

HISTORY 221: THE MEDIEVAL LEGACY

Course Information:

History 221-01 (CRN 82759), Fall 2001
Time: MWF 9:00-9:50
Room: McIver 225

Instructor Information:

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Office hours: MWF 10:00-10:50 and by appointment

Course Description:

This course explores the rich legacy of Medieval Europe. The Middle Ages are generally thought to have covered the period from the collapse of the Roman Empire in the west (which occurred around 500 AD) to the Renaissance (14th to 16th centuries AD). This is an enormous time span, and I have no intention of trying to cover every event and every aspect of the Middle Ages. Rather, I intend to offer a broad variety of enticing slices of medieval culture. We will briefly examine several of the cultures that contributed to the creation of the Middle Ages and will then equally briefly examine the Early Middle Ages (circa 500-850). The bulk of the course will focus on the period from 900-1300, which is, not surprisingly, both the period of greatest medieval creativity and vigor and the period most stereotypically familiar to modern students who think about 'the Middle Ages.' Within this period (known as the "High Middle Ages") we will examine numerous topics, events and individuals. These topics, events and individuals are grouped so as to provide underlying which lend an analytical focus to the course. Some of these themes include: 1) the changing ways in which kings and other governmental authorities attempted to provide law and order to the regions under their control; 2) the changing ways in which Medieval Christianity influenced politics, society, and personal belief; 3) the ways in which the organization of society changed over a thousand-year span (here we will look at definitions of family and gender roles); and 4) the ways in which literature reflects the changing values and ideals of medieval society.

The process of our trip through the Middle Ages, however, will not merely be one of mastering names and dates (although you certainly must do a fair amount of memorization). Indeed, a major purpose of the class is to demonstrate to you the methods by which historians approach the past. Thus we will be interested in learning about the nature of the sources available to us, and, above all, in learning how to interpret them. Interpretation, after all, is the keystone of the historian's craft, and it will be one of our purposes in this course to subject all of the material at our disposal to careful prodding, questioning, and criticism. By doing this, we will be learning to master the Historical Method, a powerful analytical tool which you will be able to apply in many other classes and life-situations.

Our approach in this task will be to learn two primary techniques: 1) the criticism of primary sources, and 2) the evaluation of modern scholarly argumentation. When you look at the readings assigned for the course (see below), you will notice that they are divided into three categories: Textbook Reading, Primary Source Reading, and Secondary Source Reading. The Textbook (Hollister) is a very basic, very superficial overview of the period under discussion. It is designed to familiarize you with people, events and trends. The Primary Source Readings are the meat of the course: they are the texts produced by medieval people. It is our task to learn how to read those texts critically, so that they reveal qualitative information to us about medieval society and culture. The Secondary Source Readings that I have assigned are all articles written by professional historians who study the Middle Ages. They should all have an argument, which you should try to discern and evaluate. These articles are all interpretive: that is, they take the primary sources, chew them over, digest them, and produce an interpretation.

REQUIRED BOOKS (available for sale in the UNCG bookstore):

1. C. Warren Hollister, *Medieval Europe: A Short History*, 8th edition (McGraw-Hill, 1997)
2. Patrick J. Geary, ed., *Readings in Medieval History*, 2nd edition (Broadview Press, 1997)
3. *Beowulf and Other Old English Poems*, trans. C.B. Heatt, 2nd edition (Bantam Classics, 1983)]
4. Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain: the Knight of the Lion*, trans. Burton Raffel (Yale University Press, 1987)
5. *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, ed. Betty Radice (Penguin, 1974)
6. *The Song of Roland*, trans. Glyn Burgess (Penguin, 1990)
6. Scholarly Articles placed on reserve in Jackson Library (the reserve room is to the right as you enter the front door). It is up to you to procure these articles from the Reserve Room.
7. On-Line texts. Occasionally your primary source reading for a week will be located on-line. I have indicated the URL where such texts may be found. If you have trouble using the internet, please see me for assistance.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Attendance, Discussion, and Homework (10% of your grade)

I care about attendance and will reduce the grade of those who frequently miss class without first obtaining permission. Discussion and participation in class can only help your grade. If you have perfect attendance but never open your mouth in class, you will likely receive a C for this part of the overall grade. At the moment I do not plan to require formal homework assignments, although I reserve the right to institute such a policy if I deem it necessary.

2. Quizzes (10%)

Approximately every other week (or at times I deem necessary) I will administer a short, in-class quiz based on the assigned readings. These quizzes are designed to ensure that you keep up with the reading. Your overall quiz grade for the course will be an average of the individual quiz grades.

