MEDIEVAL STUDIES PROGRAM

The medieval studies program provides an interdisciplinary context for students who wish to study the European Middle Ages. Students normally concentrate on one of three fields: art history and archaeology, history and culture, or language and literature. They are also expected to do coursework in the other fields. In certain cases the program may also provide a framework for students wishing to cross the temporal, topical, and geographical boundaries of medieval studies to consider such problems as the relationship between classical and medieval literature or art, or the broader history of the preindustrial European societies.

Students have a number of opportunities to experience medieval materials firsthand, including working with rare manuscripts in Special Collections, singing in the Collegium Musicum, or participating on an archaeological dig. The Medieval Studies Department brings distinguished visitors to campus each year to give public talks and to work one-on-one with students. Field trips to places such as the Cloisters Museum in New York City and to concerts in the nearby area foster a sense of community in addition to providing access to materials.

The skills typically acquired by medieval studies students—knowledge of European culture, ability to analyze “foreign” texts, experience handling artifacts and manuscripts, and familiarity with Latin—provide good preparation for advanced degrees, whether in the humanities, law, or other professional schools.

AFFILIATED FACULTY

Joseph Salvatore Ackley
AB, Dartmouth College; MA, New York University; PHD, New York University
Assistant Professor of Art History; Assistant Professor, Medieval Studies

Jane Alden
BMU, Manchester University; MMU, King’s College; PHD, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Professor of Music; Chair, Medieval Studies; Professor, Medieval Studies

Francesco Marco Aresu
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Associate Professor of Italian; Associate Professor, Medieval Studies

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BA, Harvard University; MA, Harvard University; PHD, Harvard University
Associate Professor of Spanish; Associate Professor, Medieval Studies; Associate Professor, Latin American Studies

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BA, Northwestern University; MA, University of Virginia; MA, Universite Lumiere Lyon 2; MA, Universite de Paris - Sorbonne; PHD, University of Virginia
Associate Professor of French; Associate Professor, Medieval Studies

Cecilia Miller
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Professor of French; Professor, Medieval Studies

Gary Shaw
BA, McGill University; DPHIL, Oxford University
Professor of History; Associate Editor, History and Theory; Professor, Medieval Studies

Jesse Wayne Torgerson
BA, Biola University; MA, University of California, Berkeley; PHD, University of California, Berkeley
Associate Professor of Letters; Chair, College of Letters; Associate Professor, Medieval Studies; Associate Professor, History

DEPARTMENTAL ADVISING EXPERTS

Jeff Rider

- Undergraduate Medieval Studies Major (https://catalog.wesleyan.edu/departments/mdst/ugrd-mdst/)
- Undergraduate Medieval Studies Minor (https://catalog.wesleyan.edu/departments/mdst/ugrd-mdst-mn/)

MDST125 Love, Sex, and Marriage in Renaissance Europe

This writing-intensive seminar will compare literary and artistic depictions of love, sex, and marriage during the Renaissance by authors and artists from England, Spain, France, Flanders, Germany, and Italy. We will read both male and female writers in genres ranging from poetry, the short story, and theater to the essay, the travel narrative, and the sermon. We will also examine other arts such as painting, sculpture, and the decorative arts (e.g., wedding chests). Questions we will explore include, but are not limited to, How were love and marriage related during the Renaissance? What role did sex, gender, and violence play in relationships between couples and within society? How do gender and genre affect the ways in which love, sex, and marriage are depicted? How did cultural differences influence writers’ and artists’ interpretations of love, sex, and marriage? And what about same-sex unions? Other topics will include virginity and celibacy, erotic literature, family and class structures, and divorce.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RLAN
Identical With: RL&L123, COL123, FGSS123
Prereq: None

MDST125F Love, Sex, and Marriage in Renaissance Europe (FYS)

This seminar compares literary depictions of love, sex, and marriage from the 14th to the 17th centuries by writers from England, France, Germany, Italy, the Low Countries, Spain, and Sweden. (Students will be able to study writings from other parts of Europe over the course of the semester should they so choose.) We will read texts composed by women and men in genres including poetry, theater, the short story, the essay, the maxim, the travel narrative, and the sermon. Though the seminar is focused on literature, we will also consider painting, engravings, sculpture, and the decorative arts (e.g., wedding chests). We will explore questions such as: How were love and marriage related during the Renaissance? What roles did sex, gender, race, class, and violence play in relationships between couples and within society, and how were they represented in literature and art? How do gender and genre affect the ways in which love, sex, and marriage are depicted? How did cultural differences influence writers’ and artists’ interpretations of love, sex, and marriage? And what about homosexual love, same-sex unions, and depictions of dissident
MDST128 Rome After Rome: Culture and Empire of Constantinople
Rome did not fall. Rome was swallowed by a new idea of what it means to be Roman when, in the fourth century, the empire left its own founding city behind and moved the capital to the newly-minted city of Constantine, Constantinople. This course gives students a hands-on introduction to one of the most astounding sociopolitical transformations in human history, tracing out the cultural, political, and economic trajectories of the Roman empire of the Middle Ages.

