Program Statement

I have always been drawn to the Middle Ages, perhaps because of the mystery surrounding this period in the modern mind. When thinking of the Middle Ages, people either think of the plague, violent crusades, and the loss of classical knowledge, or they think of fairy-tale princesses in towers and valiant knights in tournaments. Though these two opposing images are based on some sort of truth, the reality is clearly much more nuanced and interesting. What is termed as “The Middle Ages” covers a span of a thousand years and numerous cultural, ethnographic, linguistic, and societal changes throughout Europe. The roots of many modern thoughts and developments that many people attribute to the Renaissance can actually be found in the medieval period.

The primary focus of my program studying the Medieval World has been the many facets of cultural history in Western Europe, as represented through literature. Medieval attitudes towards women, religion, the self, and the other have all been reflected through my coursework. Sources I studied have ranged from the sacred to the profane, from instructive to humorous, and from biographical to imaginary, providing a wide scope of ideas and thoughts that all represent medieval mindsets.

The role of women and society has probably been the largest focus in my society through literary evidence of how they were perceived within culture, as well as historical examples of powerful or famous women. Female characters who play a prominent role in literature, such as the satirical Wife of Bath in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, reflect dominant ideas of a woman’s sexuality, proper behavior, and even social anxieties towards women. Representations of female rulers and saints in both historical and literary documents demonstrate these same ideas but can also provide examples of women who superseded the boundaries normally prescribed to them. Similarly, female writers such as Margery Kempe and Christine de Pizan provide the immensely important perspective of women expressing themselves within a society in which they were the minority as female authors.

Another important aspect of my cultural study has been studying both religious and secular literature and examining how they intersected. Comedy and satire play with the boundary, blurring the lines between the two categories and proving how integrated they both were in medieval life. Even saints’ lives demonstrate the important relationship between the elevated and mundane aspects of divinity that medieval people experienced, as religion permeated into the everyday details of their lives.

On a larger scope, my work has focused on how medieval people perceived themselves as individuals within a broader communal landscape. They were defining themselves based on a shared historic and folkloric past that shaped their ideas of nationality and religion, but were also sharing a contemporary set of topos and genres unique to their own time. My senior thesis, by examining questions of gender, power, religiosity, and visual culture brought these many interests together.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall ’13</td>
<td>Sean Gilsdorf</td>
<td>HIST-LIT 90an</td>
<td>God Save the Queen: Ruling Women from Rome to the Renaissance</td>
<td>Examined ideals of rulership and how women have had to either fit into the Western stereotypes of a patriarchal system or create their own spheres of power and authority throughout the Middle Ages and early Renaissance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ’14</td>
<td>Stephen Mitchell</td>
<td>FOLKMYTH 106</td>
<td>The History of Witchcraft and Charm Magic</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary approach to the phenomenon of witch hunts: political, psychological, social, and religious implications of scapegoating, mistrust of women, and categorizing liminality in Western society, particularly in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ’14</td>
<td>Luis Giron-Negron</td>
<td>LITER 157</td>
<td>From Type to Self in the Middle Ages</td>
<td>Examined medieval texts where the author was also the protagonists, considering the literary topos each text was using as a frame and how medieval writers conceptualized the individual as a participant in the communal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ’14</td>
<td>Nicholas Watson</td>
<td>ENGLISH 115b</td>
<td>Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales</td>
<td>A close-reading of Chaucer’s text, contextualizing the many different types of genres represented within the literary and historical world Chaucer was inhabiting. It also examined the framework of the pilgrimage and the storytellers themselves as playing a role in the larger social satire Chaucer constructed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ’14</td>
<td>Cemal Kafadar</td>
<td>HIST 88b</td>
<td>Medieval History and Cinema</td>
<td>Examined films that represented medieval history from all over the world, discussing to what extend film can represent history as well as the time it was a product of. Compared films to historical records of the same events they were portraying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ’15</td>
<td>University of Edinburgh</td>
<td>STUDY ABROAD</td>
<td>Introduction to Medieval History, 1200-1450</td>
<td>Survey course covering the major events and movements of the latter half of the middle ages, including the Crusades, the Papal schism, the Black Death, the Peasant’s Revolt, Christian mysticism, and the relevant historiography.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ’15</td>
<td>Daniel Donoghue</td>
<td>ENGLISH 90cl</td>
<td>Comic Literature through the Middle Ages</td>
<td>Looked at comedy written especially during the latter half of the Middle Ages in Europe, including fabliaux, satire, and parody. Discussed the theory behind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Field: Medieval World

