

HISTORY 221: THE MEDIEVAL LEGACY

Course Information:

History 221-01 (CRN 80852), Fall 2002
Time: MWF 9:00-9:50
Room: McIver 226

Instructor Information:

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Office hours: MWF 1:00-1:50 and by appointment

Course Description:

This course explores the rich legacy of Medieval Europe. The Middle Ages are generally thought to have lasted from the collapse of the Roman Empire in the west (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 focus on the period from 900-1300 (the “High Middle Ages”), 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.’ I have organized the period into seven thematic units, each of which represents an important aspect of the world of the High Middle Ages. The units are Kingship; Religious Belief; Religious Institutions; Towns and Urban Life; Lordship and Social Order; Women; and Chivalry.

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 have taken the primary sources, chewed them over, digested them, and produced 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) [0-07-029729-0]
2. Joinville and Villehardouin, *Chronicles of the Crusades*, trans. Martin Shaw (Penguin, 1963) [0-14-044124-7]
3. Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec and Enide*, trans. Dorothy Gilbert (Univ. of California Press, 1992) [0520073460]
4. *The Song of Roland*, trans. Glyn Burgess (Penguin, 1990) [0-14-044532-3]
5. 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.
6. On-Line texts. The bulk of your primary source reading will be located on-line, either at my web-site or at the superior academic site known as the On-Line Medieval Sourcebook. For each text I have indicated the URL where that text may be found. If you have trouble using the internet, please see me for assistance. Please note that the on-line version of this syllabus will have direct hyper-links to these texts.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS :

1. Attendance and Discussion (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. Try to make at least one comment per week: if you get in the habit of offering your ideas and opinions on the readings, you will find that your appreciation and understanding of the material will grow.

2. Quizzes (10%)

At the end of every unit there will be a brief, mostly objective in-class quiz on the readings for that unit.

3. Two Essays, worth 50% of your total grade (10% for the first, 20% for the second and third)

These essays will be generally of 3-5 pages, although individual assignments with separate guidelines will be distributed in class. **You are required to revise one of these two essays.** Revisions must take into account my comments on structure and method and must be accompanied by a one page explanation of how you have revised the paper and the ways in which you have improved it (ie., tell me what you did and how this has made the essay better). You are responsible for choosing which of the three essays you will revise. Note: revisions are due 10 days after you have received my comments on the first draft.

a. First Essay: due Monday September 23 (10% of your grade)

A short (3-4 page) essay in which you demonstrate your skills at constructing an argument. I will ask you to argue both sides of a proposition based on the primary source reading for Saint Louis.

b. Second Essay: due Monday November 25 (20% of your grade)

This essay asks you to reflect upon the ways in which genre shapes our understanding of the past. You will write a 4-5 page paper treating the concept of lordship from the perspective of the relative values of different genres of sources.

4. Take-Home Midterm Exam: Due Monday October 7 (20%)

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. Take-Home Final Exam: due-date TBA (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. I will require 6-8 pages in response.

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Attendance and Discussion:	10%	
Quizzes		10%
First Essay:	10%	
Second Essay:	20%	
Midterm Exam:		20%
Final Exam:	30%	

THE 'LEGAL' STUFF

1. In case later consultation should prove necessary, students are asked to keep copies of all graded assignments until at least the end of the semester.
2. All course requirements must be completed to receive a grade for the class. This means that you will fail the course if you don't, for instance, write the first paper.
3. Regarding late work 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, the work (when eventually received) will be substantially penalized. Contact may be made by phone, email, or a note left in my mailbox in the History Department (219 McIver). And while I provide my home phone number at the top of the syllabus, I will be annoyed if you call me at home after 9 PM.
3. **PLAGIARISM:** Plagiarism is a type of cheating, and occurs when a person passes off (whether intentionally or un-intentionally) 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. Note: my comments in class do not need to be cited.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS

Introduction

August 19: Course Introduction: Historians and Their Method

August 21: How to Read a Primary Source/the Middle Ages - a Quick Chronological Sketch/ Periodization

Primary Source Readings:

A Medieval Document (Handout)

Other Readings: Paul Halsall's "What Happened in the Middle Ages?"

