



# Medieval Studies 201.001/ History 201.001

## The Medieval World

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TR 9:30–10:45



This course offers a broad orientation to Western culture during the Middle Ages by surveying the history, literature, art, and spirituality of the West during the thousand-year period from the fall of the Roman Empire to the eve of the Renaissance. This was an especially fertile epoch during which there evolved ideas, institutions, and forms of cultural expression of enduring importance, many of them still influential today. Far from being a long interlude of darkness and stagnation separating Antiquity from the Renaissance, the Middle Ages were a time of vibrant transformation, of innovative developments in many areas of human endeavor. Yet, while medieval men and women sowed the seeds for changes whose impact can still be detected today, medieval habits of thought and action differed in fundamental ways from those of our contemporary world. This course will highlight, investigate, and seek to explain what is most typical and most significant in the culture of the Middle Ages through a multi-faceted approach focusing on a broad range of texts and artifacts. The course will introduce students to several of the great vernacular works of the Middle Ages, including *Beowulf*, *The Song of Roland*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*; will cover such key topics as the evolution of rulership and the beginnings of parliamentary democracy; and will provide an orientation to major cultural breakthroughs, including the evolution of the manuscript book, the origins of the university system of education, and the development of the architecture of Gothic cathedrals. The overall aim of the course is to provide a well-rounded assessment and evaluation of the most significant developments during this rich historical period. "The Medieval World" is the gateway course for the Minor in Medieval Studies.