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring '16</td>
<td>CULTBLF 51</td>
<td>Making the Middle Ages</td>
<td>Focused on the materiality of the medieval era, studying objects and artifacts as vehicles to better understand cultural phenomenon and beliefs. These were paired with texts of different genres, representing a broad range of medieval mindsets and ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring '16</td>
<td>FRENCH 112</td>
<td>Lyric Poetry in Medieval and Renaissance France</td>
<td>The development of lyric poetry in France through the earlier trouver period through the later medieval troubadour poetry and on to Renaissance poets, examining the musicality, language, and themes present throughout these poems that could either be narrative or reflective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring '14</td>
<td>CELTIC 138</td>
<td>Mabinogion: Narrative Traditions of Medieval Wales</td>
<td>Close-reading of the eleven stories of the Mabinogion, studying them within the historical and folkloric context they were products of through their development as oral stories and finally as a recorded text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall '14</td>
<td>CELTIC 118</td>
<td>The Gaelic World: 1100-1700</td>
<td>Studied the general social structure of mainly Ireland and Scotland through half of a century, focusing on the poets and writers and their role within Gaelic culture as well as the tradition they constructed and recorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring '16</td>
<td>CELTIC 184</td>
<td>The Tain</td>
<td>Close-reading of the Irish text of the Tain Bo Cuailnge (The Cattle-Raid of Cooley), recorded in the Middle Ages but set in a more ancient time of Irish history.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Related Courses**
Topics

PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER

Primary
Heldris de Cornauille, *Silence* (early 13th c.)  
*Le Ménagier de Paris* (1393)
Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405)
Alain Chartier, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* (1424)  
William of Dunbar, “Two Married Women and the Widow” (1508)

Secondary
A. J. Minnis, “Chapter 4: Gender as Fallibility” in *Fallible Authors* (2008)  

ARTHURIAN LEGENDS

Primary
Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain* (1136)
Mabinogion, “Culhwch and Olwen,” “The Dream of Rhonabwy,” “Owain,” “Peredur,”  
“Geraint ac Enid” (12th-13th c.)
Marie de France, “Lanval” in *Lays* (late 12th c.)
Chretien de Troyes, *Yvain and The Knight of the Cart* (1170-90)
Chaucer, “Wife of Bath’s Tale” in *The Canterbury Tales* (1387-1400)
Thomas Malory, *Le Morte D’Arthur* (1485)

Secondary

HOLY WOMEN

Primary
Venantius Fortunatus, *Life of Radegund* (6th c.)  
Sophronius, *The Life of Mary of Egypt* (634-8)
Hildegard von Bingen, *Scivias* (1151-2)
Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe* (1420-1432)  
“The Twelve Articles of Accusation” in *Joan of Arc: La Pucelle* (1431)

Secondary
Lilas Edwards, “Joan of Arc: Gender and Authority in the Test of the Trial of  
Condemnation,” in *Young Medieval Women* (1999)
SATIRE

**Primary**
- *Aucassin et Nicolette* (12th-13th c.)
- “Land of Cocaygne” (late 13th c.)
- Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* (1387-1400)
- Chaucer, *The Parliament of Fowles* (late 14th c.)
- Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1534)

**Secondary**
- Jill Mann, *Chaucer and the Medieval Estates Satire* (1973)

FOREIGN ENCOUNTERS

**Primary**
- *The Song of Roland* (1050)
- Fulcher of Chartres, *Chronicle* (1106)
- *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela* (1175)
- Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland* (1188)
- *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck* (1255)

**Secondary**
- Sharon Kinoshita, “Pagans are Wrong and Christians are Right: Alterity, Gender and the Nation in the Chanson de Roland” in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* (2001)
Bibliography

PRIMARY TEXTS

Historical

Prokopios, The Secret History (6th c.)
Gregory of Tours, History of the Franks (6th c.)
Ermoldus the Black, Poem in Honor of Louis (9th c.)
"Lothar II’s Divorce" (9th c.)
Fulcher of Chartres, Chronicle (1106)
Geoffrey of Monmouth, History of the Kings of Britain (1136)
Gerald of Wales, The History and Topography of Ireland (1188)
The Trotula (12th c.)
Jean Froissart, Chronicles (1361-1400)
“The Twelve Articles of Accusation” (1431) in Joan of Arc: La Pucelle
“The Opinions of the University of Paris” (1431) in Joan of Arc: La Pucelle
Elizabeth I, speeches on marriage and succession (1559-67)
Newes from Scotland (1591)
“Issobel Gowdie’s Third Confession” (1662)
“The History of the Devils of Loudun, the Alleged Possession of the Ursuline Nuns, and the Trial and Execution of Urbain Grandier” (17th c.)

