Course Number: HI3xx  
Credits: 4

Title: Violence in the Middle Ages

Catalog Description Including Prerequisites:

We often imagine medieval Europe as a violent era. This course explores the forms of violence in medieval culture, and the role violence played in the construction of European society between 500 and 1500 AD. Topics include warfare and feuding, violence in law and in religion, and its uses by, and impact on, groups such as outsiders, women, and peasants.

General Education Status:

☐ Initial Approval  
☐ Sunset Renewal

General Education Component:

Directions                                                                 Connections
☐ Self & Society (SSDI)                                                     ☐ Diversity (DICO)
☐ Past & Present (PPDI)                                                   ☐ Global Awareness (GACO)
☐ Scientific Inquiry (SIDI)                                                ☐ Wellness (WECO)
☐ Creative Thought (CTDI)                                                  ☐ Integration (INCO)

Review Guidelines:


For Initial Approval Proposals:

Please attach the course syllabus that must include the following:

• The written description of the Gen Ed component (from the Gen Ed Handbook or Academic Catalog) including a list of skills to be developed;

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GENERAL EDUCATION
PROPOSAL FORM

- Statements of course objectives and skills to be developed in Directions courses or to be addressed at a more advanced level in Connections courses; and

- Enough information about assignments to make clear how these goals will be assessed.

For Sunset Renewal Proposals:

1. Please examine a course syllabus for each instructor who has taught the course since its last approval and attach the syllabus that seems most typical. The typical syllabus must include the required items listed above for initial approval proposals.

2. Please also attach summary statistics of the results from the Gen Ed Program Student Evaluations for the most recent academic year during which the course was offered. Are the numbers consistent with your goals?

3. Please reflect upon your experience with the course and discuss how you’ve succeeded with, maintained, or improved the course in order to meet or exceed Gen Ed Program objectives. In addition, please offer any suggestions for changing the Gen Ed Program, within any specific aspect or as a whole. Although feedback from Gen Ed instructors remains critical for Program assessment, your response is not required for sunset approval.

______________________________

General Education Committee

Vote:

- In favor
- Opposed
- Abstained
- Absent

Action:

- Approved
- Not approved
- Other

The approval period is through ___________

Gen Ed designation will be effective as of the next offering of the course.

/s/
 Dean / Chair

______________________________

General Education Chair

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Violence in the Middle Ages
HI 3xxx
Plymouth State University, 4.0 credits

Twice weekly for 100 minutes per session. Room TBA
Prof. Jonathan Couser  jbcouser@plymouth.edu

Office hours: Wednesdays and Fridays, 10:00-11:00 am, Memorial Hall 104, or by appointment.

Description: We often imagine medieval Europe as a violent era. This course explores the forms of violence in medieval culture, and the role violence played in the construction of European society between 500 and 1500 AD. Topics include warfare and feuding, violence in law and in religion, and its uses by, and impact on, groups such as outsiders, women, and peasants.

General Education (Global Awareness Connection): Educated people are aware that human beings are interdependent members of a world community, that there are both similarities and differences in the societies and cultures of the world, and that the manners in which people live their lives need not be exactly alike.

Students take a three or four-credit Global Awareness (GACO) course (either within the major or not) designed to expose them to the important societal issues facing the world and to encourage them to develop the ability to appreciate and think about issues from different points of view. Global Awareness courses focus on the forces that have shaped peoples, cultures, nations, and regions of the world. They increase students’ understanding of each person’s position, participation, obligations, and responsibilities within the world community.

This course promotes Global Awareness by exploring violence and its relationship to building-and-challenging the cultural norms extant during the medieval period of European history and which continue to be important in shaping cultures and nations today. It also considers the era from multiple perspectives which can be organized in ways that inform us today, such as social class, gender, region, and religion, among other lines of inquiry. It explores and challenges the (supposed) roots of our current world’s understanding of chivalry, vengeance, martyrdom, and peace; and how these played-out (and continue to play-out) in cultural notions of just violence and crusading. The course accomplish this while cultivating skills, including: Critical Thinking, Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, Conducting Research (including work with information technology), and Collaborating with Others.
**Course Objectives:**
1) Gain background knowledge about European history between 500-1500 AD and detailed knowledge about the role that violence played in its culture over that period:

2) To discern how, like today, Europeans were interdependent members of a world community that shared both similarities and differences in their societies and cultures:

3) To explore the manners in which medieval European lives were not exactly alike – then, and compared to the present.

4) Develop analytical and synthetic critical thinking skills in the examination of historical evidence and scholarship:

5) Hone critical writing skills in the presentation of arguments interpreting this evidence:

6) Learn to work both independently and in consultation with the instructor in the pursuit of an individual research project:

7) Collaboratively discuss and critique their own and each other’s interpretations of this evidence through class discussion and response to each other’s presentation of research findings

**COURSE EVALUATION CRITERIA:**

**Discussion Participation:** 20%

*Includes attendance, completion of reading assignments with notes, demonstrated ability to answer professor’s questions, to ask own questions and offer insights in class. Come to class with copies of all readings assigned for that day, your notes on them, and comments and questions.*

Source study (4-6 pages): 10%

Analytical essay, interpreting one primary source. Students may choose which sources they wish to write on.

Research Proposal/Bibliography (2-3 pages): 5%

*Students must propose a research question within the parameters of the course and compile a bibliography of primary and secondary sources that could be used to pursue it.*

Research Paper (10-15 pages): 25%

*Students will submit a work of historical research involving the use of multiple primary and secondary sources, based on their proposal, and give a final presentation on their research.*

**Response Essays** (3-4 pages each): 20% each/40% total.

**Grading:** All assignments must be handed in at the beginning of class on the due date. All must be in Times New Roman 12-point font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and stapled together (there should be about 250 words per page). Minimum page lengths are **minimums:** any

Commented [JC3]: In lieu of content testing, the response essays invite students to work synthetically with class material to answer questions that link varied kinds of experiences studied in the course.
paper which does not reach minimum length will automatically fail. Any papers that do not follow these guidelines will not be accepted and will lose a third of a letter grade per day until submitted in the correct format. Electronic submissions (such as by email) will not be accepted without prior permission or a written medical excuse. Written assignments will be scored on a four-point scale, as A, B, C, or F.

