

HIST 4390/5390

Violence in Medieval Europe

Spring 2019
T/Th 1:40-2:55 PM
Stabler Hall 408

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Office: Stabler Hall 604J
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 3:00-4:00 pm, and by appointment
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Course Description

In contemporary usage, to call something “medieval” is to mark it as benighted, violent, and cruel. It is debatable whether the societies of the European Middle Ages stand out as especially brutal in human history, but medieval sources do present us with a varied menu of behaviors with which to argue the proposition. We find, for instance, families waging private wars with each other, noblemen beating peasants and burning their homes and fields, and lawsuits decided by armed combat between plaintiff and defendant. We have little difficulty calling such practices violent, but was such violence as unbridled, gratuitous, and “irrational” as our casual sense of the word “medieval” suggests?

In this course we will examine how writers from the Middle Ages and the present have understood and interpreted various forms of violence in medieval European societies. In our discussion and in our writing we will also develop interpretations of our own. We will examine the ways violence is presented in different genres of medieval sources, such as chronicles and histories, sagas and saints’ lives, law codes and court records. The bulk of our time in class will be spent discussing these sources, as well as works of modern scholarship written about or on the basis of the sources.

Course Goals

This course introduces students to key themes in the study of the European Middle Ages by immersing them in the medieval sources themselves. In the process, students will have the opportunity to hone the core skills of the historian: critically reading and analyzing historical sources, evaluating and responding to the work of other scholars, and developing and articulating their own arguments and interpretations.

Course Readings

The following books are available for purchase at the UA Little Rock bookstore. A copy of each is also on two-hour reserve in Ottenheimer Library.

- Warren C. Brown, *Violence in Medieval Europe* (Routledge, 2011). ISBN: 9781405811644
- *Njal's Saga*, translated by Robert Cook (Penguin, 2001). ISBN: 9780140447699
- Recommended: Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, translated by Lewis Thorpe (Penguin, 1974). ISBN 9780140442953

The bulk of our reading will consist of primary sources and works of modern scholarship that will be posted on Blackboard. Because we will be discussing these readings extensively in class, you must **print out these readings** and bring them with you to class on the assigned days.

Requirements

Undergraduate (HIST 4390)

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|---------------------------------|-----|
| Attendance and Participation: | 30% |
| Weekly Assignments: | 10% |
| Map Quiz: | 5% |
| Source Analysis Paper: | 15% |
| Article Review: | 15% |
| Final Papal Proposal and Draft: | 5% |
| Final Paper: | 20% |

Graduate (HIST 5390)

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Attendance and Participation: | 25% |
| Weekly Assignments: | 10% |
| Map Quiz: | 5% |
| Source Analysis Paper: | 10% |
| Article Review: | 10% |
| Final Papal Proposal and Draft | 5% |
| Final Paper: | 35% |

Grading Scale: A=90-100% B=80-89% C=70-79% D=60-69% F=0-59%

Attendance and Participation. This course will be conducted as a seminar, which means that the attendance and active participation of all members of the class will be vital to its success. Participation can mean, among other things: offering your thoughts about and

reactions to the readings; posing questions that the readings raised for you; or responding (respectfully) to the contributions of other members of the class with follow-up questions or comments. You should come to class having read the assigned texts carefully, marked or noted important, problematic, or interesting passages, and ready with your comments and questions. Students will frequently be assigned leadership of our discussion of one or more readings, in which case they should come to class prepared to briefly introduce the reading(s) and offer questions and observations that can serve as a starting point for our discussion. There may be occasional unannounced quizzes on the assigned readings. The results of any such quizzes will be factored into your participation grade.

Of course, you can only participate in class if you are present. Attendance is, therefore, required. If you have an issue that prevents you from coming to class, please let me know; but in general only documented absences for the following reasons will be excused: serious emergency or serious illness, a religious holiday that prevents attendance, or required attendance at a university-sponsored event. Other absences will result in a lowering of your attendance and participation grade. If at all possible, you must inform me in advance of expected absences. Please arrive to class on time. Excessive or habitual lateness to class will negatively affect your attendance grade. A student who misses more than two consecutive weeks of class may be administratively withdrawn from the course.

Map Quiz. This quiz will assess your knowledge of some of the physical and human geography that forms the backdrop to medieval European history. Students will be given a list of places to locate on the map in advance of the quiz.