3. First Paper: due Monday September 24 (10% of your grade)

You will write a short (3 page) interpretive essay on either Charlemagne or Alfred the Great. I will distribute a paper assignment during the first week of class. Papers must be typed, double-spaced, with standard one-inch margins, and should be written in good, formal English. Citations to the text are necessary. Be sure to proofread!

4. Take-Home Mid-Term Examination: Friday October 26 (20% of your grade)

This exam will include one or two short essays interpreting primary sources, a short analysis of one of the scholarly articles, and a longer essay. The goal of the longer essay will be to have you evaluate and synthesize (that is, pull together) material from the readings and discussions.

5. Second Paper: due Monday November 19 (20% of your grade)

You will write a slightly longer paper (4-5 pages) on Chretien de Troyes' classic work of chivalric literature, *Yvain*. Specific questions and further information will be distributed in class.

6. **Final Exam: date to be announced (check Schedule of classes for final exam times)** (30% of your grade) The format of this exam will be similar to that of the midterm. I will ask you several short identifications and then ask you to write two longer essays.

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Attendance, Discussion, Homework:	10%
Quizzes	10%
First Paper (on an early medieval king):	10%
Midterm Examination:	20%
Second Paper (on <i>Yvain</i>):	20%
Final Exam:	30%

You cannot pass the class if you do not fulfill all of the requirements listed above. This means that you will fail the course if, for instance, you don't write the first paper. Assignments are due on the date and at the time listed on the syllabus; if a crisis (such as illness) arises, it is your responsibility to contact me. If you do not contact me, I will be unable to accept late work. Contact may be made by phone, email, or a

note left in my mailbox in the History Department (219 McIver). Note that while I provide my home phone number above, I will be annoyed if you call me at home after 9 PM.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is a type of cheating, and occurs when a person passes off (whether intentionally or unintentionally) someone else's words or ideas as their own. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, which, in its most overt forms, can result in formal disciplinary action by the university.

This is a notoriously thorny area for students. Many students unintentionally commit plagiarism by 'borrowing' ideas, interpretations, and/or actual words from other authors. Make sure that your words are your own, and that your interpretations are also your own. If you find yourself using someone else's words or ideas, make sure you have given him/her credit by using a footnote, endnote, or parenthetical citation. When writing exams or papers, keep in mind the following points:

1. DO discuss sources, interpretations, and anything else with your peers and friends.

2. DO feel free to make use of interpretations presented in class.

3. **DO NOT** slavishly copy, quote, or otherwise present the textbook's rather meager interpretation as your own. Hollister presents a rather straightforward narration of facts. In no case will you find that he offers sufficient interpretation to answer an exam question or a paper topic. You should read Hollister for background, and to gain a sense of the chronology of events, but when writing you should present your own interpretations based on your reading of the primary sources and our discussions in class.

4. DO NOT pass off someone else's words or ideas as your own. To do so is to commit the academic crime of plagiarism, a serious offense that can lead to a variety of punishments including failing the course. If you copy the exact words of another author into your paper, they must appear within quotation marks and you must provide a citation to the source from which you took the quotation. Likewise, if you simply rearrange the words but keep the main point and/or interpretation from another text, you also must provide a citation indicating the source of the point/interpretation. **Exception:** my comments in class do not need to be cited.

CITATION OF SOURCES

For any formal written assignment (ie., one prepared and written at home, with access to sources, readings, etc. - but not in-class exams) you must provide specific citations to the texts that you use in support of your paper.

What are citations?

In general: they are bookmarks for the reader, allowing him/her to return to the source you have used to

make your point. They also serve as acknowledgments of the sources you have used (particularly so that your reader does not think you are passing off someone else's ideas as your own)

In practice: citations are brief statements of the author and/or title of the work you are referring to, along

with a reference point (usually a page number) within that work. For example, if you wanted to use Hollister's opinions of King John in a paper, you would include a citation such as this (Hollister, p. 256). Or, if you are discussing a particular episode from *Yvain* in a paper, you might offer (*Yvain*, lines 170-195).

Types of Citations

1. Parenthetical citations: are necessary whenever you have paraphrased a source (that is, taken the gist of

it and reworked it into your own words) or when you refer to an episode from a source (for example, "In the relief clause of Magna Carta, the barons demanded ..."). Because you are not using the exact words of the original text, you have some leeway about where you place the citation. Place it either at the end of the paragraph or immediately after the relevant portion of your paper.