In exploring the textual and material relics of this medieval metropolis on their own terms, students apply and publish their research interests on the collaborative place-based interactive teaching encyclopedia Constantinople as Palimpsest (https://arcgis.io/0e4Lb4). For their final project students will design a unit for a high school history course, using Constantinople as Palimpsest to introduce the diversities and paradoxes of life in the city of New Rome.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RELI
Identical With: RELI201, CIST244, COL237, WLT281
Prereq: None
MDST204 Medieval Europe
This introductory lecture course is a history of European politics, culture, and institutions from the end of the Roman Imperial era through 1520. Within a chronological framework we will focus on the creation of kingdoms and government; the growth and crises of papal-dominated Christianity, its crusades and its philosophy; the rise and role of the knight, lady, and aristocratic culture; masculinity and gender relations; the crises of the later Middle Ages, including the Black Death, heresy, mysticism, and war. These all contributed to the beginnings of the modern world, including the Renaissance and the Reformation, events that ended the medieval period. We will also at least glance at the borderlands of Europe, the edges of Islamic and Orthodox worlds.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-HIST
Identical With: HIST201
Prereq: None

MDST207 Chaucer and His World
In this course, we will read Chaucer's fascinating dream-visions, The BOOK OF THE DUCHESS and THE HOUSE OF FAME and his best-known work, THE CANTERBURY TALES. We will also read selections from Chaucer's sources and consider how he adapts these texts in his own literary works. Some of the topics we will explore are the various genres of Chaucer's poetry (allegory, epic, romance, satire), medieval ideas about psychology and dreams, the ideology of chivalry, Chaucer's reinvention of the classical world, and views of gender and sexuality. All readings will be in Middle English, so we will read slowly and carefully, with attention to the language.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ENGL
Identical With: ENGL207
Prereq: None

MDST209 Mosque and Cathedral: Islam and the West, c. 600-1500
This course examines the interaction between the Islamic world and medieval Europe from the perspective of art and architecture, from late antiquity and the rise of Islam through the end of the Middle Ages. Our approach will seek out both intersections and comparisons: while attending to the borders, crossings, and overlaps that existed between medieval Christendom and the Islamic world, this course will also stage comparisons of key themes specific to these traditions, chief among them the picturing of divinity, the status of a sacred text, the organization of sacred space, and the practice of luxury. We will survey a series of historical encounters, including Byzantine Iconoclasm, the Crusades, and trade and diplomacy in general, before culminating in Renaissance Italy. Special emphasis will be reserved for key geographies of exchange, including Spain, Sicily, North Africa, and the Holy Land. Consideration will be given to the media of architecture, mosaic, painting, relief sculpture, decorated books, ivory, metalwork, and textiles. Questions of geography, ethnicity, the other, the idol, cultural translation, and the status of text vs. image will be threaded throughout.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ART
Identical With: ARHA209
Prereq: None

MDST210 Romanesque and Gothic Art and Architecture
This course introduces the art and architecture of Romanesque and Gothic Europe, that is, later medieval Europe ca. 1100-1400, focusing especially on Germany, France, Italy, England, and Spain, as well as the wider Mediterranean. Architecture, painting, sculpture, and the luxury arts (e.g., metalwork, ivory, and textiles) will be our focus, supplemented by primary-source texts and secondary literature. Key themes will include sacred spaces, such as cathedrals and monasteries; sacred images and devotion; gender; pilgrimage and the relic; geography; the Other; the monstrous and the miraculous; courtly love and chivalry; the relationship between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam; and premodern definitions of art, the artist, the donor, craftsmanship, and value.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ART
Identical With: ARHA210, RL&L210
Prereq: None

MDST212 Wesleyan University Collegium Musicum
The Collegium Musicum (literally "company of musicians") is a vocal performance ensemble dedicated to exploring and performing the diverse European repertoires of medieval, renaissance, and baroque music. Emphasis is given to the study of musical styles, performance practices, voice independence, healthy singing, and musicianship. Students investigate various cultural aspects of the production of music, including primary sources, acoustics, and cultural heritage. Outreach projects include singing with and for seniors.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-MUSC
Identical With: MUSC438
Prereq: None

MDST213 Cross, Book, Bone: Early Medieval Art, ca. 300-1100
This class surveys the art and architecture of early medieval Europe, beginning with the multicultural world of Late Antiquity, the decline of the Roman Empire, and the spread of Christianity, and then continuing through the glory of Byzantium, the rise of Islam, and the development of Germanic kingdoms in Northern Europe. Style, content, function, and historical context shall be examined across monuments of architecture, sculpture, mosaic, manuscripts, painting, and the luxury arts. Questions of religious practice, political messaging, and cross-cultural translation shall be threaded throughout, for example: Could one picture God? How might divinity be conceptualized and accessed? How might one best picture a ruler? How did early medieval Europe define both art and the figure of the artist? How might we see dialogue, overlap, and/or competition between the art and architecture of Islam and Christianity, among other religious traditions? The art historical periods considered will include Late Antique, Byzantine, Umayyad, Abbasid, Migration, Insular, Carolingian, Mozarabic, Ottonian, and Viking art.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ART
Identical With: ARHA213
Prereq: None

MDST214 Introduction to the New Testament
The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to writings of the earliest Christians that came to be included in the New Testament. These writings will be examined critically with respect to their social-historical origin, religious content, and place within the development of early Christianities. Interpreting early Christian texts constitutes the most important task in the study of the New Testament. We will, therefore, focus on a close reading of the New Testament in light of historical situations and social contexts in the Greco-Roman world, one of the chief aims of the course being the acquisition of critical skills in reading and understanding the New Testament. In the process, we will necessarily engage secondary scholarship and wider theoretical interests, thereby providing students with a general introduction to the academic study of religion.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
MDST215 Politics and Piety in Early Christianities
The first four centuries of the Christian era will illustrate the lively twists and turns of social experimentation that set the stage for the emergence of the Christian religion. This course will be concerned with fundamental arenas of intellectual and social conflict, including constructions of Christian myths of apostolic origins and authority, the appropriation of the Jewish epic; the challenge of gnosticism; the domestication of Greek philosophy; interpretations of sexuality and gender; experiences of martyrdom and prosecution; theological reflections on human nature and society; and the ways Christians were seen by Romans. The objective will be to grasp the beginnings of the Christian religion as a human achievement of cultural consequence.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RELI
Identical With: RELI212, WLIT282
Prereq: None

