reviews used in *Speculum*.

ARTICLE PRÉCIS: [25%]

Write a close analysis of a recent journal article on any aspect of medieval monasticism. This should not be a summary, but a *critical evaluation* of the author's argument and use of sources.

NB: For Both the Book Review and Précis, please consider the following:

1. What *question* the author is asking?
Is it a sensible and interesting question? Do we care about the answer? How does the question related to the past literature? What is the innovation in the paper? Does it change any old paradigms or offer new insights?
2. To what *sources* does the author turn to answer his/her research question?
Does he/she make appropriate use of these sources?
3. What *conclusions* does the author draw? Does he/she offer a convincing answer to his/her research question?
4. Does the author answer the '**SO WHAT?**' question in his/her introduction and/or conclusion? (we will discuss this more in class!)

C. Optional Background Reading:

We will spend only a very brief time discussing the very basics of monastic history in class. Please be sure that you are familiar with the elemental concepts of monasticism and primary historical developments. If we need more time, we can arrange an extra tutorial session, but I prefer not to use our seminar time for extended presentations of background material. If you have no specific background in monastic history, you may want to follow along with weekly readings from Brooke or Lawrence. I have also posted a copy of my undergraduate Medieval Monasticism syllabus from the University of Cologne to Carmen for those who want to work out a more formal reading and study plan.

Primary:

Timothy Fry, ed. *RB 1980 : the Rule of St. Benedict in Latin and English* (Liturgical Press, 1981). Pick your version! This is my favorite.

D.W. Robertson, trans. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Later Printing. (Prentice Hall, 1958). A basic starting point for understanding the theological premises of the monastic pursuit. Not an easy read, but worth the effort!

Secondary:

Christopher Brooke, *The Age of the Cloister: The Story of Monastic Life in the Middle Ages* (Hidden Spring, 2002).

C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, 3rd. ed. (Longman, 2000).

Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*. (Fordham University Press, 1961). A classic starting point – now disputed, but still useful – for understanding monastic spirituality.

John Van Engen, “The ‘Crisis of Cenobitism’ Reconsidered: Benedictine Monasticism in the Years 1050-1150,” *Speculum* 61, no. 2 (April 1, 1986): 269-304. Just because it is so great and every one of you should read it. [Carmen]

Historiographical and Methodological

Giles Constable, *Medieval Monasticism : a Select Bibliography* (University of Toronto Press, 1976). A snapshot of the ‘state of the field’ in 1976 – a methodological turning point.

David Knowles, *Great Historical Enterprises and Problems in Monastic History* (Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1962). A basic introduction to some of the most important early modern medieval historical projects – and deeply influential for historiographical directions in monastic history.

Université catholique de Louvain and Léopold Genicot, *Typologie des sources du Moyen Age occidental* (Brepols, 1972). An excellent source of general information and bibliography on various sources for the study of the Middle Ages. Various volumes are useful for the study of monasticism.

D. COURSE SCHEDULE

I have created a Zotero group for our seminar. Each of the themes below has its own folder within the Zotero library. I will ‘invite’ each of you to this group during our first class session. The Zotero library is NOT the course reading list (so don’t panic!), but a gathering of new and classic works on monastic history. One of the many great things about Zotero is that it remains dynamic during the semester and we can add to it as we go along to suit your intellectual needs and interests. Please sign on and have a look.

We will establish a complete presentation schedule during our first class meeting, and you can get started immediately browsing Zotero for a monograph and an article that you would like to present in class, and for your written assignments. Please come and discuss the possibilities with me in my office. The literature on medieval monasticism is vast – I am here to help you navigate it! I will prepare a schedule of presentations as soon as we pick dates. Readings will be on Carmen whenever possible!

■ Week 1 (27 September)

Introductions; Course Planning

■ Week 2 (4 October)

What is monasticism? How have scholars approached the field? And why should every medievalist care?

Reading:

Giles Constable, "The Study of Monastic History Today," in *Essays on the Reconstruction of Medieval History*, ed. Vaclav Mudroch and G.S. Couse. [Carmen]

David Knowles, *Great Historical Enterprises and Problems in Monastic History* (Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1962), pp. 3-32 (the Bollandists) and pp. 35-63 (the Maurists). [Carmen]

Giles Constable, *Medieval Monasticism: a Select Bibliography*, Toronto Medieval Bibliographies 6 (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1976). I have a copy of this in my office.

Tentative Order of Topics for the Remainder of the Semester. We can modify the order and even the topics themselves to suit!

■ Week 3 (11 October)

Structuring Time: The Monastic Liturgy

■ Week 4 (18 October)

Structuring Self 1: Conversion

■ Week 5 (25 October)

Structuring Self 2: Prayer

■ Week 6 (1 November)

Structuring Space 1: Cloister & Choir

■ Week 7 (8 November)

Structuring Space 2: Art & Decoration

■ Week 8 (15 November)

Spaces of Knowledge 1: Library and Scriptorium

■ Week 9 (22 November)

Spaces of Knowledge 2: Infirmary and Hospital

■ Week 10 (29 November)

Spaces of Knowledge 3: Field, Pasture, Workroom