Chivalry and Knighthood in Medieval Europe

Instructor Contact Information

Prof. Michael Furtado
366 McKenzie Hall
346-4833
mfurtado@uoregon.edu

Office Hours: Tues 1-4, or by appt.

Course Description

Between the year 1000 and the end of the Hundred Years’ War in 1453, the role of the knight in medieval European society changed in many significant ways. This course will explore those changes and offer some different ways of understanding the means by which the chivalric ideal influenced noble self-perception in the Middle Ages. We will begin by defining the knight and his role in early medieval society, including the role of the church and religion in shaping that role. We will then explore the contradictions knights faced in war and peace when attempting to adhere to the “chivalric code”, and the role women played in influencing the development of particular values. Finally, we will discuss the pageantry of knighthood, where lineage and the Tournament became the most important identifying elements to a medieval knight.

No prior knowledge of the Middle Ages is necessary to enjoy this course.

Please Note: This is a summer course, taught over a four-week period, but with the same level of academic rigor as any course taught during the regular academic year. That means that you will be doing roughly twice the amount of reading and preparation per week as you would during a regular term here at the University of Oregon.

Required Reading List

The following titles are available for purchase at the Duckshop (formerly the UO Bookstore). Most are readily available from a variety of used sources as well.


Additional readings available via Blackboard are indicated with an asterisk (*)
ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING:

*Your course grade will consist of four elements:*

1) **Three short reading response papers** based on weekly primary source readings, each worth 10% of your final grade, for a total of 30%
2) **Attendance and participation** in weekly Discussions of Primary Sources, worth 10%.
3) **Midterm Examination**, worth 25%
4) **Final Examination**, worth 35%

*A Word about Plagiarism:* Regrettably, I must make a statement regarding the offense of plagiarism. Any violation of the University of Oregon’s academic policy on plagiarism will result in serious consequences up to and including failure of the course.

**Policy Regarding Late Assignments or Make-up Examinations:**

All assignments are due by the end of class on the scheduled date unless I have granted an extension. Late assignments will not receive an evaluation. There will be no exceptions to this policy.

You must make all requests for extensions or make-up exams in advance. In the case of exams, you must notify me no later than one week prior. Naturally, I will consider emergencies on a case-by-case basis.

**General Student Conduct:**

Please refrain from reading materials unrelated to our course during class. Please keep your side conversations to a minimum; feel free to ask questions if you need to do so. You may use laptops only for note taking, as activities unrelated to the course are distracting to others and thus unacceptable. Please put cell phones into silent mode before class begins.

**Class Schedule (Subject to Change)**

**Week One:**

**Defining the Medieval Knight**

**Monday, 07/23**

(A): Introduction to the Course
(B): Social stratification and Feudalism

*Read:* Begin William Marshal.

**Tuesday, 07/24**

(A): From *Miles* to Knight: The development of the warrior class
(B): Knighthood and Nobility

*Read:* Start *Las Siete Partidas* “On Knighthood”*; Continue William
Wednesday, 07/25

(A): Chivalric Literature and Courtesy
(B): Tools of the Trade: Arms, Armor and Training

Read: Continue *Partidas*, William, Marie de France, *Lanval*

Thursday, 07/26

(A): The Chivalric Code
(B): Discussion of Primary Sources (*William, Siete Partidas; Lanval*)

**Reaction Paper Due**

**Week Two:**

**The Knight and Religion**

Monday, 07/30

(A) The Church and Knighthood
(B) Knights and Piety

Read: Richard Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors*

Tuesday, 07/31

(A) Crusading and Knighthood
(B) The Hospitallers

Read: Fulcher of Chartres, *History of the Expedition to Jerusalem*
http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/fulcher-cde.html
Richard the Lion-Hearted Conquers Cyprus, 1191
http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1191cyprus.html
Read: William of Tyre, *Fiasco at Damascus*
http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/tyre-damascus.html

Wednesday, 08/01

(A) The Knights Templar (Part I)
(B) The Knights Templar (Part II);

Read: Bernard of Clairvaux, *In Praise of the New Knighthood*
http://www.the-orb.net/encyclop/religion/monastic/bernard.html
William of Tyre, *The Foundation of the Order of Knights Templar*
http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/tyre-templars.html
Pero Tafur, *Description of the Hospitaller Facilities at Rhodes*  
(See Blackboard under Course Documents)

Thursday, 08/02

(A) The Teutonic Knights
(B) Discussion of Primary Sources

Read: The Rule of the Teutonic Knights
http://www.the-orb.net/encyclop/religion/monastic/tk_rule.html; Begin Charny, Marie de France
Week Three
Chivalric Roles and Contradictions

Monday, 08/06
(A) MIDTERM EXAMINATION
(B) Knights, Ladies, and Love
Read: Continue Charny; Marie de France, Guigemar, Les Deux Amants.