(<http://www.arts.cornell.edu/prh3/medshist.html>)

Unit 1: Kingship and Politics

August 23: Kings and Kingdoms in 1050

August 26: William of Normandy and the Conquest of England

August 28: The Sons of the Conqueror

August 30: King Henry II and the Angevin Empire

Textbook Reading:

Hollister, 156-160, 248-257

Primary Source Reading

William of Malmesbury on the Battle of Hastings

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1066malmesbury.html>)

Domesday Book (Instructions and Sample Entry)

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/domesday1.html>)

Orderic Vitalis on Henry I

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/orderic.html>)

Peter of Blois, Description of Henry II

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

September 2: No Class: Labor Day

September 4: King John

September 6: Discussion: Magna Carta

Primary Source Reading:

Magna Carta

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/magnacarta.html>)

Secondary Source Reading:

C.W. Hollister and John W. Baldwin, "The Rise of Administrative Kingship: Henry I and Philip Augustus," *American Historical Review* 83 (1978): first part (on Henry I)

September 9: King Philip II Augustus of France

September 11: Philip Augustus, part II

September 13: German Emperors: Frederick Barbarossa and Frederick II Stupor Mundi

Textbook Reading:

Hollister, 235-238, 242-243, 261-265

Primary Source Reading:

Joinville, *Life of Saint Louis*, first third, in *Chronicles of the Crusades*, 163-240

Secondary Source Reading:

C.W. Hollister and John W. Baldwin, "The Rise of Administrative Kingship: Henry I and Philip Augustus," *American Historical Review* 83 (1978): second part (on Philip Augustus)

September 16: Saint Louis (King Louis IX of France)

Textbook Readings:

Hollister, 265-269

Primary Source Readings:

Joinville, *Life of Saint Louis*, 3rd part, in *Chronicles of the Crusades*, 240-353

September 18: Saint Louis

September 20: Discussion of the *Life of Saint Louis*

Unit 2: Religious Beliefs

September 23: The Terminology of the Church: Bishops, Priests, Canons, Monks, and Saints

FIRST ESSAY DUE IN CLASS SEPT 23

September 25: Creeds, Dogmas, Sacraments and the Penitential System

September 27: Saints and Miracles

Textbook Reading:

Hollister, 206-210

Primary Source Reading:

The Nicene Creed (<http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton/church-fathers.htm>)
St Vincent of Lerins Defines Orthodoxy
(<http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton/church-fathers.htm>)

Doctrinal Definitions of the Sacraments

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1438sacraments.html>)

Tales of Confession

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/tales-confession.html>)

Miracles of St. Foi (handout)

Guibert of Nogent: on Relics

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/nogent-relics.html>)
Tales of Relics
(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/tales-relics.html>)

September 30: the Regular Life: Benedictine Monks and Franciscan Friars

October 2: Benedictine Monks, pt. II

October 4: Rise of the New Religious Orders: the Friars

Textbook Reading:

Hollister, 65-69, 210-214, 216-224

Secondary Source Reading:

Reserve Room: Barbara H. Rosenwein and Lester K. Little, "Social
Meaning in the Monastic and

Mendicant Spiritualities," *Past and Present*, 63 (1974): 4-32.

Primary Source Readings:

On-Line: Rule of St Benedict (Selections)

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/rul-benedict.html>)

Thomas of Celano's Lives of St Francis

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/stfran-lives.html>)

4. Unit 3: Religious Institutions

October 7: Origins of the Papacy to 1000

MIDTERM EXAM DUE IN CLASS

October 9: the Gregorian Reform, I

October 11: The Gregorian Reform, II [LAST DAY TO DROP WITHOUT PENALTY]

Textbook Reading:

Hollister, 225-234

Primary Source Reading:

Gelasian Doctrine

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/gelasius1.html>)

Dictatus Papae

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/g7-dictpap.html>)

Letters of Gregory VII and Henry IV

Ban on Lay Investitures

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/g7-invest1.html>)

Henry IV to Gregory VII

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/henry4-to-g7a.html>)

Gregory Deposes Henry IV

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/g7-ban1.html>)