2. Direct citations: are necessary whenever you use an author's words directly. In this case, the author's

words must appear in quotation marks and the citation should appear immediately after the closed quotation mark. For instance, in the following made-up sentence I quote myself. "As the noted medieval historian, Richard Barton, once said, 'Medieval History is cool' (Barton, p. 297)."

The Nitty-Gritty: How to cite

1. Formally ... by using endnotes or footnotes
2. Informally, by providing the author's last name and the relevant page number in parentheses in

the

relevant spot within your paper.

In History 221 you are welcome to cite sources informally. Be forewarned that other professors may

require endnotes or footnotes, so it's worth learning how to use them.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS

The readings are grouped by the week, such that by August 24 (the end of week 1) I will expect you to have read all of the material assigned for the week August 20-August 24. Sometimes I note which readings pertain to a specific date; in these cases I expect you to have read that text before coming to the appropriate class meeting.

August 20: Course Introduction: Historians and Their Method

August 22: How to Read a Primary Source

August 24: the Roman Heritage

Textbook Readings:

Hollister 1-5, 9-15

Primary Source Readings:

Handout: "A Medieval Document" (for August 22)

Handout: Some Texts on Roman Law and Government (for August 24)

August 27: The Christian Heritage: Ideas and Beliefs

August 29: the Christian Heritage: Institutions (Bishops, Priests and Saints)

August 31: the Germanic Migrations and the Successor States

Textbook Reading:

Hollister, 15-27

Primary Source Readings:

For August 27: Nicene Creed, St Vincent of Lerins' Definition of Orthodoxy

Both available as On-line texts: the World of the Church Fathers

Access them at my web-site:

<http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton/texts-list.htm>

For August 29: Ambrose of Milan (also on-line at the same site)

Geary: the Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity (Geary, 58-64)

For August 31: *Beowulf*, pp. 3-25

September 3: LABOR DAY HOLIDAY

September 5: the World of the Early Middle Ages

September 7: Discussion: *Beowulf*

Textbook Reading:

Hollister, 28-41, 56-64

Primary Source Readings:

Beowulf, entire (pp. 25-81)

Secondary Source Reading:

Reserve Room: J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, "The Bloodfeud of the Franks," in *The Long-*

Haired Kings

(London, 1962; reprinted U. Toronto Press, 1982), 121-147.

PART II: THE CENTRAL MIDDLE AGES

September 10: Charlemagne and the Great Man Theory

September 12: Scholars and Historical Interpretation

September 14: DISCUSSION

Textbook Reading:

Required: 87-108

Primary Source Readings:

Geary: Einhard, *Life of Charles the Great* (ie., Charlemagne), 267-280

Secondary Source Readings:

Reserve Room: Timothy Reuter, "Plunder and Tribute in the Carolingian Empire,"

Transactions

of the Royal Historical Society, 5th ser. 35 (1985): 75-94.

September 17: the Vikings and the End of Early Medieval Europe

September 19: Recovery in the Tenth Century: England

September 21: Lordship: relations between aristocrats

Textbook Reading:

Required: Hollister, 109-123

Primary Source Readings:

Geary: King Alfred, pp. 223-247

The Song of Roland, first 1/3 (to p. 66)

Secondary Source Reading:

Reserve Room: Elizabeth Brown, "The Tyranny of a Construct: Feudalism and Historians

of

Medieval Europe" in *American Historical Review* 79 (1974): 1063-88.

September 24: Castles: aristocratic life

FIRST PAPER DUE: Monday, September 24, in class

September 26: Medieval Cases of Lordship in Action: Roland, Hugh of Lusignan, and Gervais of Le Mans

September 28: Discussion

Textbook Reading:

Hollister, 123-129, 172-182

Primary Source Readings:

Geary: Fulbert of Chartres, Letter to William of Aquitaine, p. 366

Geary: Hugh of Lusignan, "Agreement Between Lord and Vassal", 367-372

The Song of Roland, last 2/3 (p. 66 to end)

October 1: Lordship: relations between peasants and lords

October 3: Manors and the life of the peasantry

October 5: Lecture: the Organization of the Church in 1100

Textbook Reading:

Hollister, 138-143, 182-188

Primary Source Readings:

On-Line Texts: Peasant Servitude (at my website)

On-Line Texts: Peasant Life (at my website)