Biographical

Itinerarium Egeriae (385)
Augustine, Confessions (397-400)
Venantius Fortunatus, Life of Radegund (6th c.)
Sophronius, The Life of Mary of Egypt (634-8)
Anonymous, Life of Balthild (7th c.)
The Book of Ahmed Ibn Fadlan (925)
Encomium Emmae Reginae (1041-42)
A Monk’s Confessions: The Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent (1115)
The Letters of Heloise and Abelard (1120-50)
The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela (1175)
Ibn Shaddad, The Life of Saladin (early 13th c.)
The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck (1255)
Jean de Joinville, The Life of Saint Louis (1309)
Boccaccio, Famous Men (1355-74) and Famous Women (1374)
Chaucer, The Legend of Good Women (late 14th c.)
Margery Kempe, The Book of Margery Kempe (1420-1432)
Teresa de Ávila, Life (1567)

Literary
The Song of Roland (1050)
The Song of Roland

Troubadour Poetry: Guillaume de Poitiers, Marcabru, Jaufre Rudel, Raimbaut d’Orange, Arnaut Daniel (12th c.)

Chrétien de Troyes, The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes (1170-90)

Táin Bó Cúailnge (12th c.)

Marie de France, Lais (late 12th c.)

Trouveres poetry: Chretien de Troyes, Le Chatelain de Coucy, Thibaut de Champagne, Rutebeuf (12th-13th c.)

The Mabinogion (12th-13th c.)

Aucassin et Nicolette (12th-13th c.)

Heldris de Cornuaille, Silence (early 13th c.)

Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, The Romance of the Rose (1230)

Land of Cocaygne (late 13th c.)

Dante, Vita Nuova (1295), Inferno (1308-1320), Purgatorio (1308-1320)

Juan Ruiz, Book of Good Love (1330-1343)

Guillaume de Machaut, Remede de Fortune (1340)

Boccaccio, The Decameron (1348-1353)

Jean Froissart, L’épinette amoureuse (1369)

Geoffroy de la Tour Landry, The Book of the Knight of the Tower (1372)

Le Ménagier de Paris (1393)

Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales (1387-1400)

Chaucer, The Parliaments of Fowles (late 14th c.)

Christine de Pizan, The Book of the City of Ladies (1405)

Christine de Pizan, The Treasure of the City of Ladies (1405)

Alain Chartier, La Belle Dame Sans Merci (1424)

Francois Villon, Le Testament (1461)

Thomas Malory, Le Morte D’Arthur (1485)

Dunbar, Two Married Women and the Widow (1508)

John Heywood, Johan Johan (1520)

Rabelais, Garguantua and Pantagruel (1534)

Dane Hew, the Munk of Leicestre (late 16th c.)

The Friars of Berwick (late 16th c.)

Religious

Sahih Muslim: Book of Vision (9th c.)

Bernard of Angers, The Book of Miracles of Saint Foy (1013-20)

Otloh, The Book of Visions (1060)

Hildegard of Bingen, Scivias (1151-52)

Boniface VIII, Papal Bulls “Clerics Laicos” (1296), “Unam Sanctam” (1302)

John of Morygni, Book of the Flowers of Heavenly Teaching: The Book of Visions (early 14th c.)

Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love (1395)

John Knox, The First Blast of the Trumpet (1558)

Daemonology (1597)
SECONDARY TEXTS

Gender/Women

Carol Clover, "Regardless of Sex: Men, Women, and Power in Early Northern Europe" in *Speculum* (1993)
Peggy McCracken, "Rumors, Rivalries, and the Queen's Secret Adultery" in *The Romance of Adultery* (1998)
Janet Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels" in *Medieval Women* (1978)

Visual History

Jane Ashelford, *Dress in the Age of Elizabeth I* (1988)
Richard La Motte, "Designing Costumes for the Historical Film" in *Cineaste* (2004)
Elizabeth W. Pomeroy, *Reading the Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (1989)

**Religious Commentary**


Joshua Trachtenberg, “Devil Incarnal” in *The Devil and the Jews* (1943)

**Historical Commentary**


Lillian M. Bisson, *Chaucer and the Late Medieval World* (1998)


Gary Dickson, “The Crowd at the Feet of Pope Boniface VIII: pilgrimage, crusade and the first Roman Jubilee (1300)” in *Journal of Medieval History* (1999)


Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean
Field: Medieval World

*History (2000)*
Tomaz Mastnak, *Crusading Peace: Christendom, the Muslim World, and Western Political Order* (2002)

*Literary Commentary*
Sharon Kinoshita, "Pagans are Wrong and Christians are Right: Alterity, Gender and the Nation in the Chanson de Roland," in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* (2001)
Jill Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire* (1973)