

SYLLABUS Ger 392 Medieval Travel Course, Summer 2025

Instructor: Prof. Albrecht Classen, Dept. of German Studies, 301 LSB, Univ. of AZ

Textbook: *Medieval Answers to Modern Problems* (San Diego: Cognella, 2017)

Time Schedule:

The course consists of three weeks, with no weekends, i.e., we'll have class every day because this is such an intensive summer course. The class consists of daily meetings ca. 1 1/2 hours to discuss the assigned texts, to review what we have learned before, and of daily excursions of 2-4 hours. Please read every section in advance as assigned and be ready for the class when the material is listed on the syllabus. We will regularly switch from the early to the late Middle Ages so that you gain a good contrastive perspective throughout the course. That will also reflect the reality on the ground as we will observe on our daily excursions.

Course Objectives:

Familiarizes you with the history of the Middle Ages in its social, philosophical, religious, and cultural dimensions. Through a close reading of a wide variety of texts we will study the political structure, the history of mentality, gender issues, religious conflicts, the basic belief system, and the ethical and moral value system characteristic of that time in Europe. We will also study medieval art history, architecture, urban spaces, social topics, mentality, and everyday life. Those topics will change from day to day because it all depends on the local sites (churches, cathedrals, city squares, houses, city walls, castles, sometimes museums and archives, etc.).

Course Outcome:

You will have acquired both theoretical and practical knowledge about the European Middle Ages, which entails literature, history, religion, philosophy, sociology, and political science. You will have gained a solid understanding of medieval society from the earliest stirring to the paradigm shift in around 1500. You will be a competent and independent researcher of medieval culture able to identify architectural designs, dates, concepts, and knowledgeable in integrating art history into religion and vice versa. The literary and philosophical discourse on individual happiness, love, marriage, tolerance, violence, and war will be easily available for you to handle many universal issues as perceived through a Humanities perspective.

Syllabus:

Day 1 and 2: Introduction: The history, social structure, and political system of the Middle Ages. The literary, religious, and philosophical foundations.

Day 3: The early Middle Ages: Hildebrandslied: Critique of feudalism and vassalage.

Day 4: The end of the Middle Ages: Nicholas of Cusa: Fall of Constantinople, yet Christian outreach to the Turks: History of toleration, religious conflicts.

Day 5: The Christian Church and its value system: "Our Lady's Tumbler": the high Middle

Ages: The search for the self within a religious context.

Day 6: Feminism in the Late Middle Ages: Gender politics. Christine de Pizan

Day 7: The role of women in the high Middle Ages: Marie de France: Love, marriage, sexuality

Day 8: Cont. Marie de France

Day 9 and 10: The political and social system of medieval society as reflected in literary terms:
Dante, *Divina Comedia*

Day 11: Economic and political aspects in the early Middle Ages: Charlemagne: estate management, agriculture

Day 12: The schools and universities: Bruno of Cologne

Day 13: Miracles, faith, and religious tales: Caesarius of Heisterbach

Day 14: Rationalism, philosophy, and the university schools: Abelard: Yea and Nay

Day 15: Abelard and Heloise: a political scandal

Day 16: Political criticism of the Church: Walther von der Vogelweide: social, ethical, and moral issues

Day 17: The role of nobility and philosophical and religious quests: Hartmann von Aue, *Lord Henry*.

Day 18 and 19: Late-medieval discourse on justice, individual happiness, and self-realization:
Johannes of Tepl

Day 20 and 21: Peace, justice, and the individual: Marsiglio of Padua

Grading:

Keep a journal for every day, write on your reading experience, on the discussion in class, and on the excursions. These journal entries must be well designed, critical, and in good English. I will collect the journals for an advance feedback from me after 3 days (only comments). Thereafter I'll collect the journals for grading three times. Please consult with me if you face any problems or need further input.

I expect ca. 2-3 pp. per day, or ca. 150 words. You must engage with every text covered in class, and always provide some reflections on what we studied on our excursions. Be creative, include images, entry tickets, photos, and other mementos. You can also conceive of a visual portfolio, as long as it is accompanied by an extensive and critical narrative.