October 8: FALL BREAK

TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DUE: February 26

October 10: Monasticism: the Benedictine Ideal

October 12 (LAST DAY TO DROP WITHOUT PENALTY): Benedictine Monasticism at its Peak: Cluny

Textbook Reading:

Hollister, 65-70 (on Benedictine monks), 206-224

Primary Source Readings:

Geary: Rule of St Benedict, 158-187 (focus on the prologue and chapters 1-7, 12-16, 22-

25, 28-

30, 33-34, 36-42, 48, 58-62)

Geary: Miracles of St Foy, 311-318

Secondary Source Reading:

Reserve Room: Barbara Rosenwein, Thomas Head, and Sharon Farmer, "Monks and

their

Enemies: A Comparative Approach," *Speculum* 66 (1991): 764-786

October 15: the Papacy Emerges: the Investiture Controversy
October 17: the Papacy in Action: Law and Doctrine in the 12th Century
October 19: Innocent III

Textbook reading:
Hollister, 225-247
Primary Source Readings:
Geary: Pope Gregory VII and King Henry IV, pp. 580-583 (all but last paragraph on 583),
587-591 (to first sentence on 591), 596-605
Geary: the Fourth Lateran Council, 421-446 [read especially chapters 1, 3, 6, 9, 11, 13, 14-18,
21, 26, 31-32, 47, 50-52, 62, 67-69]

October 22: Discussion: Fourth Lateran Council
October 24: Medieval Education: teachers and methods
October 26: Medieval Philosophy: the Return of Aristotle
TAKE-HOME MIDTERMS DUE: Friday October 26, in class

Textbook Reading:
Hollister, 293-314
Primary Source Readings:
The Letters of Abelard and Heloise, pp. 57-106, 109-118

October 29: Film: Siena
October 31: Discussion of Abelard and Heloise
November 2: the Growth of Towns and Commerce

Textbook Reading:
Hollister, 161-172
Primary Source Readings:
On-Line Documents: both may be accessed here:
<http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton/texts-list.htm>
The Beauvais Dossier, 1182-1233 (only read the Introduction and Document A)
The Chartres Riot, 1210
Secondary Source Reading:
Reserve Room: Lester K. Little, "Pride Comes Before Avarice: Social Change and the Vices in Latin Christendom," *American Historical Review*, v. 76 (1971), 16-49.

November 5: Chivalry and the Courtly Life
November 7: Film
November 9: **No Class: Instructor away**

Textbook Reading:
Review: Hollister, 172-181
Primary Source Readings:
Chretien de Troyes: *Yvain, or The Knight of the Lion*, ix-xiii and lines 1-3898

November 12: A Real Knight and a Real Queen: William Marshal and Eleanor of Aquitaine
November 14: Real Medieval Warfare: A Battle and a Campaign: Hastings and the First Crusade
November 16: Discussion of Yvain

Primary Source Readings:
Chretien de Troyes, *Yvain*, lines 3899-6818 and pp. 205-226

November 19: Monarchy: general principles
SECOND PAPER DUE: Monday November 19, in class
November 21: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

November 23: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Primary Source Reading:

Handout: *Prospice*: a Royal Blessing-Prayer

November 26: Kings vs. Emperors: the problem of the Empire

November 28: Charismatic kings vs. Administrative Monarchs: William the Conqueror and Henry II

November 30: Monarchy and Divine Right (Richard II)

Textbook Reading:

Hollister, 248-255, 261-265

Primary Source Readings:

For Nov. 26: Handout: Some Medieval Notions of Empire

For Nov 28: Handout: Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Assessment of William the Conqueror

For Nov. 30: On-Line Text: the Assize of Clarendon

[<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/aclarendon.html>]

On-Line Text: Peter of Blois, Description of Henry II

[<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1177peterblois-hen2.html>]

Secondary Source Reading:

Reserve Room: C.W. Hollister and John W. Baldwin, "The Rise of Administrative

Kingship:

Henry I and Philip Augustus," *American Historical Review* 83 (1978): 867-905.

December 3: the Ideal King: St Louis (Louis IX) of France

December 5: A Disastrous King: King John of England

December 7: Discussion of Magna Carta and St Louis

Textbook Reading:

Hollister, 255-261, 265-271

Primary Source Reading:

Geary: Magna Carta, 1215, pp. 744-750

Geary: Joinville, *Life of St Louis*, 654-671

Geary: *Enquêts of King Louis*, 672-682

December 10: the 'Middle' Ages

HISTORY 221 - OTHER IMPORTANT COURSE INFORMATION

PRIMARY SOURCES VERSUS SECONDARY SOURCES

Every semester I encounter a few students who remain confused by this distinction, even after 15 exciting weeks of medieval history. Make sure you know the difference:

Primary Sources: things written down during the period under study

-examples: diaries, letters, financial accounts, works of literature, philosophy, etc.

