

# **History 2401E**

## **Medieval Europe**

### **2026–2027**

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**This is a draft outline. Please see the course site on OWL for a final version.**

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course will explore the history of Europe from the collapse of the western half of the Roman Empire in the 5<sup>th</sup> century up to the Renaissance and dawn of the early modern period in about the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This was a dynamic period in European history, an age of great political transformation, social development, economic transition and religious controversy. Architects built increasingly grand and ornate structures, while artists developed new art forms. Mounted knights came to dominate the battlefield, only to see their place of prominence snatched away by the common soldier. Classical knowledge was salvaged from the ashes of Rome, reacquired through foreign caretakers, and ideas were reinterpreted as literacy and education expanded. Modern governmental institutions formed as trade networks expanded and the boundaries of the known world were pushed back.

## **COURSE SYLLABUS**

The first half of the course will trace the narrative of this period, providing a chronological overview of what happened where. The second half will take a thematic look at various aspects of life during this period and how it was experienced by different people. By investigating a range of primary sources, students will gain insights into what life was like during this period, the priorities and concerns of various people, and how historians use these sources to build our understanding of the past.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Express an appreciation of, and ability to analyze, the principal political, religious and cultural developments of the medieval period, their causes and significance.
- Compare developments in different parts of Europe to identify similarities and differences between political, religious and cultural institutions and traditions.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the course material by constructing arguments, in formal writing, speech and a popular medium, that reveal an ability to analyze primary sources and conduct historical research.
- Examine and critically evaluate texts, conveying an awareness of influences, biases and historical significance, as well as the ways in which sources can be interpreted differently, leading to historiographical debates.

This is a draft outline. 2026-27 version. Please see the course site on OWL for a final version.

Students are expected to attend all lectures. They should arrive prepared (having read the assigned readings) and be ready to contribute to discussions (they may be called on to do so). Students are also expected to complete all assignments and submit these on time.

## **METHODS OF EVALUATION**

Quizzes	25%	Weekly (in class, using OWL)
Historiography essay	15%	5 November, by 10:59pm (upload to OWL)
Research topic approval	2%	28 November (by email)
February midterm	20%	12 February (in class)
Research essay	28%	4 March, by 10:59pm (upload to OWL)
Podcast	10%	18 March, by 10:59pm (upload to OWL)
<i>Bonus: podcast votes</i>	+1%	22 March, by 10:59pm (by email)
<i>Bonus: course feedback</i>	+1%	End of the winter term (issued by the university)

### **Quizzes**

There will be a short quiz each week relating to the weekly lecture material and accompanying readings. Each student's best nineteen (19) quizzes will count towards their final grade. If a quiz is missed, it will receive a mark of 0%. There will be no extensions or re-writes for missed quizzes (for any reason), but as there will be a quiz each week, a missed quiz should not hurt a student's final grade. For a quiz to be counted, students must attend the corresponding lecture and complete the quiz synchronously in class (i.e. with and at the same time as everyone else).

Late policy: no extensions or rewrites will be offered (no exceptions)

### **February Midterm**

This midterm will allow students to demonstrate their mastery of the narrative material of the course. It will be written during class and is scheduled to take no more than 2 hours. The format and further instructions will be provided closer to the date.

Late policy: make-up midterms can only be approved by Academic Advising. Please see [https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_module\\_information/policies.html](https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html) for department procedures and requirements involving make-up tests and exams. This is a designated assessment; academic consideration will require supporting documentation.

### **Historiography Essay**

This essay of about 1500 words presents an opportunity for students to investigate how scholarly interpretations of a topic or issue can vary when different types of evidence are considered or evidence is simply interpreted differently. Students will need to critically examine a selection of scholarly publications, demonstrating an understanding of their arguments, their sources of evidence and how they compare to the others under investigation. Students will also have the opportunity to contribute their own opinion to this ongoing academic discourse. The assigned topic, documents and further instructions can be found on OWL.

Late policy: essays may be submitted up to 168 hours (7 days) after the due date without a grading penalty; no essays will be accepted after this grace period, for any reason. Only essays submitted on time will receive comments.

### ***Research Topic Approval***

Students must gain approval for their research essay and podcast topic (the same topic for both, see the essay instructions for topic guidelines). Requests for approval should be submitted by email. Replies to requests for approval may take at least 48 hours (not including weekends). Approval will not be granted for topics judged to be inappropriate or impractical, in which case approval must be sought for an alternative topic (the original deadline for approval remains the same). Neither an essay nor a podcast can be submitted without prior topic approval.

Topic approval is typically a process and students should expect to be asked to refine their line of research before approval is granted. Accordingly, students should plan ahead, begin researching early and submit requests for topic approval well in advance of the deadline (with a backup in mind, if necessary).

