

The Best 1200 Years
The Roman Empire to The End of The Age

So important, it needs two terms & three units

Romans Christians Germans Lords Peasants Religious Warriors Thinkers Everyone Else



HSTR236

Dr T.S. Haskett
UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA
FALL 2019 & SPRING 2020
Mondays & Wednesdays 11:30 to 12:50

The Medieval Beginnings
of Everything



The middle age

is the name given to a period in western history which spanned more than a thousand years, from the mid-third century A.D. to the late-fifteenth century. Despite its great length, it is a period which had a unique and lasting unity: it may be argued that for these one thousand two hundred years the people of Europe shared a common culture, a common language, a common faith and a common vision of human beings and the world. Indeed, the Middle Age can be said to have waned only when the unity of Christendom and the Christian world view finally broke down. Yet this unity — or at least the dream of one Christendom — survived for more than a millennium, and it was a unity that was by no means monolithic: diversity, dissent, challenge and change were hallmarks of the medieval world.

The Middle Age is a period which commands our attention, not only because it stands as one of the longest ages in western history, but because medieval culture made substantial contributions to western, and indeed world, culture as we know it today. Far from being backward or dark, the Middle Age gave us many of our modern institutions and attitudes: the university itself is a medieval creation, as is the institutional Church, the book and much of modern legal and political theory. And this is not to mention many lesser but no less intriguing inventions such as stained glass, the windmill, the technique of alphabetisation, the sonnet, or the idea of chivalrous behaviour. The Middle Age is a period that must be known if we are to know ourselves. It will also allow discernment of the various qualities, good and bad, of modern neo-medievalism, and will permit us to understand our contemporary world in the long-term context that is required for perspective.

We cover in the first term

the formative centuries of the Middle Age, about A.D. 300 to 1000. In this time a discernible medieval culture gradually emerged out of the Late-Antique world, saving what it could and altering what it could not. We shall study the early development of medieval society and institutions, emphasising the influences exerted by Classical, Christian and Germanic cultures in their formation. Issues to be considered include monasticism and the medieval papacy, the rebirth of empire under Charlemagne and the important influences of Byzantine and Islamic cultures.

We cover in the second term

the origins of feudal society and examine the so-called high and later Middle Age, the eleventh through fifteenth centuries, the period of the expansive development of medieval culture, the age of chivalry and crusade, towns and a new economy, Gothic cathedrals and new religious expressions, and radical new forms of thought and learning. We investigate themes such as the social and economic organisation of medieval life, the political order, medieval religion and the spiritual authority, forms of dissent and the intellectual world of the Middle Age.