MDST216 What is Sicily?
Language is frequently thought of as the accompaniment of empire. How, then, does one study a poetry without an imperium? This course examines Sicilian culture as a phenomenon which developed under the rule of many empires (Greek, Byzantine, Arab, Norman, French, Spanish) whilst never itself an empire. Birthplace of the sonnet and crossroads of a plurality of cultures, the Sicilian language remains a literary language to this day. What does it mean to write in Sicilian? At the margins of history, empire, and continent, this course examines the growth and transformation of a colonized island from antiquity to the present through its literatures.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-COL
Identical With: COL211, RL&L211
Prereq: None

MDST219 Northern Renaissance Art
The Northern Renaissance, roughly c. 1400-1600, was a period of thrilling transition in Europe and profound change for the Western tradition of art and architecture. For art history, the period’s many paradigm shifts include the rise of oil painting, the spread of the printing press and print media, the growth of middle-class patronage, the Protestant Reformation, radical developments in architecture. For art history, the period's many paradigm shifts include the rise of oil painting, the spread of the printing press and print media, the growth of middle-class patronage, the Protestant Reformation, radical developments in architectural heritage but also to better understand contemporary social and cultural practices.
Coursework involves learning through performance, examination of manuscripts, research, writing, transcription, and editing. There are also weekly listening assignments and readings.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-MUSC
Identical With: ARHA220
Prereq: None

MDST220 Love and Loss in Medieval and Early Modern French Literature and Culture
The interconnected themes of love and loss encompass others such as desire, passion, friendship, death, separation, and grief. This course introduces students to the uses of these themes in French literature of the medieval and early modern periods by reading a range of texts, from the courtly romance and lyric poetry, to the essay, the novella, and theater. We will examine how men and women treat these themes, and we will be especially sensitive to the ways in which women write in genres traditionally dominated by men. Topics of study will include the body, virtues and vices, marriage, sexuality, seduction, chastity, and violence. We will also place emphasis on improving French pronunciation and on developing oral presentation and written skills. Readings, papers, and discussions will be in French.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RLAN
Identical With: FREN222, COL217
Prereq: None

MDST221 Mystical Visions, Medieval Women, and the Performance of Early Music
This course challenges the traditional male-dominated history of early music by focusing on the women who commissioned, performed, heard, and composed music in pre-modern times. Discovering love lyrics that express desires, conflicts, and sufferings that seem equally true today helps collapse the notion of linear time. In addition to finding similarities across centuries, we will draw from multiple disciplines, including comparative literature, religion and cosmology, and gender and sexuality studies. An interdisciplinary approach will guide our investigation of the mystical and visionary aspects of medieval music. Topics to be explored include communal music-making practices, authorship, power and politics, and the multiple civic and social functions of music. We investigate how the music of worship differs from that of romance, public ceremony, and private entertainment. These inquiries help to cultivate skills not only to appreciate our musical heritage but also to better understand contemporary social and cultural practices.

Various “medievalisms”—modern interpretations of the medieval—are explored, to show how musicians continue to interact with early practices in new and exciting ways. This allows us to talk not only about performers of historical early music, but also about composers like Kaija Saariaho, folk groups like Vulcan’s Hammer and Folkal Point, and pop artists like Janelle Monaé and Florence Welch. The creation of medievalist music for films and video games is also relevant, as an arena where musicians reimagine the medieval for new audiences.

MDST222 Early Renaissance Art and Architecture in Italy
This course surveys key monuments of Italian art and architecture produced between ca. 1300 and 1500. Focusing on major centers such as Florence, Milan,
Rome, and Venice, as well as smaller courts such as Urbino and Mantua, it considers the works and careers of the most important artists and architects of the period, among them Giotto, Brunelleschi, Donatello, Giovanni Bellini, Botticelli, and Leonardo da Vinci. Monuments are studied in their broader intellectual, political, and religious context, with particular attention paid to issues of patronage, devotion, gender, and spectatoriality. Class discussions will be based on close readings of primary sources and scholarly texts on a wide range of topics.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ART
Identical With: ARHA221, RL&L212
Prereq: None

MDST223 The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Rethinking the Italian Renaissance
In this course we explore the intellectual achievements of the Italian Renaissance. We study the development of new secular values and the quest for the fulfillment of body and soul, glory, and exuberant pleasures. We question notions of beauty, symmetry, proportion, and order. We also unveil often-neglected aspects of Renaissance counter-cultures, such as the aesthetics of ugliness and obscenity and practices of marginalization (e.g., misogyny, homophobia). We inquire into the rediscovery of classical civilizations. We consider how the study of antiquity fundamentally changed the politics, literatures, arts, and philosophies of Italy at the dawn of the modern era. Through a close reading of texts by authors such as Francesco Petrarch, Niccolo Machiavelli, and Michelangelo, we investigate continuities and ruptures between their quest for human identity and ours. This course is conducted in English, and all primary and secondary sources are in English.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RLAN
Identical With: RL&L224, COL224, ITAL224
Prereq: None

MDST225 European Intellectual History to the Renaissance
This class will examine some of the major texts in Western thought from ancient Greece to the Renaissance. Emphasis will be placed on close reading and analysis of the texts.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-HIST
Identical With: HIST215, COL216
Prereq: None

