

# MEDIEVAL HISTORY 2017-2018

## ELEVENTH GRADE

MR. RICHARD COX (RCOX@WESTMINSTERKNIGHTS.ORG)

**Course Objective** – Westminster School seeks to provide a Christ-centered mastery of historical events with emphasis on the study of original historical documents as an integral part of a well-rounded educational program. History is the unfolding of events under the hand of a sovereign God who controls the universe, and we will further explore his will throughout the ages.

### **How do you say “medieval”?**

You’d be surprised, but some people prefer “medi-evil” over the more popular “mid-evil.” Perhaps this is to accentuate the origin of the term in the Latin phrase *medium aevum* or the “middle age.” We call it this because it is the period between the fall of Rome and the rebirth of culture in the fourteenth-century Renaissance. Some know it as the “Dark Ages.” While this is a somewhat unfortunate title (the medieval world is rich with poetry, epic, theological treatises, historiography), it conveys that the classical world had indeed come to an end, and that it would one day rise from the ashes, so to speak.

This class will focus specifically on the historical developments of this middle age, mostly in Europe, but with some attention to Africa and the Near East. Because so much of what we read will concern the development of Christianity and the rise of Islam, it should be easy to see the relevance this course could have for a Christian student living in America in the twenty-first century.

Beyond its relevance, though, your teachers hope that the study of medieval history will deepen your understanding of yourself as a member of the mystical body of Christ known as “the Church” and its place in the grander middle age that comes between the first and second appearances of our Lord. While he is away, the Church has been deemed the primary means of expanding the kingdom of Jesus. But as we will see, she has not always acted in the spirit of her Lord’s teachings. Nonetheless, we are the heirs of what our spiritual ancestors left us, whether that takes the form of the crusades or the *Summa Theologiae*. We will approach these ancient Christians with charity and honesty, but without excusing their errors and vices.

### **Essential Questions**

What is Christendom and does it work?

What was important to the inhabitants of the medieval world?

How did the church and Christianity change during the Middle Ages?

Where do we agree and disagree with the beliefs and practices of the medieval church?

### **Goals**

1. To read some of the best (i.e., most interesting, influential, and entertaining) literature ever written.
2. To search out and find our own baseless prejudices, false opinions, and other problematic thinking.
3. To correct the things mentioned in #2.
4. To become better readers, writers, thinkers.
5. To become better (i.e., more skilled and more charitable) dialogue partners.

### **Assessments**

40% of your quarterly grade consists of “minor assessments” (quizzes, homework, discussions, and participation) while 60% consists of “major assessments” (tests and papers/projects). Regular quizzes and homework assignments are purposefully designed to either reinforce subject matter previously covered in class or prepare students for upcoming discussion and learning.

At least three major assessments will be given per quarter as well as a semester exam in December and cumulative final exam in May that will focus on big picture ideas from our yearlong study of history. To assist students in establishing a broad understanding of Medieval Europe’s history, students will memorize a timeline of thirty key

events and dates in medieval history (fifteen per semester). This timeline will be included on both the semester and final exams. Students must adhere to the Student Handbook in regards to academic guidelines, such as the late work policy that calls for an 11% grade reduction per late day for major projects and papers.

### Medieval Timeline

1	311 AD	Galerius's Edict of Toleration legalizes the practice of Christianity.
2	325 AD	The Council of Nicea determines that Father and Son are <i>homoousios</i> .
3	378 AD	At the Battle of Adrianople Valens is defeated and killed by the Goths.
4	380 AD	Theodosius makes Nicene Christianity the official state religion.
5	405 AD	Jerome completes his Latin Vulgate (translation of the Bible).
6	410 AD	Alaric and the Visigoths sack Rome.
7	426 AD	Augustine publishes <i>City of God</i> .
8	452 AD	Attila attacks Rome, but leaves without sacking.
9	476 AD	General Odoacar deposes last western emperor.
10	493 AD	Theodoric assassinates Odoacer and begins his reign in Italy.
11	524 AD	Boethius writes <i>The Consolation of Philosophy</i> .
12	527 AD	Justinian begins reign as emperor of Byzantium.
13	543 AD	Saint Benedict dies.
14	632 AD	The prophet Muhammad dies.
15	732 AD	Frankish king Charles Martel defeats Umayyad Muslims at the Battle of Tours.
16	800 AD	Charlemagne is crowned Holy Roman Emperor.
17	843 AD	The Carolingian Empire is divided in the Treaty of Verdun.
18	878 AD	King Alfred the Great defeats the Vikings at the Battle of Edington.
19	936 AD	The beginning of the reign of Otto the Great.
20	1054 AD	Eastern and Western churches officially sever diplomatic ties.
21	1066 AD	William Duke of Normandy defeats Harold Godwinson at the Battle of Hastings.
22	1071 AD	Seljuk Turks defeat the Byzantines at the Battle of Manzikert
23	1099 AD	The Sack of Jerusalem ends the First Crusade.
24	1204 AD	Sack of Constantinople and the end of the Fourth Crusade
25	1215 AD	King John of England issues the Magna Carta.
26	1299 AD	The Ottoman Empire is founded by Osman I.
27	1320 AD	Dante Alighieri completes his <i>Divine Comedy</i> .
28	1348 AD	Europe's population decreases by a third due to the bubonic plague.
29	1415 AD	Henry V of England is victorious over the French at the Battle of Agincourt.
30	1453 AD	The Hundred Years War ends and Constantinople falls to the Ottomans.