Secondary Sources: sources written by persons living after the period they are studying

-examples: all textbooks, every work of history, biographies, etc.

Grey Areas: what about a biography of the emperor Charlemagne (died 814) written in 950? Is it

a

primary source or secondary source? It's a good question. Technically it would be a secondary source, since the author could have had no direct knowledge of Charles or his time. For the purposes of this course, however, we will consider as primary sources any source composed by a medieval author.

The Straight Dope For History 221:

Primary Sources: all of the texts in Geary; *Beowulf*; *Yvain*; and the material written by Abelard and Heloise

Secondary Sources: Hollister (the textbook); me (the prof); you (the student).

HOW TO READ AND INTERPRET PRIMARY SOURCES

Every history class asks you to do two things when you read something: 1) understand what you've read; and 2) interpret what you've read. Unlike what some high school history classes seem to imply, the real task of a historian is in the interpretation of a piece of reading. Interpretation is difficult, because it requires you to make sense of the facts that you've read and to relate them to other facts or ideas. Here are some suggestions on how to interpret primary sources; they are arranged as an acronym, **AWGGAS**. If you work through each of these steps for each source you read, you will undoubtedly come away with a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the source and the period from which it derives.

AWGGAS:

Author

When and where

Genre

Goal

Argument

Significance

A. Author

1. Who is the author?

2. Try to figure out as much as possible about the author. What was his or her place in society (monk? noble? bishop?) Was he/she rich? Poor? Educated? Male? Female? English? French? Italian? Why might this matter? Often you will have to derive some of this information from the text as you read it (because few authors start out by saying "I'm a tall rich guy from Poland who lives in a 10-room house"). Sometimes the editor will provide some biographical information about the person - you might ask yourselves how the editor learned these facts.

3. If you cannot identify an author, ask yourself why not? Is authorship always important? Do some types (genres) of sources tend to lack known authors? Why? How does this affect our interpretation of them?

4. Fill in these blanks: "The person who wrote this text was _____ and he/she seems to have been _____. These facts are significant because _____."

B. When and Where

1. When was the text written? Often the writer will not tell you, and it will be up to you to determine the date of the text. For most texts, the editor (usually Geary or me) will have provided a date for

you. What is the significance of an undated text? What does it tell us about the author's concern about dates, etc.?

2. What else was going on in Europe at the moment the text was composed? Here you only need to be approximate. It is significant to know that a text written in the 820s or 830s was composed at a time in which the Carolingian rulers of Europe were consciously attempting to revive learning, writing, etc. So it's worth checking a textbook, or class discussion, to place each text you read into a context.

3. Where was the text written? Sometimes this can be very important, as in a text describing the Germanic tribes written by a Roman living in Rome. In other cases, the place where the text was written (or the ethnicity of the writer) will not be very significant - since the medieval church was a pan-European institution, we may not care very much that a religious treatise was written by an Englishman serving in the papal government in Rome. In this case ethnicity is secondary to the culture of medieval Christendom.

4. Answer these questions: "The text was written [date] in [place]. I also know that was happening in Europe at around this time."

C. What Genre does this text fall into?

1. Historians (and other types of scholars) group texts that share similar features into categories, known as genres. For instance, a common modern genre is the novel (note that this genre did not exist in the middle ages). If you describe a given text as a novel, your listener or reader will immediately gain knowledge about the text (chiefly that it is fiction, that it is book-length, and that it is probably plot-driven). What you are reading right now is another sort of modern genre: the course syllabus; when you here that word (syllabus) you make immediately associations both about the content of the text and about the purposes for which it was written.

2. Common medieval genres: letters, saint's lives, biblical exegesis (commentary), sermons, royal accounts, monastic charters, communal charters, chronicles, annals, *gestae* (secular 'biographies'), law codes and compilations, individual 'laws' or assizes, philosophical treatises, etc.

3. What genre defines your text? What conventions of the genre are likely to have shaped how and why the specific author wrote the text? (that is, a writer of a royal *gesta* will not usually provide long lists of accounts or laws, etc.)