MDST226 The Cosmos of Dante’s “Comedy”
In 1321, Dante Alighieri completes the final cantos of the “Comedy” and breathes his last. After 700 years, the “Comedy” has not finished saying what it has to say. This course provides an in-depth introduction to Dante’s masterwork as a point of entry to the history of Western literature, philosophy, and science. The core of the course consists of an intensive study of Dante’s encyclopedic poem in relation to the culture and history of Medieval Europe. We examine the poem as both a product and an interpretation of the world it describes. We also observe how the “Comedy” casts its long shadow on modern culture: in Primo Levi’s description of the horror of Nazi concentration camps, or in Amiri Baraka’s fragmentary representation of America’s infernal racist system. We investigate the challenges that Dante’s text elicits when it migrates to visual and cinematic arts (from medieval illuminations to Robert Rauschenberg to David Fincher), continuously camouflaging and adapting to different media. Major topics of this course include: representations of the otherworld; the soul’s relation to the divine; Dante’s concepts of governance and universal peace; mythology and theology in Dante’s Christian poetics; the role of the classics in the Middle Ages; intertextuality and imitation; genres and genders in medieval literature; notions of authorship and authority during the 13th and 14th centuries; the culture and materiality of manuscripts in the Middle Ages; and the reception of Dante’s work from the 14th century to the present. The course combines a close analysis of Dante’s inventiveness and literary strategies with exercises in analytical writing and in multimedia translation and adaptation, aimed at prompting critical reflection on the ways in which present cultural practices are built upon the practices of the past. This course is conducted in English; no previous knowledge of Italian is required.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ART
Identical With: ARHA221, RL&L212
Prereq: None

MDST227 What Can the Middle Ages Teach Us About Nature?
Today nature is at the center of our preoccupations. This course will go back to a time before human beings thought they were the masters of nature, when nature was at the same time teaching and allegory, metaphor and science. We will explore the different functions of nature in bestiaries, poems, romances, and herbaria from the Middle Ages to the beginning of the Early-Modern period (in modern French translation). We will be able to see a real herbarium in the Special Collections & Archives. Students will also visit the Davison Center for the Arts and the Joe Webb Peoples Museum to explore visual representations of nature as well as scientific displays. During the semester, students will put together a herbarium that will be displayed in an exhibition at the end of the semester.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RLAN
Identical With: FREN229, ENVS229
Prereq: None

MDST228 Heroes, Lovers, and Swindlers: Medieval and Renaissance Spanish Literature and History
This course is designed to develop students’ ability to make informed and creative sense of four fascinating, complex, and influential medieval and Renaissance Spanish texts in their multiple (literary, historical) contexts: the "national" epic EL CID (12th–13th century); the bawdy and highly theatrical prose dialogue known as LA CELESTINA (1499); the anonymous LAZARILLO (1554), the first picaresque novel; and María de Zayas’s proto-feminist novella THE WAGES OF VICE (1647). Through these and selected historical readings, the course is also intended to provide students with a basic knowledge of Spanish culture (in its plurality) from the 11th through the 17th centuries, the texture of everyday life, and the larger movements of long-term historical change. We will draw on literature and history to imagine the world of chivalry and crusade in the medieval Spain of "the three religions of the book" (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam); of mercantile values, courtly love, and prostitution in the Renaissance city; of social injustice and religious hypocrisy in imperial Spain; and of the exacerbated gender and caste tensions that followed from the political crises of the 1640s. We will reflect on the interplay of literature and history in our efforts to come to grips with a past both familiar and strange; address the crossing of linguistic, artistic, ethnic, religious, caste, and gender boundaries that has long been a conspicuous feature of Spanish society; and consider what texts and lives of the past might still have to say to us today. No prior historical or literary preparation is required, only a willingness to engage the readings closely (textually and historically).

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RLAN
MDST229 Fight like the French: Debates, Quarrels and Polemics in French Culture
In the age of "fake news" and polarization, knowing how to debate is essential. The French are notoriously practiced in debate; the importance of public opinion and the figure of the public intellectual have made French society as a whole particularly prone to the agonistic discussion of ideas. This course will survey foundational aesthetic and political debates in French culture from the 15th century to this day, focusing on those that were led by writers, philosophers, and intellectuals and that have entered French literary and cultural history. The course will show how controversies mark and make paradigmatic changes in the cultural landscape, advancing the arts and sciences and voicing political dissent. Throughout the course we will read literary works, treatises, letters, and newspapers.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RLAN
Identical With: FREN228
Prereq: None

MDST230 Lancelot, Guinevere, Grail: Enigma in the Romances of Chretien de Troyes
Chretien de Troyes, the greatest writer of medieval France, was the first to tell the stories of Lancelot and Guinevere's fatal passion and of the quest for the Holy Grail. Written at the height of the Renaissance of the 12th century, his Arthurian tales became the basis for all future retellings of the legend. We will read these tales in depth, paying particular attention to their enigmatic quality.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RLAN
Identical With: FREN220
Prereq: None

MDST231 Cuneiform to Kindle: Fragments of a Material History of Literature
This course provides a theoretical and historical investigation of diverse media of literary expressions from clay tablets to digital texts. We will inquire into the history of writing through different technologies and modes of composition, circulation, and reception from antiquity to the present day. By engaging in such topics as the transition from scroll to codex, from manuscript to print, and from book to Kindle, we will consider the history of literacy in relation to other forms of expression (oral, visual, networked) and analyze different practices of organizing textual materials (punctuation, paragraphing, annotation). We will scrutinize paratextual elements (title, front matter, opening information, foreword) and various forms of verbal accretions (glosses, commentaries, editorial interventions). We will examine shifting notions of authorship and originality and explore different systems of storage (libraries, archives, museums). And by questioning the multifaceted, nondeterministic interplay between literary artifacts and the media by which they are formalized and materially formed, we will provide a critical and historical reflection on the nature of textuality, writing, and media.