Weekly Assignments. You can expect to complete a short assignment of some sort every week. Most weeks (and unless informed otherwise), this will take the form of a post to the class discussion forum on Blackboard. Your post should focus on one or more of the readings for the upcoming class session, and may reflect on points you found significant in the reading, questions it raised for you, or connections you see between the readings. You must submit your post by **11 am** on the day of class for which the reading is assigned (either Tuesday or Thursday). If your post is submitted on time, meets basic standards of grammatical English and demonstrates genuine thought and effort, it will receive full credit. **No credit is awarded for late posts/weekly assignments.**

Papers. In the **source analysis paper** (approx. 5 pages), you will analyze one or more of the primary sources we are reading for class. In the **article review** (approx. 4 pages) you will analyze and assess one or more scholarly articles on the topic of violence in medieval society (I will provide a list of possible articles). The **final paper** (approx. 7-8 pages for

undergraduate students, 13-15 for graduate students) will address a topic chosen by you in consultation me. A proposal with bibliography and a full draft for peer editing will also be submitted. Due dates for the papers are indicated on the course schedule.

Note to graduate students. In addition to writing a longer paper, students taking the class for graduate credit (HIST 5390) will be expected to complete additional readings each week and to meet regularly with the instructor outside of class.

Classroom Policies

As a seminar, this class depends upon the interaction between its members. For that reason I ask that in class you not use laptops or similar devices, which can impede face-to-face interaction. I will not, at least initially, insist absolutely on this point. I do however reserve the right to prohibit the use of such devices at any time if I feel they are interfering with class. Cell phones should be turned off or completely silenced.

Assignments must be turned in on time. As noted above, late weekly assignments (such as discussion posts) will not receive credit. Papers, paper proposals, and paper drafts will be penalized for each day late, unless there are extenuating circumstances discussed with and approved by me in advance.

Academic Integrity

Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses that will result in a grade of “0” for the assignment in question, as well as possible further penalties as outlined in the UALR Student Handbook. For a brief explanation of what constitutes cheating, plagiarism, and other academic offenses, see the section of the UALR Student Handbook entitled “Academic Offenses” (also available here: <http://ualr.edu/deanofstudents/1684-2/>). Anything you present as your own work must be your own work. If you utilize the work of others—either by quoting their exact words or by rephrasing or summarizing their ideas and arguments—you must explicitly acknowledge this with a bibliographic citation. If you have any questions about what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, please do not hesitate to consult with me at any point during the semester. Ignorance is no excuse.

University Inclement Weather Policy

You can find the UA Little Rock inclement weather policy here: <https://ualr.edu/policy/home/admin/weather/>

Students with Disabilities

Your success in this class is important to me, and it is the policy and practice of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to create inclusive learning environments consistent

with federal and state law. If you have a documented disability (or need to have a disability documented), and need an accommodation, please contact me privately as soon as possible, so that we can discuss with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) how to meet your specific needs and the requirements of the course. The DRC offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process among you, your instructor(s) and the DRC. Thus, if you have a disability, please contact me and/or the DRC, at 501-569-3143 (V/TTY) or 501-683-7629 (VP). For more information, please visit the DRC website.

Course Schedule

Any changes to the following schedule will be announced in class and noted on Blackboard. **All readings should be done in advance of the class meeting for which they are assigned.**

Week 1

1/22: Introduction

1/24: Violence and the Historian (I)

Steven Pinker, "Violence Vanquished," *The Wall Street Journal* 24 September 2011

Watch: Steven Pinker, "The Surprising Decline in Violence"

(https://www.ted.com/talks/steven_pinker_on_the_myth_of_violence)

Raymond Williams, "Violence"

William Ian Miller, "Getting a Fix on Violence" (excerpt)

Suggested: Sara Butler, "Getting Medieval on Stephen Pinker: Violence and Medieval England" and/or Daniel Smail, "The Inner Demons of *The Better Angels of our Nature*"

UNIT ONE: Violence, Feuding, and the Law in Early Medieval Francia

Week 2

1/29: Violence and the Historian (II)

Brown, *Violence*, pp. 1-30

Suggested background reading: Judith Bennett, *Medieval Europe* (excerpt)

1/31: Gregory of Tours and Merovingian Gaul

Brown, *Violence*, pp. 33-34

Clifford Backman, "How to Read a Primary Source"

Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, excerpts from Books I & II

Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome* (excerpt)

Week 3

2/5, 2/7: Violence in the World of Gregory of Tours

Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, excerpts from Books III-X

Brown, *Violence*, pp. 33-47

2/7: MAP QUIZ

Week 4

2/12: The "Bloodfeud" in Merovingian Gaul: Modern Perspectives

Max Gluckman, "The Peace in the Feud"

J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, "The Bloodfeud of the Franks"

Guy Halsall, "Reflections on Early Medieval Violence: the Example of the 'Bloodfeud'"