Attendance: The PSU attendance policy may be found at https://coursecatalog.plymouth.edu/university-policies-procedures/. Note that, in practice, it will be your course participation, and not mere presence, that positively or negatively impacts your grade and learning. If you are not present and on time, you will not get credit for participation and will miss essential announcements or course content that you need to succeed. In consideration of that, I waive the policy that you must notify me of reasons for any absence whatsoever, unless this absence will prevent you from submitting written work.

Statement on Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is the foundation of the pursuit of knowledge. All members of the academic community are expected to be dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge in an honest, responsible, respectful, and ethical manner. Every violation of academic integrity is an affront to the academic community. Violations of academic integrity make fair valuation impossible and cast doubt upon the seriousness with which students accept the responsibility of acquiring an education. Members of the academic community are expected to report all instances of those violations that come to their attention. Both faculty and administration consider it their duty, as guardians of academic standards and intellectual honesty, to enforce the following policy by prosecuting all cases of violation of academic integrity to the fullest extent. Students are urged to consider that it is the toleration of violations of academic integrity, and not the reporting of it, that is dishonorable. You may read more on PSU’s statement on Academic Integrity here: https://coursecatalog.plymouth.edu/university-policies-procedures/.

ADA Statement: Plymouth State University is committed to providing students with documented disabilities equal access to all university programs and facilities. If you think you have a disability requiring accommodations, you should contact Campus Accessibility Services (CAS), located in Speare 210 (535-3300) to determine whether you are eligible for such accommodations. Academic accommodations will only be considered for students who have registered with CAS. If you have a Letter of Accommodation for this course from CAS, please provide the instructor with that information privately so that you and the instructor can review those accommodations.

Books to purchase

Warren Brown, *Violence in Medieval Europe*
Galbert of Bruges, *The Murder of Charles the Good*
J.R.R. Tolkien (trans), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*
Some additional readings will be offered in digital form on the course Moodle page.
Semester Schedule:

WEEK I: Foundations

1.1 Introduction. Fundamentals of premodern societies

1.2 Approaches to the study of violence.

Readings: Brown, ch. 1.

WEEK II: Early Medieval Violence

2.1 Lecture: becoming “medieval”: the breakup of the Roman Empire and the making of the “barbarian” world.

Reading: Brown, ch. 2. Gregory of Tours excerpts. (MOODLE)

2.2 Blood Revenge in the Merovingian World


WEEK III: Early Medieval Violence (continued)

3.1 How to Write a Source Study

3.2 Carolingian Warfare


WEEK IV: Religion and Violence

4.1 Vengeance in the Carolingian World

4.2 Introduction: early Christianity. Christians under Persecution

Readings: Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas: Stark, “Martyrdom as a Rational Choice.” (MOODLE)

WEEK V: Religion and Violence (continued)

5.1 Christians persecuting, and fantasies of Martyrdom

Readings: Life of St. Porphyry of Gaza: Jerome, excerpt from Life of Hilarion. (MOODLE)

SOURCE STUDY DUE

5.2 Christianity Starts Thinking about Violence.


FIRST REACTION PROMPT RELEASED

WEEK VI: Causes and Constraints of Violence in the High Middle Ages (1000-1300)

6.1 The Peace of God


6.2 Reading: Murder of Charles the Good, first part (pp. 77-186). Brown ch. 5.

FIRST REACTION PAPER DUE

WEEK VII

7.1 Read: Charles the Good, second part (pp. 186-312). Brown ch. 6

7.2 How to Write a Research Proposal

WEEK VIII: Religion and Violence, reprise
8.1 Crusading
Reading: Crusading Documents (MOODLE)

8.2 Nirenberg, pp. 18-92.

WEEK IX

9.1 Nirenberg, pp. 93-165
9.2 Nirenberg, pp. 166-250

Research Proposal Due

WEEK X: Knighthood

10.1 Chivalry

10.2 Read: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

WEEK XI: A Monopoly on the Legitimate Exercise of Violence?

11.1 High Medieval Law
Read: Brown ch. 8, Assizes of Clarendon (MOODLE)

11.2 Read: Brown, ch. 9: Froissart: on Bastot de Mauleon (MOODLE).

WEEK XII: Violence against Self

12.1 High and Late Medieval Spirituality
Read: Henry Suso, pp. 61-129 (MOODLE)

12.2 Flagellantism

Commented [JC7]: The paradigmatic violent confrontation between members of different cultures.

Commented [JC8]: This part of the course looks at how violence served to negotiate the boundaries between varied communities in medieval Spain.

Commented [JC9]: "Chivalry" has a long legacy for modern society, but Kaeuper here reminds us of its basis in the values of a warrior class.

**Outline of Research Paper Due**

**WEEK XIII: Domestic Violence**

13.1 Gender in the Middle Ages


**Second Reaction Prompt Released**

**WEEK XIV: Class Violence**

14.1 The Medieval Peasantry

Read: Paul Freedman, “Peasant Rebellions of the Late Middle Ages,” *Images of the Medieval Peasant* pp. 257-288

14.2 Read: Brown, chapter 10. Froissart on the Peasant revolt. “Robin Hood and the Monk” (MOODLE)

**Second Reaction Paper Due. Finals Week: Final research papers and presentations due.**