Readings will set essays in the history of the book and media studies alongside key literary case studies from various periods and geographical areas. Projects will engage with textual materiality (including through the creation of book-objects of our own). The course will be conducted in English.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00

MDST232 Obscure Enigma of Desire
This course is an introduction to the study of the ways we create meanings when we read texts. It will focus on several deliberately obscure literary texts from twelfth-century France and will examine them in the light of the classical and medieval concepts of enigma, the marvelous (wonderful), fabula, and allegory as well as some modern theoretical works about how we understand narratives. We will seek to understand why deliberate obscurity is an important part of literature and how medieval authors created narratives that seem particularly meaningful precisely because they are obscure. We will consider why we feel these texts have meaning and the ways in which we make them meaningful to us. This course will be co-taught in parallel with a course (in English) on the same subject offered at the Charles University in Prague by Professor Lucie Dolezalova. About half of the classes will be conducted together with the class in Prague through teleconferencing and Professor Dolezalova will teach one week of the course at Wesleyan and meet with students while she is here.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RLAN
Identical With: RL&L232
Prereq: None

MDST234 Days and Knights of the Round Table
This course will study the evolution of the Arthurian legend from its origins in sixth-century Britain to its development in the 12th-century romances of Chretien de Troyes. The course will look at the way the various developments of the legend were rooted in specific historical circumstances and yet contributed to the elaboration of a rich and complex narrative that has been appropriated in different ways by each succeeding period of Western European culture.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RLAN
Identical With: RL&L334
Prereq: None

MDST235 Days and Knights of the Round Table
This course will study the evolution of the Arthurian legend from its origins in sixth-century Britain to its fullest development in the 13th-century French Lancelot-Grail cycle. The course will look at the way the various developments of the legend were rooted in specific historical circumstances and yet contributed to the elaboration of a rich and complex narrative that has been appropriated in different ways by each succeeding period of Western European culture.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RLAN
Identical With: RL&L176
Prereq: None

MDST236 Don Quixote: How to Read the Ultimate Novel
No novel is more celebrated than "Don Quixote," albeit in often contrary ways: touchstone at once of the modern and the post-modern; of prosaic and magical realism; of Romantic idealism and skepticism, relativism, or materialism; of a truth-telling folly; and of the competing claims of books and "life" or history and fiction. Sample superlatives: the one text that can challenge Shakespeare in the Western canon (Harold Bloom), all prose fiction is a variation on its theme (Lionel Trilling), one of the four great myths of modern individualism (Ian Watt). Each generation recognizes itself differently in it and every major literary tradition has made it its own. One secret of its lasting appeal is that, brilliantly improvisatory
and encyclopedic, it resists being pinned down. Nothing quite prepares us for the hallucinatory thing itself. There is something for every taste: self-invention; the biology of personality; humor, pathos, and tragicomedy; high and low culture; prose, poetry, and theatrics; episodic variety in a long narrative arc; probing examination of the ambiguities of heroism with a parade of spirited and resourceful heroines who rival and often upstage the heroes; and the disruptive transformations of a new world order (the print, educational, and military revolutions; early modern globalization; incipient capitalism; the explosive growth of profit-driven entertainments). A celebration of the transformative power of imagination even as it casts a gimlet eye on how fantasies can go awry, what passes for “the real world” is often as nutty as the hero himself. We will read, discuss, and write about “Don Quixote” in English, together with key examples of the critical, philosophical, literary, and artistic responses it has inspired. The course assumes no familiarity with literature, history, or Spanish; it does call for an interest in grappling with this wonderful text closely, imaginatively, and historically.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RLAN
Identical With: RL&L236, COL236, WLIT247
Prereq: None

MDST237 Dante in His World: Politics, Poetry, Religion
Dante Alighieri is one of the great figures of European history and culture. He has been famous since his life, especially for his poem “The Divine Comedy,” including its depictions of the Inferno, Purgatory, and Heaven. It reveals his massive intellectual knowledge and his deep and complex commitments. It might be less well known that he was also an active politician and a political theorist, as well as a student of literature and style.

This course will examine the body of his work and use it to outline some of the great political, moral, and religious crises of Europe around the year 1300, a moment closely connected to the very idea of the Middle Ages. Important course themes will include the question of the political balance of church and state, the role of mysticism and philosophy in expressing ethics, and the uses of history, theory, and poetry in seeking the good life. Readings will focus on Dante’s own writings, including “The Divine Comedy,” “The New Life” (La Vita Nuova), and “On Monarchy.”

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-HIST
Identical With: HIST236, WLIT342
Prereq: None

MDST238 Mystics and Militants: Medieval Women Writers
In this class we will read a wide range of works written by European women between ca. 1100–1400, including courtly, devotional, and polemical texts. The course will explore ideologies of gender in the Middle Ages and examine the ways in which our authors confronted the misogynist discourses of their eras with learning and imagination. We will consider such topics as constructions of sexuality and the body, “courtly love,” mystical religious experience, heresies, humanism, and utopian realms. In short, we will read works by women who created their own forms of authority and in doing so, both influenced and defied the authorities of their time.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ENGL
Identical With: ENGL232, FGSS224, RL&L231

Prereq: None

MDST241 Revolutionary Lives: How a Life Becomes Political Power, Middle Ages to Modernity
Death is not enough to turn a life into a political movement. That translation requires a story. This course asks why, since Gandhi, few leaders have successfully drawn upon the power of adopting a revolutionary approach to living as a means of effecting political, social, and cultural change. A student-centered collaborative pedagogy equips students with the tools and concepts to collectively workshop principles drawn from a wide range of examples of revolutionary living from the period known as the middle ages; from well-known and widely imitated examples such as the Buddha, the Prophet, and the Christ, to lesser-known examples including cross-dressing nuns, hermits on pillars, desert mothers, begging collectives, and much more. Students will then apply the ways these past lives were remembered and transmitted to contemporary movements such as Occupy Wall Street or the Black Lives Matter CHOP in Seattle. Course assignments consist of short essays, presentations, and a self-designed final project that can be analytical, creative, or demonstrative.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-COL
Identical With: COL221, HIST232
Prereq: None