Late Policy: topic approval counts for 2% of a student's final grade; a 1% final grade penalty will be applied every day after the due date until approval is granted (i.e. if a student receives topic two days after the deadline, they will get a mark of 0%; for those who still do not have topic approval beyond that point, they will lose 1% from their final grade each day until they successfully gain approval).

### ***Research Essay***

This essay of about 2500 words provides an opportunity to investigate an element of medieval European culture, society or history and the primary sources that offer windows into the lives of these people. Students will choose a historical figure, site, institution or other aspect of medieval European life, and produce an essay based on their findings. Essays must make meaningful use of primary sources found in the Rosenwein reader, supporting and supplementing these with academic secondary sources. All secondary sources must be accessible through Western's library (excluding interlibrary loan). Specific details and requirements are available on OWL.

Late policy: essays may be submitted up to 168 hours (7 days) after the due date without a grading penalty; no essays will be accepted after this grace period, for any reason. Only essays submitted on time will receive comments.

### ***Podcast***

After completing their essays, students will have the chance to compose a brief podcast episode (5-8 minutes) to share an aspect of their research with the class. Rather than an essay synopsis or abstract (do not simply read a summary of your essay or sections from it!), this should be an original, informative and entertaining episode with the underlying aim of teaching the listening audience about what you have discovered through your research. Students have complete freedom to structure their episode as they like. Podcasts will be evaluated based on how

informative and entertaining they are, as well as a demonstrated mastery of the medium – if you came across this podcast, would you listen to the end? More details are available on OWL.

Students may use AI in the planning and preparation of their podcast (if they want).

Late policy: podcasts may be submitted up to 72 hours (3 days) after the due date without a grading penalty; no podcasts will be accepted after this grace period, for any reason. Only podcasts submitted on time may receive bonus votes.

### ***Bonus: Podcast Votes***

After submitting their own podcast, students have the opportunity to review those uploaded by others in the class. Each student will also be able to vote on which podcast they find the most informative and which they believe is the most entertaining – a student has two votes total, one to allocate to each category. Students cannot vote for their own podcast. The four (4) podcasts that receive the most votes will earn an additional mark (equivalent to +1% of their final grade). Any ties will be decided by the professor. Votes should be cast in a simple email, stating clearly a choice for: most informative (one vote); most entertaining (one vote). Only podcasts submitted on time may receive votes. Students may not vote for their own podcast.

Late policy: no votes will be accepted after the deadline (no exceptions).

### ***Bonus: Course Feedback***

If at least 80% of students enrolled in the course complete the official (anonymous) course feedback survey issued by the university near the end of the winter term, everyone will receive an additional 1% added to their final grade.

## **COURSE MATERIALS**

Required texts:

- Clifford Backman, *The Worlds of Medieval Europe*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Oxford, 2022)
  - E-book 180-day rental \$46.99; e-book purchase: \$55.37
- Barbara H. Rosenwein. *Reading the Middle Ages*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Toronto, 2018)
  - Paperback: \$80.00

*Prices are approximate, subject to change, and do not include applicable taxes and shipping.*

Materials can be purchased from the bookstore (<https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbooks-and-course-materials>) or any other retailer (including the publisher). Please note the listed **edition**; older editions may not be used.

If purchasing an electronic version of the Rosenwein text, ensure it displays the proper published page numbers – these will be required for the research essay!

## COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

### FALL TERM

Week 1.1	<b>Introduction</b>	No readings
Week 1.2	<b>Legacy of Rome</b>	Backman, pp. 3-26, 28-60 <i>Rosenwein docs.</i> , 1.1, 1.2, 1.3
Week 1.3	<b>Byzantines</b>	Backman, pp. 116-46, 422-29, 590-93 <i>Rosenwein docs.</i> , 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 4.8, 4.9, 6.3
Week 1.4	<b>Gothic Italy</b>	Backman, pp. 62-90 <i>Rosenwein docs.</i> , 1.13, 1.15
Week 1.5	<b>Franks</b>	Backman, pp. 149-81 <i>Rosenwein docs.</i> , 1.14, 1.16, 2.10, 2.11, 3.11

### READING WEEK

Week 1.6	<b>Anglo-Saxons</b>	Backman, pp. 185-217 <i>Rosenwein docs.</i> , 2.12, 3.8, 4.16
Week 1.7	<b>Anglo-Danes</b>	Backman, none <i>Rosenwein docs.</i> , 4.18, 4.19, 4.20, 4.21
Week 1.8	<b>Carolingian Decline</b>	Backman, pp. 253-64 <i>Rosenwein docs.</i> , 3.4, 3.6, 3.12
Week 1.9	<b>Norman Conquest</b>	Backman, pp. 264-75 <i>Rosenwein docs.</i> , 5.15, 5.16, 5.17, 5.18
Week 1.10	<b>England &amp; France</b>	Backman, pp. 395-409 <i>Rosenwein docs.</i> , 6.4, 6.12, 6.14, 7.17, 7.18
Week 1.11	<b>Hundred Years' War</b>	Backman, pp. 543-52 <i>Rosenwein docs.</i> , 8.10, 8.11, 8.12, 8.13
Week 1.12	<b>Research Class</b>	No readings