4. Answer these questions: "This text is an example of _____ genre. Some of the conventions of this genre are _____ and I can see them at work in this text [example]."

D. Goal of the text

1. Why did the author compose this text? Is there an obvious rhetorical or intellectual purpose? Consider saints' lives (one of the most popular genres of literature written in the Middle Ages). Regardless of the details of a specific saint's life, all saints' lives shared a common purpose: to extol the virtues of the saint and to prove his/her sanctity. Other texts may have less clear purposes - what was the purpose of Domesday Book, for instance? For such texts you will need to do a bit of imagining and thinking - remember that no one writes (at least no medieval writer) simply for the joy of it; there is always at least one purpose or goal in composing a text of a certain type.

2. What is the genre of the text? Is it a saint's life? A law code? A chronicle? An epic romance? Each of these genres of writing has its own conventions, expectations, and purposes. One way of approaching the problem of the author's purpose in writing is to assign the text to one of the major medieval genres, and then consider the conventions and goals of the *genre*.

3. Try to answer this question: "The author wrote this text because _____."

E. Argument of the text [also known as 'content']

1. What is the internal argument of the text? That is, what is it telling us? The "argument" could be as non-argumentative as a recitation of the deeds of a king's life, or it could be as focused as a theological treatise that attempts to prove the existence of God. In other words, some texts may not seem to have a very strong argument; they may be more narrative or descriptive. Others will be sharp and focused on having the reader (i.e., you) understand and agree with a set of points.

2. Again, genre will help make sense of the argument. Make sure you know what kind of text it is before reading it (or as you read it); this will help make sense of the author's agenda.

3. What's the difference between goal and argument? The two concepts are, in fact, closely linked. Take the life of Saint Martin, written by Sulpicius Severus. The purpose of the text is to spread the Christian message by proving the power and validity of God's word as demonstrated by the virtue, piety,

and miracles of Martin. The argument is more narrow: Sulpicius shows how Martin came to be Christian, how he shared his cloak with a beggar, how he combated pagans with miracles, how he founded a monastery, and so forth. In a way, the goal is the unstated general purpose of the author, while the argument is what the text actually says.

4. You may find it most useful to create a short outline of each text; indicate the main scenes/events, or the main points in the argument of the author.

F. Significance of the Text (or meaning)

1. This is the most important part of the historical method. Without interpretation, facts have no meaning. It is up to each historian - and that includes you! - to assign meaning to each text that you read.

2. Ask yourself “Why should I care about this text?” You might feel that the correct answer to this question is “I could not care less”, and that may well be true. However, for my class, you will be forced to care about each text. Each text has multiple layers of meaning - some will be personal (I, for instance, derive a bizarre personal meaning from the *Song of Roland* that may well be unique to me. Or, someone just about to get married might find personal meaning in a medieval treatise on marriage), others will be more cultural (our modern ‘democracy’ cares about the Magna Carta because it sees in MC some of the seeds of limited government). More to the point, there will be meanings that are relevant to History 221. We in History 221, for instance, will certainly acknowledge the role MC played in the construction of democracies, but we will also care about it as an example of changing norms of kingship and lordship in the 12th century; it is, we will see, utterly typical of a broad spectrum of notions about reciprocal rights and obligations. And since we will be focusing on such rights and obligations, we will tend to focus on the meanings of MC that correspond with those interests. All of this is a long way of saying that there will be themes emphasized in this course, and that it is up to you (with my help) to come to understand how each text fits into one of those themes.

3. How does this text relate to other texts? Relational thinking is one of the most powerful analytical tools possessed by sapient beings. We can take a discrete fact (or event, or text), and compare and contrast it to other facts, events, or texts that seem to us worthy of comparison. Here again the concept of themes will be very important. We will keep returning to a handful of important themes throughout the course (see the course intro above); when we encounter a new text, we will first want to consider which theme (or themes) it belongs with before we go on to compare and contrast it with other texts relating to that theme.

4. Look for change and continuity over time. Relational thinking tends to reinforce such trends. We will see that Clovis’ notions about law and government were fairly different than those of the Theodosian Code. We have thus identified a change that occurred over time, and we will want to ask “why” this change occurred.

5. Ask yourself how each text reflects the cultural values and beliefs of the people, region, and time in which it was written. This is one of the most obvious ways of getting at significance.

6. Finally, write down an answer to the following: “This text is important in the context of History 221 because it (for instance) relates to [these themes], shows [these values] about [this group of people], demonstrates [this sort of change] from [that earlier period], etc., etc.”