MDST245 The Invention of Fiction: Giovanni Boccaccio’s Decameron
In this course we read and discuss Giovanni Boccaccio’s Decameron (ca. 1353), a collection of 100 short stories traded by an “honest brigade” of 10 Florentine men and women. They tell each other these stories while sheltered in a secluded villa as the plague of 1348 rages in Florence. We study the Decameron as both a product and an interpretation of the world Boccaccio inhabited. We examine the Decameron’s tales and narrative frame as a point of entry into the cultural and social environment of medieval Italy. We look at its scurrilous, amusing, and provocative innuendos as traces of erotic, religious, ethnic, and cultural questions. We investigate the sexual exuberance of many of Boccaccio’s tales and the tension between “high” and “low” culture. We consider the development of mercantilism and literacy in early-modern Europe and its emerging virtues of wit and self-reliance. We review the dynamics of composition and reception in manuscript culture and the book’s adaptation into different media, from illuminations to film. And by impersonating the 10 Florentines, we will reenact their pastime of telling stories and appreciate Boccaccio’s remarkably modern sensibility and unsurpassed art of writing fiction. This course is conducted in Italian.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RLAN
Identical With: ITAL235, COL255
Prereq: None

MDST247 Devotion and Deception: Erotic Discourse from Dante to Petrarca
In this course, we will investigate the ideology, content, and material forms of love literature from Dante Alighieri to Francesco Petrarca. Through a close reading of such texts as Dante’s Vita nova (ca. 1295), Giovanni Boccaccio’s Decameron (ca. 1353), and Petrarca’s Rerum vulgarium fragmenta (often referred to as the poetry book par excellence: il canzoniere, ca. 1374), we will unveil the literary and fictitious nature of medieval erotic literature. We will explore the origins of love poetry in medieval France and its subsequent interpretation and rewriting in Italian courts and comuni. We will inquire into the cultural constructions of the medieval notion of the lyrical self and how it still has an impact on our own notion of consciousness. We will study the forms, themes, and characters that populate ‘love stories’ in the Middle Ages. We will analyze the dynamics of composition, circulation, and reception in manuscript culture. Our close analysis of the texts as they have been preserved in manuscript form
will help us gauge the differences between medieval and contemporary ways of writing, reading, and loving. This course is conducted in Italian.

**Offering:** Crosslisting

**Grading:** A-F

**Credits:** 1.00

**Gen Ed Area:** HA-RLAN

**Identical With:** ITAL227, COL296

**Prereq:** None

**MDST254 Cervantes**

Cervantes is known chiefly for DON QUIXOTE, often described as the first modern novel and fountainhead of one of the great modern myths of individualism. DON QUIXOTE also reimagines virtually every fashionable, popular, and disputable literary genre of its time: chivalric, pastoral, picaresque, sentimental, adventure, and Moorish novels; the novella; verse forms; drama; and even the ways these kinds of literary entertainment were circulated and consumed, debated, celebrated, and reviled. It is a book about the life-enhancing (and endangering) power of books and reading and the interplay of fiction and history and truths and lies. Cervantes’ art remains fresh and unsettling, sparing no one and nothing, including the author and his work. Distinguished by its commitment to the serious business of humor, make-believe, and play, the novel is at once a literary tour de force and a fascinating lens through which to examine the political, social, religious, and intellectual debates of its moment. Characteristic themes include social reality as artifact or fiction, the paradoxical character of truths, the irreducible diversity of taste and perception, the call for consent in politics and love, and personal identity (including gender) as a heroic quest. In this course, we will read, discuss, and write about DON QUIXOTE, along with a sampling of critical, philosophical, literary, and artistic responses it has inspired.

**Offering:** Crosslisting

**Grading:** A-F

**Credits:** 1.00

**Gen Ed Area:** HA-RLAN

**Identical With:** SPAN236, COL327

**Prereq:** None

**MDST255 The Vikings and the Viking Age, 700-1243**

The Vikings erupted from their isolated northern homelands throughout Europe from the eighth century, and arguably reoriented European history both in the West, where they were instrumental in the history of the British Isles and France, as well as the East, where they were founders of the Russian kingdom. By 1100, they and their descendants had also established themselves in the Mediterranean, Italy, Sicily, and the Holy Land. This course will examine the reasons the Vikings emerged, and will explain their role not only as warriors, but as important merchants, administrators, and contributors to a robust European literary culture. They provide the perfect avenue by which to understand the creation of European culture and politics. The course will also act as an introduction to the dark age history of England, France, and Northern Europe.

**Offering:** Crosslisting

**Grading:** OPT

**Credits:** 1.00

**Gen Ed Area:** SBS-HIST

**Identical With:** HIST255

**Prereq:** None

**MDST257 Knights, Fools, and Lovers: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance French Culture**

The study of history and past literature provides intellectual, psychological and emotional resources that make one more resilient in adapting to new circumstances, enable one to see new possibilities of being-in-the-world, and provide new capacities for self-understanding. A knowledge of the European past, moreover, can be an advantage for people seeking to study, live, or work in Europe. This course will help students develop those resources and knowledge through a study of various forms of short fiction and poetry from the French Middle Ages and the Renaissance (12th-16th centuries). We will focus on the representations of human relations, above all romantic relations and their inherent conflicts of power, in these works. We will also view a couple of historical films in order to develop our visual imagination.

