Welcome to this class!: Course Description

Was the middle ages a period of general prosperity or poverty? Our answer to this question determines our conclusions on the quality of life and options for the vast majority of its population, ordinary people. It also shapes our understanding of historical change: what was the lever of progress and who directed that lever? Were the medieval centuries much poorer than later ones or did they provide the developmental take-off for western Europe’s early modern global supremacy? This course provides an overview of select critical debates about the medieval western European economy by examining the lives of its most important actors: farmers, guild artisans and merchants. Students will also learn how to analyse some of the historical documents employed by researchers in these debates in order to arrive at their own conclusions about medieval society (all documents are in translation and no knowledge of Latin is required).

Learning Objectives

- An introduction to the literature’s debates over medieval western European economic development and the roles of its players; for history students unfamiliar with development theories, this course will also supply an introduction to some of these concepts
- An introduction to analytical methods employed by historians to assess individual and general wealth and poverty in the past
- An introduction to pertinent medieval historical documents and the issues around their interpretation

Course Grading

- Seminar participation and presentations (25% of the final grade)
- 2 short papers, which provide an analysis of historical documents; 3-6 pages each, including any tables and graphs (each paper is worth 25% of the final grade; 50% in total for both).
- Annotated bibliography of the assigned readings (7-14 pages, 25% of the final grade)
Please note: The Dean has exempted this course from Senate regulation (2016 04) which reads: “At least one week prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive assessment of work accounting at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the corresponding course syllabus.” See the full text at: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/evaluation_undergrad.pdf

In other words, the instructor of this course is NOT required to provide an assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of the final grade one week prior to the deadline for withdrawal from the course.

Course Work and Due Dates for Assignments

Secondary Source Readings and Annotated Bibliography

There is no required textbook for this course. All articles and selections from books for the weekly class discussions, as well as the historical documents for the short papers’ analyses of primary sources, will be online, either on our Owl class site or that of Weldon Libraries. Students are also welcome to employ different historical documents for the short papers than those assigned as long as they pertain to the question under discussion with my permission.

Students will do the same readings for the two classes that feature a general introduction to the lives of artisans and merchants; I’ll summarize medieval farmers’ working lives in a lecture. For the one or two weeks of classes following the general introduction to each of the three sections, students will sign up to summarize and present one of the weekly readings to their classmates. These readings present opposing views on the same question. By dividing up the readings in this fashion, you will gain a greater exposure to more ideas and be able to debate their relative merits in class.

Students who are not familiar with some of the economic terms used in these articles should take heart! None of the papers selected for this course are highly “technical” and even history students without a background in economics will be able to work their way through them. Additional help can be found in The Penguin Dictionary of Economics, which supplies a useful short summary to economic terms and theories found in some of these papers.

The structure of the course does not lend itself to a final exam. Instead, you will supply an annotated bibliography that provides a summary of each reading (hypothesis, arguments, historical sources and methods) that you selected to examine for the class, along with your critique of the author’s ideas. You will also summarize the contents of a historical document and discuss how it might be employed in research analyses during the week in which you are not analysing a document in a short paper. In total, you will therefore discuss six readings and one
type of document (s) in this fashion (about 1-2 pages for each reading). This annotated bibliography is due in hard copy on April 7.

Class Participation

In seminar courses, students discuss and exchange their ideas regarding secondary readings and historical documents. Since each one of you is a unique individual, you can offer each other unique insights! and thereby increase the scope and depth of your own analysis.

Your grade will be based on the quality of your participation, both in the class discussions and your presentations. Quantity also counts! and students who miss more than one class, without obtaining academic accommodation, will lose twenty percent from their final participation grade for each such absence.

Short Papers on the Historical (Primary) Sources

The short papers (3-6 pages, including all tables, graphs and charts) contain your own analyses of primary sources that provide us with some insights into the economic choices made by farmers, artisans and merchants, and some thoughts about their consequences. These analyses will give you the opportunity to engage in the methods and sources employed by historians in the field of economic history. You will be able usually to choose to use either qualitative or quantitative methods of analysis with these historical documents.

You will select which two of the three possible areas (farmers, artisans, merchants) that you wish to study in this fashion. Depending on the number of students in the class, you will present your papers’ findings once or twice to your classmates for discussion.

Short papers using documents pertaining to farmers are due in hard copy in class on February 2; those analysing records concerning craft guild members are to be handed in on March 9, and those examining merchants on April 6.

These papers must also be submitted electronically to Turnitin.com, on their respective due dates, in order to receive a mark. I will announce the course password and identification number in class before the due date of the first assignment.

In regards to the employment of Turnitin, the policy at Western University is that “All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (http://www.turnitin.com).”
Late Policy

Because your classmates will discuss and present their interpretation of historical documents in class, no extension is possible for these short papers, unless you obtain academic accommodation. Otherwise, the grade will be zero for papers not handed in on their due date. Similarly, if you sign up to make a presentation on a reading and do not do so, you will receive a mark of zero for the presentation, unless you obtain accommodation. The penalty for late annotated bibliographies is five percent a day, including weekends, unless you obtain accommodation (see the procedure to do so at the end of this syllabus).

Weekly Topics and Readings

January 5: Introduction to the course and its materials (secondary and primary sources). Lecture providing an overview of the middle ages and researchers’ opinions on economic growth and its mechanisms. What are the current debates over medieval growth and development? How does these relate to the questions over pre-industrial patterns of growth and comparative differences in global development found between countries into the present? What sorts of historical documents do historians use to shed light on these questions?

