

HISTORY 221: THE MEDIEVAL LEGACY

Course Information:

History 221-01 (CRN 11077), Spring 2003
Time: MWF 9:00-9:50
Room: McIver 226

Instructor Information:

Dr. Richard Barton
Office: 212 McIver Bldg.
Office phone: 334-5203
Home phone: 274-8318, no calls after 9 PM
Mailbox: McIver 219
Email: rebarton@uncg.edu
website: <http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton> (with syllabus, documents and other course materials)

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

Course Description:

This course explores the rich legacy of Medieval Europe. Scholars generally agree that the Middle Ages lasted from the collapse of the Roman Empire in the west (around 500 AD) until the so-called 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, we will focus on several themes examined over three sub-periods of the Middle Ages. We begin with the ancestors of the Middle Ages: the civilization of Rome, its Christian overlay, and the arrival of the Germanic tribes. From there we will look in turn at the Early (c.500-950), High (c.950-1250) and Late Middle Ages (c.1250-1500). Within each of these mini-periods we will examine the following themes: the nature and effectiveness of government (primarily kingship), the role of Christian belief and Christian institutions in shaping medieval life, the shape of everyday life, and the capacity of women to exercise power.

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.

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.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

A student who successfully completes this class should expect to:

- acquire broad knowledge of the political, religious, and social history of the European Middle Ages (c.500-1500)
- learn how to interpret primary sources from the period under study and using both written and oral skills to analyze them
- learn how to synthesize material read from a variety of sources to produce a larger analytical conclusion

-understand some of the methods used by historians to analyze the past (chronology, periodization, comparison/contrast, continuity/change, and some theory, including gender)

-practice writing analytical prose of a variety of different sorts

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

1. C. Warren Hollister and Judith Bennett, *Medieval Europe: A Short History*, 9th edition (McGraw-Hill, 2002) [0-07-112109-9]
2. *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources*, trans. and ed. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (Penguin Classics, 1983) [0140444092]
3. Theodore Evergates, ed., *Feudal Society in Medieval France: Documents from the County of Champagne* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993) [0812214412]
4. *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, ed. Betty Radice (Penguin, 1974) [0-14-044297-9]
5. Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey Brereton (Penguin Classics, 1968) [0140442006]
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. 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 Participation (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. Assignments (10%)

Every other week or so I will ask you to write either a short (1 page) response piece to the readings or several (1-2) sample identifications (as practice for the exams).

3. First Midterm Exam: March 3, (part in class, part take-home) (20%)

The exam will include several short-answer identifications (who, what, where, when, and why important) and one longer, synthetic 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. You will write the essay (from a list of 2-3 questions provided by me) at home and bring it to the exam date; then, in class, you will answer the identifications.

4. Second Midterm Examination, April 21 (part in-class, part take-home) (20%)

The format of this exam will be identical to that of the first exam.

5. Final Exam: Friday May 9, 8-11 AM (40% of your grade)

The format of this exam will be similar to that of the midterms. You will bring two already-written essays to the examination session, at which point you will answer several additional identifications and short answers.

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Attendance and Discussion:	10%
Assignments	10%
First Midterm:	20%
Second Midterm:	20%
Final Exam:	40%

THE 'LEGAL' STUFF

1. In case later consultation should prove necessary, students are asked to keep copies of all graded assignments until the end of the semester (at least).
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, turn in the exam essay.
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 (at the most extreme, this might include expulsion). 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. Note: my comments in class do not need to be cited.

4. **BE CAUTIOUS** in using websites. Many students feel that they can obtain the 'answer' (or even a good interpretation) concerning a historical problem by simply looking it up on the web. While the web has many uses, this is almost invariably a fatal strategy. Looking for someone else's ideas is no substitute for your own analysis. Some observations from the instructor's point of view: 1) use of a web-site without citing it (even if it is crap) is plagiarism, which, if detected, can result in serious academic penalties (see above); 2) instructors can often detect uncited use of a website when either the writing style of the student's paper changes drastically, or when facts/ideas/dates/people not discussed in class or in any of the assigned readings appear in an assignment. Again, I don't want to discourage you from gaining more perspectives by using the web. What I'm saying is that ultimately you are being evaluated on your analysis of the assigned readings, not on your ability to plug some web site's ideas into your essay.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS

Note: Primary source readings are preceded in the following syllabus by one of these three adjectives:

Required: you must read that text and will be held responsible for it on exams

Recommended: I'd love for you to read it, but won't test you specifically on it. Use of it on exams will impress me.