### Writing Assignments

All papers should hold to the following formatting standards:

12pt Times Font (or Times New Roman)

Double spaced text

One inch margins

Page numbers

Heading with your name, my name, and the due date

In general, follow the MLA standards in the most recent handbook.

## **Plagiarism and Academic Honesty**

Any and all instances of cheating will be punished harshly, including possible failure of assignments, parent notification, and detentions or suspension. Keep in mind that plagiarism sometimes happens by accident. It is still a punishable offense. Avoiding plagiarism requires intentionality. So for all papers, tests, quizzes, and homework it is your responsibility to ensure what you turn in represents your own work, knowledge, and preparation, and that when you have used other sources, you give them proper credit.

## **General Classroom Expectations**

- Be respectful...of others, of the facilities, etc.
- Come to class each day ready to learn! This includes being prepared for class with the proper attitude and necessary completion of outside work. Homework is never assigned without a clear purpose in mind – thus your task is to complete it with the utmost effort.
- You will need to take and keep daily notes from our class lectures and discussions. These notes will be a central way we cover material for quizzes/tests.

## **Additional Course Information**

### **Harkness Discussions**

A good discussion is a great way to learn. It helps you fine tune what you do know and come to terms with what you don't know. And since you are working with others, it's always possible they will know something you don't or understand it in a way you hadn't considered. These kinds of discussions are as old as education. In ancient Greece it was practiced by Socrates and has come to be known as the Socratic Method. In more recent times, elite prep schools like Phillips-Exeter have taken their cues from Edward Harkness, a philanthropist who advocated teachers conduct class around large oval tables (like the one in the Legacy Room) where students would find it easy and natural to converse about their subject matter. This has come to be known as the Harkness Method.

Whatever the title, a good discussion requires three things: good listening, good thinking, and good speaking. First, you have to listen to the ideas of others and consider the ways they understand the issues. Second, you have to process what others are saying and develop your own opinions. Third, you have to contribute in a thoughtful, helpful, and courteous manner. In this way, a good discussion can cultivate both wisdom and eloquence.

But it requires more still. To fully participate, you must also know the text because most conversations will be based on readings. So make sure you are reading carefully and keeping good marginalia so you can find helpful references quickly in a discussion setting.

Getting a 100% on a discussion will mean you contribute a reasonable number of times, listen well and respond to others, and cite the text in at least one of your comments.

### **Reading Guides**

There are three components to good reading: anticipation, active participation, and reflection. The reading guides are designed to assist you in working through these three stages. First, I will usually provide you with a preview of a reading. Read this carefully, making sure you know the major characters I mention. Second, I give you some guidance on what to look for in using marginalia. Remember, this is a bare minimum. I will occasionally check for marginalia, and I'll be looking for at least one or two marks per page. Third, I will give you questions. Do NOT stop and answer these along the way. They are designed to help you assess your reading AFTER you have finished. You may and should read the questions ahead of time, and you may want to mark a capital Q in the margin when you notice an answer. But don't interrupt the flow of reading to write an answer, this is the opposite of what the reading guide is meant to help you with.

### **Vocabulary Improvement**

Another practice of advanced readers is finding the meaning to unfamiliar words. Choose words for each night's

reading that are either vague and unclear or totally new. Avoid proper nouns, and aim for terms you might see again. You must write the definition in your book or on a separate piece of paper to get credit. These words will be checked periodically either as part of a quiz or separately.

### **The Art of Marginalia**

What is Marginalia? Dictionary.com defines marginalia as “notes in the margin of a book, manuscript, or letter.” My favorite definition comes from the Wikipedia page on marginalia: “scribbles, comments, and illuminations in the margins of a book.”

Practicing marginalia allows you to better focus on what you are reading. By making notes as you read, your mind is actively engaged in the text and not wandering about. The “notes” and “scribbles” you make in a book can help you remember details, find patterns, and connect ideas. Marginalia also allows you to look back and easily find certain elements in the text for your own use during open book tests, class discussions, and paper writing. By writing in the margins, you are turning your book into a tool that will help you remember and process. Think of marginalia as leaving “thinking tracks” through a book. There are many joys to be found in reading and writing in the margins. Marginalia is a discussion, a talking-back to the book, which can also lead to better discussions with others, another joy of reading.

So what should you write? Each of you will develop your own style, so feel free to experiment. One word of caution though: all emphasis is no emphasis. Avoid underlining half a page of text. Sometimes your excitement might get the best of you, I understand, but generally make precise marks that will guide your attention to important information. Here are some of my symbols and practices.

- Underlining for 2-3 lines of important text (usually the wording itself somehow stands out to me)
- Brackets for longer passage
- Stars (★) or checks (✓) for striking or important material (stuff to remember)
- Exclamation points (!) for material I disagree with or find shocking or disturbing
- ALL CAPS for important themes I am tracking

Additionally, you may want to mark information for questions in the reading guide (possibly a capital Q).

How much should you write? Often I will ask you on a quiz whether you used marginalia. To answer yes you need to have marked something on roughly every page of the reading. I also expect that you used at least three different kinds of marks (e.g., underlining, exclamation, and written response).