**Offering:** Crosslisting

**Grading:** A-F

**Credits:** 1.00

**Gen Ed Area:** HA-RLAN

**Identical With:** ITAL256

**Prereq:** None

**MDST258 Medieval Gigs: Saints, Scholars, Sailors, Sinners**

A friar preaching to birds, a scoundrel passing as a saint, a nun conversing with Jesus, a Greek hero sinking into hell, a scholar talking to the dead, and a merchant exploring uncharted territories: We find unusual professional figures giggling in Italy circa 1300. In this course we explore medieval alterity through the voices of its most illustrious representatives: from Francis of Assisi to Dante Alighieri, and through a variety of other workers in the Italian economy. We examine various aspects of medieval religious culture ranging from mystical visions to the institutional politics of the Church. We consider the development of mercantile capitalism and its emerging virtues of wit and self-reliance. We track seafarers as they encounter the Other during their maritime voyages. For those staying closer to home, like clerics and other literate "Italians," we review the dynamics of composition and reception from orality to manuscript culture. We observe how medieval culture is embodied through different media, from manuscript illuminations to film. And by combining micro- and macro-perspectives, we approach the Italian Middle Ages from a broad aesthetic, historical, and socio-anthropological standpoint.

The course is conducted in Italian. Authors include Francis of Assisi, Catherine of Siena, Angela of Foligno, Giotto, Dante Alighieri, Francesco Petrarcha, Giovanni Boccaccio, Marco Polo, and Christopher Columbus.

**Offering:** Crosslisting

**Grading:** A-F

**Credits:** 1.00

**Gen Ed Area:** HA-RLAN

**Identical With:** ITAL256

**Prereq:** None

**MDST268 The Origins of Global Capitalism: Economic History, 1400–1800**

This course explores how the modern market economy came into being in Europe and why this system expanded outward to bring the rest of the world into its orbit by 1800. Among other things, it seeks to provide answers for why China’s economy—perhaps the most sophisticated in the world before 1500—fell into relative stagnation and why Europe was the first region to develop mechanized industry and break out of a poverty trap that had restricted prosperity for millennia. The course begins by exploring late medieval European agriculture, market systems, institutions, and technology to reveal how the paths of economic development taken in Europe began to diverge fundamentally from those taken by societies in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. It will explore the role of the spice trade in the expansion of European influence abroad, the significance of new food and cash crops in the development of plantation systems and long-haul trade, the impact of organized coercion in the development of monopolies and monopoly companies, and the role of proto-industrial methods of production and colonial economies in the birth of the Industrial Revolution. The course aims to be accessible, broad, and comparative, drawing insights from many fields to consider the environmental, geographical, cultural, institutional, and political factors shaping the economic changes that have created modern capitalism.

**Offering:** Crosslisting

**Grading:** OPT

**Credits:** 1.00

**Gen Ed Area:** SBS-HIST
This seminar will explore the works produced by the pluralistic societies of medieval Iberia from the perspectives of art, architecture, history, archaeology, literature, and music. As we study renowned monuments such as the synagogues of Toledo, the Alhambra, and the Way of St. James, we will learn to decode elements such as dress and home decor, food and hygiene, and gardening and agriculture, to expand our picture of culture and lived experience. Finally, we will ask why "convivencia" ultimately failed, and how the medieval Iberian experience can enlighten our own uneasy attempts at building a multicultural, multi-confessional society.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ENGL
Identical With: ENGL310
Prereq: None

MDST312 The Medieval Beast
How did medieval writers think about the distinction between human and animal? This course will begin with the categories of soul and body, ruler and ruled, speech and noise—among others. We will also read about human-animal hybrids like werewolves and bird-men in order to think through some of these binaries. Texts will include bestiaries (encyclopedias of animals), treatises on hunting, beast-fables from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish traditions, Marie de France’s “Lais” and “Fables,” Chrétien de Troyes’s “Knight of the Lion,” “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,” and Chaucer’s “Parliament of Fowls.”

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ENGL
Identical With: ENGL310
Prereq: None

MDST313 Medieval Manuscripts
Medieval manuscripts were dense, considered gatherings of text and image, and they are among the richest of artifacts bequeathed to us by the Middle Ages. Manuscripts both crystallized and intervened in many of the key intellectual, religious, and aesthetic foundations of medieval Europe. To step into a luxurious medieval manuscript—into its script, its miniatures, its marginal decoration, its scrabbles, its little monsters and unexpected grotesques, its tears and signs of use—is to probe definitions of painted image and written word that differ markedly from our own today. Throughout, basic questions of the relationship between text and image, and the linguistic and the pictorial, repeatedly beg attention. How were these books made, who used them (if they were used at all), how did the reading process unfold in the medieval period, and how did pictorial decoration assist in revealing—or, perhaps, obscuring—truth? These
questions, and more, will inform this seminar’s systematic inquiry of the making, function, and layout of the medieval book, from its Late Antique origins to the 15th-century advent of printing.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-ART
Identical With: ARHA312
Prereq: None

MDST315 The Politics of the French Language and the Birth of the French State

Today, the advantages of national borders and monolingual language policies are being trumpeted all across the world. And yet, the study of premodern languages and literatures reveals that the history of national languages has always been a multicultural affair. In this course, we will look at the case of the French language, particularly the establishment of French as a literary language through strategies of legitimization. Starting with an examination of the first text written in the language that would later become French, from the 9th century, we will then go on to study (in modern French) a series of medieval and early-modern poems, plays, treatises and essays that borrow from other languages and literatures, even as they establish French as a literary and a national language. The final portion of this class will include a meditation on the status of French language in contemporary Francophone countries based on Derrida’s essay "Le monolinguisme de l’autre.”