Optional: this text will help your comprehension of the daily topic, but won't be on the exams

UNIT 1: Introduction

January 13: Course Introduction: Historians and Their Method

January 15: Reading a Primary Source

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Handout: A Medieval Document

January 17: Roman Government and Culture

Primary Source Readings:

Required: On the powers of the Emperor (<http://129.186.40.170/THOMAS/netscape/lex.htm>)

Required: Late Roman laws on marriage: please only scan a few entries in this long file - DON'T read it all! We're only interested here in the form of Roman law and in the breadth of imperial power, not in the specifics of Roman marriage law.

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/cjc-marriage.html>)

Textbook Readings: Hollister/Bennett, 1-16

January 20: NO CLASS (Martin Luther King Day)

January 22: Rise of Christianity and the Christian Roman Empire

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Letter of Pliny to Emp. Trajan (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/pliny1.html>)

Required: Excerpts from Theodosian Code (5th century, not 4th, as the on-line text asserts) (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/codex-theod1.html>)

Required: Humiliation of Theodosius

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/theodoret-ambrose1.html>)

Optional: Excerpts from the martyrdom of Perpetua

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/perpetua-excerpt.html>)

Textbook Readings: Hollister/Bennett, 17-30

January 24: Germanic Society

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Tacitus, excerpts from *Germania*

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/tacitus-germania-excerpt.html>)

Textbook Reading: Hollister/Bennett, 35-40

January 27: Germanic Migrations

January 29: Fall of the Roman Empire

January 31: Successors to Rome: Byzantium and Islam

Primary Source Readings for entire week:

Required: Jordanes on Theodoric the Ostrogoth:

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/jordanes-theodoric1.html>

Required: Letters of Theodoric (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/theodoric1.html>)

Recommended: Salvian, on Roman decline

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/salvian1.html>)

Textbook Readings: 31-35, 41-45, 49-55, 86-93

UNIT 2: Early Middle Ages

February 3: The Franks: Clovis and Kingship

Primary Sources:

Required: Clovis Stories: the Vase of Soissons and his Conversion

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/gregtours1.html>)

Required: Conversion of Clovis (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/496clovis.html>)

Textbook Reading: H/B, 45, 47-48, 65-74

February 5: The Franks: law and order

Primary Sources:

Required: Salic Law (ie., Law of Salian Franks)

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/salic-law.html>)

Optional: Ordeal Formulae: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/ordeals1.html>

Optional: 11th-century Judicial Duels: <http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton/judicialduels.htm>

Optional: An 11th-century ordeal: <http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton/ordeals.htm>

February 7: Monasticism: rule of Saint Benedict

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Rule of Saint Benedict (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/rul-benedict.html>)

Textbook Reading: H/B, 74-78

February 10: Early Medieval Belief: Saints, Miracles, Sacraments

Primary Source Readings:

Required: The Nicene Creed (<http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton/church-fathers.htm>)

Required: the Life of St Eligius (read only these chapters: 1-10, 15-18, 21, 27, 30)

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/eligius.html>)

Textbook Reading: 78-82

February 12: Women in Frankish Society

Primary Sources:

Required: Frankish Queens: <http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton/frankish-queens.htm>

Textbook Reading: H/B, 46-47

February 14: Coming of the Anglo-Saxons, c.400-700

Textbook Reading: H/B, 82-85

February 17: The Carolingian Franks: Charlemagne and the revival of Government

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Einhard on Charlemagne's Wars

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/einhard-wars1.html>)

Required: General capitulary on the missi, 802
(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/carol-missi1.html>)

Recommended: Summons to military service
(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/carol-sum1.html>)

Recommended: Einhard on Charlemagne's personality
(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/einhard1.html>)

Textbook Reading: H/B, 102-117

February 19: Carolingian Renaissance

Primary Source Reading:

Required: Charlemagne's letter to Baugulf

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/carol-baugulf.html>)

Textbook Reading: H/B, 117-123

February 21: Viking Assaults

Secondary Source Readings (for next week, but get started this week)

Alfred the Great, pp. 1-48, plus maps and genealogies pp. 59-63

Textbook Reading: H/B, 125-134

February 24: Alfred the Great

February 26: Alfred's Legacy

February 28: Responses to the Invasions: Centralization and Decentralization [this lecture not on midterm]

Primary Source Readings for week:

Alfred the Great, pp. 65-120, 163-186, 189-191, 193-194

Textbook Reading: H/B, 134-140

UNIT 3: the High Middle Ages

March 3: **FIRST MIDTERM EXAM**

March 5: Economic Take-off

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Evergates, no. 16 (rights for a new village)