Farmers (the agricultural sector)

January 12: General introduction to farmers and agriculture in the middle ages (lecture). Outline provided of historical documents for analysis. Students select one reading to present in the next two weeks of classes.

January 19: This week, we will study the debate over land productivity in the middle ages (the amount of food produced per acre by farmers): Was it enough to support the population or were periodic food shortages and related starvation crises a medieval problem? What determined the amount of food that farmers decided to produce? Were they subsistence- or commercially-oriented producers? (This debate also pertains to the early modern era.) In the next two classes, we will consider this question by focussing on the agriculture scene of medieval England. Due to the superiority in the quality and quantity of English medieval historical documents, this country’s agricultural trends have become the vehicle by which historians estimate trends likely experienced elsewhere in similar farming regimes of other western European nations.


Michael Postan, Chapters 3 and 4 of his The Medieval Economy and Society: 30-80 (the page numbers will vary according to the edition that you select; this reading is a bit longer than the others but is much less quantitative)
January 26: Our focus this week is on the issue of medieval agricultural labor productivity (the amount of food produced by each farm worker): Was it high enough to feed workers outside agriculture, and thus allow for other sectors, like industry, to develop? Given the importance of the huge agricultural sector to the economy, was the value of farm workers’ production high enough to promote economic growth or was it so low that it undermined wealth and living standards? (This debate also pertains to the early modern era, and also figures largely in the question of divergent global comparative development, that is, why some countries became wealthy and others developed less quickly or remained poor over the centuries.)


February 2, Historical Documents: Farm accounts and agricultural treatises. Short analysis of one document type due in class. Students will present and compare their findings for discussion.

**Guild Artisans** (the industrial sector)

February 9: General introduction to medieval craft guilds and their artisans. Outline provided of historical documents for analysis. Students select one reading to present in the next two weeks of classes.


February 16: Were craft guilds elitist closed organizations that stifled technological progress in industry?


**Reading Week, February 20-24. No class.**

**March 2: Were craft guilds monopolistic rent-seeking institutions that undermined growth?**


Sheilagh Ogilvie, “Guilds, Efficiency, and Social Capital: Some Evidence from German Proto-Industry,” *Economic History Review* 57 (2004): 286-333. (She employs early modern German evidence but the types of sources and the debate also pertain to medieval guilds.)


**March 9: Historical Documents: craft guild ordinances and court cases.** Short analysis of one document type due in class. Students will present and compare their findings for discussion.

**Merchants** (markets and the financial sector)


**March 23: Why did merchant guilds emerge in the middle ages? Was their impact on markets ultimately positive or negative for growth?**


**March 30: The Economics of Prejudice.** In previous classes, you examined the various ways in which ordinary medieval people organized their economic activities. It was commonplace, in all three economic sectors, for people to unite and form institutions that sought to overcome some economic hurdle; these institutions also promoted individual wealth through collective action. But was participation in these institutions open to everyone in medieval society? What would you do, as a medieval person, if you were faced with an additional economic hurdle of social prejudice? In today’s class, I’d like you to begin to consider the economic ramifications of prejudice. In western medieval Europe, both Jews and women experienced discrimination and exclusion, albeit to varying degrees across time and place (in the case of Jewish people, it could even culminate in their murders or expulsion from home and country). Who economically benefited from social prejudice in medieval western Europe? To what extent could individuals counteract legal and social policies that sought to economically subordinate and/or exploit them?

**Jews:**


Maristella Botticini and Zvi Eckstein, “Jewish Occupational Selection: Education, Restrictions, or Minorities?” *Journal of Economic History* 65 (2005): 922-948. (Discusses the situation of Jews in the Muslim Empire but also pertains to Jews in western Europe.)

**Women:**


April 6: Last class! Historical Documents: merchant letters and diaries. Short analysis of one document type due in class. Students will present and compare their findings for discussion.

April 7: Annotated Bibliography due. Please leave in the History Department’s essay drop-box located outside the History’s Departmental Office (Lawson Hall, Room 2201).

I look forward to getting to know each one of you this term. Please feel free to drop by my office to discuss the readings, historical documents or just to chat.

Professor “K”

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

Prerequisites and Antirequisites:

Unless you have either the requisites for this course, as described in the Academic Calendar description of the course, or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites. The Academic Calendar description of each course also indicates which classes are considered antirequisites, i.e., to cover such similar material that students are not permitted to receive academic credit for both courses.

Academic Offences:

Scholastic Offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitute a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (http://www.turnitin.com).
The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of publication and page number. Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

B. In adopting other writer's ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source; these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction, your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases, in their suspension from the University.
Medical Issues:

The University recognizes that a student’s ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Please go to https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical_accommodations_link_for_OOR.pdf to read about the University’s policy on medical accommodation. This site provides links the necessary forms. In the event of illness, you should contact Academic Counselling as soon as possible. The Academic Counsellors will determine, in consultation with the student, whether or not accommodation should be requested. They will subsequently contact the instructors in the relevant courses about the accommodation. Once the instructor has made a decision about whether to grant an accommodation, the student should contact his/her instructors to determine a new due date for tests, assignments, and exams.

SUPPORT SERVICES:

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western, http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact, Rebecca Dashford, Undergraduate Program Advisor, Department of History, 519-661-2111 x84962 or rdashfo@uwo.ca