Tuesday, 08/07
(A) Knightly Pursuits
(B) Women and Knighthood
Read: Continue Charny.

Wednesday, 08/08
A) The Problem with Prowess
(B) The Tournament (I)
Read: Continue Charny; Marie, Milun.

Thursday, 08/09
(A) The Conduct of War
(B) Discussion of Primary Sources: Charny; Marie. Reaction Paper Due
Read: Begin Unconquered Knight; Froissart, 185-210*

Week Four
The Chivalric Pageant

Monday, 08/13
(A) Heraldry and Lineage
(B) The Push for Reform
Read: Continue Unconquered Knight;

Tuesday, 08/14
(A) The Tournament (II)
(B) Secular Orders — the “Crisis” of Chivalry?
Read: Continue Unconquered Knight

Wednesday, 08/15
(A) Discussion of Primary Sources: Unconquered Knight
(B) Wrap-up

Thursday, 08/16, 6:00 – 8:00 PM FINAL EXAM
Paper Instructions

You must submit three (3) reading reaction papers during this term, each worth 10% of your Final Grade (30% overall).

All students must write on the following two (2) subjects (Weeks 1 and 3):

William Marshal, the Flower of Chivalry (Due Thurs, July 26)

**QUESTION:** What qualities does William’s biographer imagine that a good knight should have? Do you think William lives up to this standard? Regardless of your position, be sure to address the counterargument in your paper.

Geoffroi De Charny’s *A Knight’s Own Book of Chivalry* (Due Thurs, August 9)

**QUESTION:** How does Charny’s description of knighthood vary from that described by the Partidas?

Do not simply list the differences – there are many. Choose a couple of examples that you think are especially important and compare/contrast the two works with regard to those points.

In addition, you must complete a reaction paper on one (1) of the following (Weeks 2 and 4):

Crusading and the Military Religious Orders (Due Thurs, August 2)

**QUESTION 1):** What is the theological argument used by Bernard of Clairvaux to justify the use of violence by members of a religious order?

Carefully describe how Bernard was able to reconcile the obvious conflict between knighthood and monastic life. The important thing in this response will be to find the *reasons* he gives for the creation of this “new knighthood”.

**QUESTION 2):** “Fiasco at Damascus” and “History of the Expedition to Jerusalem” both illustrate contradictions between the Crusading ideal and knighthood. Discuss those contradictions using an example from each account.

Each of these accounts contains one major moment where the ideologically “pure” motivations of Crusading collide with actions decidedly at odds with the Crusading ideal. Describe those moments and discuss what they reveal about the problems associated with the combination of Crusading and knighthood.

*El Victorial (The Unconquered Knight)* (Due Wed, July 14)

**QUESTION 1) **Compare and contrast the portrayals of knighthood shown in *El Victorial* and William Marshal, discussing the similarities and differences. How do you account for the differences?
These two works celebrate decidedly different values and behaviors as those best suited to an ideal knight. Among the most important differences are the emphasis on the individual, reputation, and loyalty. Choose any one or a combination of these themes to compare and contrast in your paper.

**QUESTION 2)** *Compare and contrast the roles women play in William Marshal and El Victorial.*

Women, particularly in the exercise of agency and their value to the protagonists, appear very differently in these two works, though there are certainly similarities as well. Be sure to address both in your paper, and weigh in on why you feel those similarities and differences are present.

**FORMAT:**

1” Margins all around; 12 pt. Times New Roman Font, double-spaced, half-inch paragraph indentation.

**LENGTH:**

Two page *minimum*. This may not be sufficient space for your response, so make the length fit your needs.

**Spell check and Proof your Work.**

Failure to do so may result in up to a one-letter grade reduction.

**GRADING:**

I will use the following criteria in evaluating your reaction papers:

1. Thoroughness in response to the question
2. Quality and clarity of your writing
3. Detail sufficient to suggest a solid engagement with the reading