Optional: Evergates, no. 74 (quashing a new village)

Textbook Reading: 155-159, 160-166, 171-176

March 7: Peasantry and Lordship

Primary Source Readings:

Required: a lord's rights over villagers, Evergates, no. 75

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

Textbook Reading: 163-171

March 10: SPRING BREAK

March 12: SPRING BREAK

March 14: SPRING BREAK

March 17: Aristocratic Society: Fiefs and Power Relationships

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Fulbert of Chartres: Letter concerning obligations of lord and vassal
(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/fulbert1.html>)

Required: Agreement Between Hugh of Lusignan and William of Aquitaine
(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/agreement.html>)

Required: Evergates, nos. 2-7, 15 (on fiefs); no. 55 (on homage); no. 77 (on justice)

Textbook Reading: 141-145

March 19 (LAST DAY TO DROP WITHOUT PENALTY): Aristocratic Society: Women's Roles

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Women of Norman Aristocracy (<http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton/normanwomen.htm>)

Required: Evergates, document nos. 35, 37, 38, 39, 41

March 21: Aristocratic Society: Values and Culture [chivalry, vengeance, etc]

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Handout: Excerpt from *The History of William Marshal* (in Amt, *Medieval England*, pp. 190-198)

Optional: Froissart, 309-315, 373-381 [later evidence of chivalric behavior]

Textbook Reading: 144-145, 182-187, 294-301

March 24: Crusading

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Capture of Jerusalem (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/fulk2.html>)

Required: on the impact of crusading: Evergates, documents #: 86-90, 94, 95

Recommended: on the Templars: Evergates, document #78-79

Textbook Reading: 217-219, 227-237

March 26: Religious Reform

Primary Source Reading:

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

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

Textbook Reading: H/B, 188-203

March 28: Rise of the Papacy

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Ban on Lay Investitures (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/g7-invest1.html>)

Required: Henry IV to Gregory VII (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/henry4-to-g7a.html>)

Required: Gregory Deposes Henry IV (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/g7-ban1.html>)

Textbook Reading: H/B, 203-210, 215-216, 242-248

March 31: Law and Society

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Gratian on Marriage (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/gratian1.html>)

Textbook Reading: 248-261

April 2: Marriage (Abelard and Heloise)

Primary Source Readings:

Required: *Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, 57-106

Recommended (Highly): Evergates, documents 25, 26, 28, and 32

April 4: Scholasticism: Anselm, Abelard and Aquinas

Primary Source Readings:

Required: *Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, pp. 109-118

Recommended: Aquinas, from *Summa Theologica*; proof of existence of God [read only prologue and Question 2 of the following] (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/aquinas1.html>)

Optional: Abelard, from *Sic et non* (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1120abelard.html>)

Textbook: 308-321

April 7: Towns and Town Life

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Evergates, no. 18 (communal franchises, 1230)

Required: Evergates, no. 20-24 (on Fairs)

Optional: a communal revolt, Chartres 1210 (<http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton/chartresriot.htm>)

Optional: a lengthy account of a communal revolt, Beauvais (<http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton/beauvaisdossier.htm>)

Textbook Reading: H/B/, 176-182

April 9: New Religious Orders

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Thomas of Celano's Lives of St Francis

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

Textbook Reading: H/B, 210-215

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.

April 11: Film: Siena

April 14: Administrative Kingship

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Assize of Clarendon: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/aclarendon.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): 867-905.

Textbook Reading: H/B, 268-279

April 16: Towards National Monarchies: England and France

Primary Source Reading:

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

Textbook Reading: 280-289

April 18: NO CLASS (Spring Holiday)

UNIT 4: Later Middle Ages

April 21: **SECOND MIDTERM EXAMINATION** and the Bubonic Plague

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Froissart, 111-112

Recommended: Boccaccio's description of the plague

(<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/boccaccio2.html>)

Textbook Reading: H/B, 323-335

April 23: War

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Froissart, 120-146

Textbook Reading: H/B, 335-336, 346-349

April 25: Urban Unrest

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Froissart, 146-148, 151-161, 231-241

April 28: Religious Ferment

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Boniface VIII: the bull *Unam Sanctam*

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

Required: Froissart, 201-210 (Avignon and Schism)

Optional: Evergates, document #100 (on heretics)

Optional: Boniface VIII: Outrage at Anagni

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

Textbook Reading: 336-345

April 30: Peasant Unrest

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Froissart, 211-230 [also review 151-155]

May 2: Governmental Solutions: England

Primary Source Readings

Optional: Froissart, 316-327 [background to what follows]

Required: Froissart, 421-471 [deposition of Richard I]

Recommended: Growth of Parliamentary Government in England

(<http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton/english-parliament.htm>)

Textbook Reading: H/B, 349-353

May 5: Governmental Solutions: France

Primary Source Readings:

Required: Evergates, no. 64 (on royal encroachment)

Textbook Reading: H/B, 353-356

May 6: (class meets on Tuesday, per University instructions): Late Medieval Heroines

Primary Source Readings:

Required: 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.