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RLAN
Identical With: FREN315
Prereq: None

MDST321 Dialogues of Love: A Close Reading

Towards the end of the fifteenth century amidst the burgeoning cultures of the Italian Renaissance in Naples, Genova, and Venice, the exiled Ibero-Sephardic philosopher and physician Judah Abravanel (Leone Ebreo) composed a philosophical work on erotic ethics as a dialogue between love (Philone) and wisdom (Sophia). "The Dialogues of Love" (1535) presented early modern readers with an erotic cosmology which drew upon Ancient and Medieval texts including Plato, Neo-Platonism, Neo-Aristotelianism, Kabbalah, and scriptural commentary. Widely translated, read, and reprinted throughout the sixteenth century, this text animated literary and cultural life throughout sixteenth-century Europe, finding its way into the work of poets and fiction writers such as Miguel de Cervantes. This course engages this unique and breathtaking work of early modern philosophy through a close reading of a Renaissance cosmos staged as a lovers’ courtship.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-COL
Identical With: COL321, RL&L321, CJIST321
Prereq: None

MDST330 Lancelot, Guinevere, Grail: Enigma in the Romances of Chretien de Troyes

Chretien de Troyes, the greatest writer of medieval France, was the first to tell the stories of Lancelot and Guinevere’s fatal passion and of the quest for the Holy Grail. Written at the height of the Renaissance of the 12th century, his Arthurian tales became the basis for all future retellings of the legend. We will read these tales in depth, paying particular attention to their enigmatic quality.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-RLAN
Identical With: FREN330
MDST376 Travel and Communication in Europe

Prereq:

Identical With:

Gen Ed Area:

Credits:

Grading:

Offering:

This course will explore the character of travel and communication networks, patterns, technologies, and ideas in Europe in the medieval and early modern periods. Students will therefore learn the concept of travel and mobility, whether commercial, cultural, or bureaucratic, and the concept of notable reconfigurations and acceleration of exchange in this period. Beyond ideas, the networks they linked to will be prominent. These include technologies such as the bridge, road, and wayfinding, as well as cybernetic creations like the riding horse (with iron shoes and complex needs); the development of institutions of hospitality, like the monastery, the hostel and the inn; and the adaptation of writing to facilitate motion and communication. Due attention will be paid to exotic travel such as crusading, pilgrimage and warfare; however, routine business travel will be key, such as the trips required by law, by trade, by the search for money, and the desire to see family.

Methodologically, the course will focus on the idea of networks and the techniques of the digital humanities. Thus, text mining for information; mapping in GIS (Geographic Information Systems); and analyzing network relations will be important additions to the usual historical skills of reading and writing essays.

Offering: Crosslisting

Grading: OPT

Credits: 1.00

Gen Ed Area: SBS-HIST

Identical With: HIST376

Prereq: None

MDST378 Visionary Journeys through Sacred Landscapes: Japanese Art of Pilgrimage

This course examines the ways in which religious paintings were used and viewed in medieval Japan. Emphasis will be laid on images of sacred landscapes and the visionary journeys they inspired. Though primarily conceived as fundraising tools and advertisements aimed at inspiring viewers to undertake a physical journey to the illustrated site, these images became sacred in their own right and were approached by worshipers as one would approach the enshrined deity of the represented site. They also allowed spiritual travel through the images, providing virtual pilgrims with the karmic benefits of actual pilgrimage without the hardships of travel.

Each week we will immerse ourselves in a sacred site, reading about its history, deities, religious practices, and unique benefits. We will then look at how these were given visual form and the artistic language developed to endow these visual representations with the power to inspire and move contemporary audiences.

Offering: Crosslisting

Grading: A-F

Credits: 1.00

Gen Ed Area: HA-ART

Identical With: ARHA379, CEAS379

Prereq: None

MDST379 Christianity and Sexuality

This course will explore a range of Christian teachings on, attitudes toward, and technologies of sex and sexuality. We will read medieval and modern theologies of sexuality, as well as contemporary historical, sociological, and cultural studies. Points of focus will include confession, mysticism, marriage, celibacy, queer and trans practices and identities, and reproductive justice.

Offering: Crosslisting

Grading: A-F

Credits: 1.00

Gen Ed Area: HA-RELI

Identical With: RELI379, FGSS309

Prereq: None
Offering: **Crosslisting**
Grading: **OPT**
Credits: **1.00**
Gen Ed Area: **None**
Prereq: **None**

**MDST401 Individual Tutorial, Undergraduate**
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: **Host**
Grading: **OPT**

**MDST402 Individual Tutorial, Undergraduate**
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: **Host**
Grading: **OPT**

**MDST403 Department/Program Project or Essay**
Project to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: **Host**
Grading: **A-F**

**MDST404 Department/Program Project or Essay**
Project to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: **Host**
Grading: **A-F**

**MDST407 Senior Tutorial (downgraded thesis)**
Downgraded Senior Thesis Tutorial - Project to be arranged in consultation with the tutor. Only enrolled in through the Honors Coordinator.
Offering: **Host**
Grading: **A-F**

**MDST408 Senior Tutorial (downgraded thesis)**
Downgraded Senior Thesis Tutorial - Project to be arranged in consultation with the tutor. Only enrolled in through the Honors Coordinator.
Offering: **Host**
Grading: **A-F**

**MDST409 Senior Thesis Tutorial**
Topic to be arranged in consultation with tutor.
Offering: **Host**
Grading: **OPT**

**MDST410 Senior Thesis Tutorial**
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: **Host**
Grading: **OPT**

**MDST411 Group Tutorial, Undergraduate**
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: **Host**
Grading: **OPT**

**MDST412 Group Tutorial, Undergraduate**
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: **Host**
Grading: **OPT**

**MDST466 Education in the Field**
Offering: **Host**
Grading: **OPT**

**MDST470 Independent Study, Undergraduate**
Credit may be earned for an independent study during a summer or authorized leave of absence provided that (1) plans have been approved in advance, and (2) all specified requirements have been satisfied.
Offering: **Host**
Grading: **OPT**