2/14: Violence in the "Barbarian" Law Codes

Brown, *Violence*, pp. 47-67

The Laws of the Salian Franks (excerpts)

Week 5

2/19, 2/21: Carolingian Law and Order

Brown, *Violence*, pp. 69-96

Carolingian Capitularies (I)

Carolingian Court Cases

Theodulf of Orleans, "Verses against Judges"

Letters and other sources on Carolingian Dispute Settlement

Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome* (excerpt)

Suggested background reading: Bennett, *Medieval Europe* (excerpt)

Week 6

2/26: NO CLASS

DUE 2/26: Source Analysis Paper

2/28: Carolingian Warfare

Carolingian Capitularies (II)

Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, book II

Timothy Reuter, "Plunder and Tribute in the Carolingian Empire"

Timothy Reuter, "Carolingian and Ottonian Warfare"

Week 7

3/5: Carolingian Civil War and Viking Incursions

Source on Carolingian Civil War: Nithard, *Histories* and Engelbert's "Lament"

Sources on the Vikings: *Annals of Xanten*, *Annals of Saint-Vaast*, the “Song of Louis”, and Abbo’s poem
Janet Nelson, “Violence in the Carolingian world and the ritualization of ninth-century warfare”
Simon Coupland, “The Vikings on the Continent in Myth and History”
Anders Winroth, *The Age of the Vikings* (excerpt)

Unit Two: Feuding and Peacemaking in “Stateless” France

3/7: A “Feudal Revolution” around the year 1000?

Brown, *Violence*, pp. 99-110
Fulbert of Chartres, Letter to William of Aquitaine
Agreements between Count William of Aquitaine and Hugh of Lusignan
Thomas Bisson et al., “Debate: The ‘Feudal Revolution’”
M. W. McHaffie, “Law and Violence in Eleventh-Century France”

Week 8

3/12: Violent Saints?

Brown, *Violence*, pp. 111-116
The Book of Sainte Foy (excerpts)
Stephen D. White, “Garsinde v. Sainte Foy: Argument, Threat and Vengeance in Eleventh-Century Monastic Litigation”

3/14: The Peace of God

Brown, pp. *Violence*, 116-128
Thomas Head, “Peace and Power in France around the Year 1000”
Documents related to the Peace of God and the Truce of God

Week 9

SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

Week 10

3/26, 3/28: Saints, Feuds, and Peace

Patrick Geary, “Living with Conflicts in Stateless France”
Stephen D. White, “Feuding and Peace-Making in the Touraine around the Year 1100”
Vassalic Conflicts at St. Victor
The Miracles of St. Ursmer

Geoffrey Koziol, "Monks, Feuds, and the Making of Peace in Eleventh-Century Flanders"

DUE 3/28: Article Review

Unit Three: Saga Iceland

Week 11

4/2: The World of the Sagas

Njal's Saga, chapters 1-45 (pp. 3-78 in the Cook translation)

William Ian Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking* (excerpt)

4/4: Njal's Saga

Njal's Saga (continue)

DUE 4/4: Paper Proposal

Week 12

4/9, 4/11: Njal's Saga and Modern Interpretation

Njal's Saga (finish)

William Ian Miller, "Gift, Sale, Payment, Raid"

William Ian Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking* (excerpt)

Unit Four: Law, War, and the State in the High Middle Ages

Week 13

4/16: Violence and the Growth of the State in the Twelfth Century

Brown, *Violence*, pp. 167-192

The Murder of Charles the Good (excerpts)

4/18: Violence and the Law in England

Brown, *Violence*, pp. 195-216

Laws of Henry II

The Case of Thomas of Elderfield (sources)

Paul Hyams, "The Strange Case of Thomas of Elderfield"

Ailward's Case

Paul Hyams, "Case narratives"

Week 14

4/23: "Judicial" Violence: the Ordeal

Robert Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water* (excerpt)

Ordeal Formulae

Canon of Lateran IV, 1215

Stephen D. White, "Proposing the Ordeal and Avoiding it"

Peter Leeson, "Justice, Medieval Style"

4/25: "Judicial" Violence: Trial by Battle

Charters related to Judicial Duels

Glanvill, *Treatise on the Laws and Customs of England* (excerpt)

Paul Hyams, "Trial by Ordeal: the Key to Proof in the Early Common Law"

Robert Bartlett, "Trial by Battle" (Excerpt from *Trial by Fire and Water*)

Week 15

4/30: Warfare and knighthood

Brown, *Violence*, pp. 255-297

Froissart, *Chronicles* (excerpts)

Raoul de Cambrai (excerpts)

DUE 4/30: Paper Draft

5/2: Peer editing and conclusions

DUE Friday, 5/10: Final Paper