Textbook Reading: H/B, 350-351

May 7: READING DAY (no classes)

CITATION OF SOURCES

For any written assignment defined as a formal writing assignment (ie., all the essays required in this course), you are expected to 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 make a parenthetical citation of 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: appear in parentheses directly after the words to which they provide reference. Parenthetical citations usually include the author's last name and the number of the page to which you are referring). For example, "Juhel of Mayenne was only 20 years old or so when he founded the priory of Marmoutier in his castle keep (Barton, p. 369)." The words in quotation marks are what you've written; but since you've taken this information from another source, you need to indicate that source. Here the citation appears in parentheses to some book by Barton at p. 369. NOTE: parenthetical citations are informal; they are acceptable (sometimes) in student writing, but never appear in formal academic work.

2. Formal citations (endnotes or footnotes): this is the way that scholars cite their references. The format of a footnote is indistinguishable from that of an endnote; the only difference between them lies in where they appear on the page (footnotes at the bottom of each page; endnotes in a separate list at the end of the paper). Modern word-processing makes it childishly easy to create either sort of note; look (usually) under the 'insert' pull-down menu of your word-processor and you will find a choice for 'footnotes/endnotes'. When you create one, a superscript number will appear in the body of your text where you created the note. That number is meant to alert the reader that he or she ought now to redirect his/her eyes either to the bottom of the page (footnote) or the back of the paper (endnote) for the relevant citation. NOTE: although word-processors allow the creation of superscript note numbers as roman numerals (e.g., i, ii, v, xiii), this is to be avoided. Always make sure you are creating arabic numerals (e.g., 1, 2, 3). [see the end of the next paragraph for examples]

What appears within the foot- or endnote is also important. For a book, you ought to include all of the information you would provide in a bibliographic entry: author, title of book (underlined or italicized), and publishing information (place published, publisher, date published). If the work to which you are referring is an article, the format is slightly different: author, title of article (in quotation marks), title of journal (italicized or underlined), volume number of journal, and year of journal. Either way, you will also need to include the specific page number to which you are referring the reader. If you are citing a web-site (or on-line text), the rules are less clear. If the on-line material is clearly derived from a book, then you ought to provide all of the usual information one expects for a book, but you should add the URL and the webpage title; if the page lacks proper bibliographic information, provide whatever you can. Here is an example of a footnote to a book.¹ Here is an example of a citation to an article.² (note that an endnote would look the same, but would simply appear at the end of the document in a separate list). Here is an example of a citation to a web-site.³ Foot or endnotes are always preferable to parenthetical citations.

WHEN must you provide a citation?

1. Whenever you use an author's words directly. In this case, the author's words must appear in quotation marks in the body of your essay and the citation should appear immediately after the closed

¹ Mary W. Smith, *Footnoting for Fun and Profit* (Boston: Academic Press, 1980), 44.

² John Q. Doe, "How to Create Footnotes," *Journal of Scholarship* 15 (1999), 219.

³ *Cartulaire de l'abbaye cardinale de la Trinité de Vendôme*, ed. Charles Métais, volume 1 (Paris: A. Picard et fils, 1893), 1:14-18. Translated from the Latin by Richard Barton and published on-line under the title "Land Tenure and Family Conflict: the Honor of Vendôme, c. 1006-1040," at <http://www.uncg.edu/~rebarton/vendome.htm>

quotation mark. For instance, in the following made-up sentence I quote myself and use a parenthetical citation to a made-up work: “As the noted medieval historian, Richard Barton, once said, ‘Medieval History is cool’ (Barton, p. 297)’.”

2. 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.
3. Whenever you mention a fact or event that is not generally known. Lots of confusion can and does exist about what is and what is not ‘generally well-known.’ Use common sense. You don’t need to cite Hollister if you state that the Battle of Hastings occurred in 1066 (this is a famous and well-known event/date). More obscure material might require a citation.

PRIMARY SOURCES VERSUS SECONDARY SOURCES

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 on-line texts; *Letters of Abelard and Heloise*; the documents in Evergates; the medieval texts in *Alfred the Great*; and Froissart’s *Chronicle*.

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."