October 14: No Class: Fall Break

October 16: the Growth of Canon Law and Papal Government

October 18: the Church and Marriage

Primary Source Readings:

The Papacy Judges Matters of Marriage and Sexuality

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/innIII-marriagewomen.html>)

Gratian on Marriage

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/gratian1.html>)

October 21: Innocent III and Universal Christendom

October 23: the Failure of the Papal Model

October 25: Discussion

Textbook Readings:

Hollister, 235-247

Primary Source Readings:

Innocent III: Policies and Relations with Kings

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/innIII-policies.html>)

Selections from the Fourth Lateran Council

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/lat4-select.html>)

Boniface VIII: the bull *Unam Sanctam*

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/b8-unam.html>)

Boniface VIII: Outrage at Anagni

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1303anagni.html>)

Unit 5: Lordship and Social Order

October 28: the Origins of Lordship

October 30: Lords and Vassals: Hugh of Lusignan, King John, Roland and Ganelon

November 1: Lords and Vassals

Textbook Reading:

Hollister, 119-143, 172-188

Primary Source Readings:

Primary Source Reading

Fulbert of Chartres: Letter concerning obligations of lord and vassal

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/fulbert1.html>)

Agreement Between Hugh of Lusignan and William of Aquitaine

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/agreement.html>)

Song of Roland, 1st half

November 4: Peasants, II

November 6: Peasants' Revolts

November 8: the Trial of Ganelon

Primary Source Readings:

Song of Roland, 2nd half

Texts on Peasant Life (<http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton/peasant-life.htm>)

Texts on Peasant Servitude (<http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton/peasant-servitude.html>)

Unit 7: Chivalry and Romance

November 11: the World of the Epics and Romances

November 13: Chivalry: Models and Realities

November 15: The World of Arthur

Primary Source Reading:

Erec and Enide, to page 171
Handout: Excerpt from *The History of William Marshal* (in Amt, *Medieval England*, pp. 190-198)

November 18: No Class: Instructor away at Conference
November 20: Gender and Women's Roles in Medieval Europe
November 22: Discussion of Erec and Enide

Secondary Source Reading:
Constance B. Bouchard, "Nobility and Chivalry" in her *Strong of Body, Brave and Noble: Chivalry and Society in Medieval France* (Cornell U.P., 1998), pp. 103-144.

Primary Source Reading:
Erec and Enide, 171 to end

Unit 6: Women in the Middle Ages

November 25: Noblewomen in the 11th and 12th Centuries

SECOND ESSAY DUE IN CLASS, NOV 25

November 27: Thanksgiving Vacation
November 29: Thanksgiving Vacation

Textbook Reading:
Hollister, 177-181 (review)
Primary Source Readings:
Women of Norman Aristocracy
(<http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton/normanwomen.htm>)

December 2: Eleanor of Aquitaine
December 4: Female Mystics: St Catherine of Siena
December 6: Joan of Arc

Textbook Reading
Hollister, 336-342
Primary Source Readings:
A Letter to Eleanor of Aquitaine
(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/eleanor.html>)
A Letter from St Catherine
(<http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton/cathsienaletter.htm>)
The Life and Trial of Joan of Arc
(<http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton/joanofarc.htm>)

Secondary Source Reading:
Caroline Walker Bynum, "Fast, Feast and Flesh: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women," in *Representations* 11 (1985), 1-25.

December 9: Conclusion and Summary

CITATION OF SOURCES

For any assignment defined as a formal writing assignment (ie., all the essays required in this course), you are expected to provide specific citation 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).

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.

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

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-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 on-line texts; *The Song of Roland*; *Erec and Enide*; the *Life of Saint*

Louis.

Secondary Sources: Hollister (the textbook); scholarly articles; 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 (ie., 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. For instance, in week one we will examine the Roman concept of law and government as expressed in the Theodosian Code; this will be our first representative of the theme of “Law and Government”, to which we will constantly return over the semester. When we find another text (say, the section of Gregory of Tours relating to Clovis) that seems to pertain to this theme, we will immediately want to compare Clovis with the Theodosian Code.

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.”