### WINTER TERM

Week 2.1	<b>Germany</b>	Backman, pp. 291-304, 364-90 <i>Rosenwein docs.</i> , 4.17, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 6.13, 7.19
Week 2.2	<b>Italy</b>	Backman, pp. 284-89, 409-18 <i>Rosenwein docs.</i> , 6.9, 6.10, 6.11, 6.22, 7.11
Week 2.3	<b>Schism</b>	Backman, pp. 552-61 <i>Rosenwein docs.</i> , 1.5, 8.14
Week 2.4	<b>Al-Andalus</b>	Backman, pp. 276-84, 599-603 <i>Rosenwein docs.</i> , 1.15, 3.7, 4.3, 6.5
Week 2.5	<b>Crusades</b>	Backman, pp. 304-16 <i>Rosenwein docs.</i> , 5.11, 5.13, 5.14, 6.2, 7.4, 7.5
Week 2.6	<b>MIDTERM!!</b>	No readings

### READING WEEK

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<b>Week 2.7</b>	<b>The Social Order</b>	Backman, pp. 226-38, 246-53 <i>Rosenwein</i> , 4.5, 5.10, 6.17, 6.18, 6.19, 6.20
<b>Week 2.8</b>	<b>Economics</b>	Backman, pp. 219-26, 238-44, 587-90 <i>Rosenwein docs.</i> , 5.3, 6.7, 6.8, 7.12, 7.13
<b>Week 2.9</b>	<b>Monasticism</b>	Backman, pp. 92-114, 317-22, 603-5 <i>Rosenwein docs.</i> , 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 4.4, 5.21, 5.22, 6.25
<b>Week 2.10</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>	Backman, pp. 324-62, 431-57, 563-81, 594-98 <i>Rosenwein docs.</i> , 5.19, 7.2, 7.3, 7.6, 7.20

### **GOOD FRIDAY (EASTER)**

<b>Week 2.11</b>	<b>Belief</b>	Backman, pp. 459-93, 496-522 <i>Rosenwein docs.</i> , 2.9, 6.23, 6.26, 7.14, 8.15
<b>Week 2.12</b>	<b>Health</b>	Backman, pp. 524-43 <i>Rosenwein docs.</i> , 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4

## **ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS**

**Email Policy:** Email is usually the best way to contact me. Emails requiring a response will typically receive one within 48 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) unless I have established that I will be unable to reply promptly. If your question is about course or assignment requirements, ensure that you check for the answer to your question on the syllabus, OWL and other course documents before sending me an email. I also reserve the right to ask you to attend office hours if your question is too complex or detailed to be answered over email (but email is often the best place to start for a quick answer).

To email me, use only your Western account (@uwo.ca) and note in the body of your email:

- your name
- your student number
- the course code (History 2401E).

Course announcements, should they be necessary, will be issued in class or via the Announcements tool in OWL.

**Extensions and Late Policy:** Students are expected to submit all work on time!

No extensions, exemptions or re-writes will be granted for quizzes – these cannot be rescheduled or retaken for any reason. There is ample opportunity to succeed, as not all quizzes will count towards a student’s final grade, allowing for unexpected issues to arise.

The midterm is a designated assessment, meaning that supporting documentation will be required for any academic consideration.

The deadline to receive approval for the research essay and podcast is firm. Every day beyond the deadline that a student does not have an approved topic, they will lose 1% from their final grade; the first two days correspond with the 2% allocated for topic approval, each day thereafter will result in 1% being deducted from their final grade. I.e. if approval is granted one day late, a student will receive a mark of 1 out of 2 for their topic; if approval comes 2 days late, the student will receive 0; if topic approval is not received until 7 days after the deadline, 5% will

be deducted from their final grade (e.g. a final grade of 82% will fall to 77%). In all instances, this penalty applies to the point at which topics are approved, NOT when a topic is submitted for consideration. A total final grade penalty will not exceed the combined value of the topic approval, essay and podcast. E.g. if a student does not gain approval for a topic, and is thus ineligible to submit an essay and podcast, no penalty will be applied, as the student has already lost 40% of their grade by not submitting these assignments.

Extensions will not be granted for essays; however, students have a one-week grace period (exactly 168 hours) following the due date to submit their work without a grading penalty. The cutoff point following this grace period will be enforced strictly (to the second) without exceptions – keep in mind, essays are *due* 7 days before the end of the grace period. Requests for further accommodation issued by academic advising will not be considered unless the issue in question renders a student completely incapacitated for both a full week before *and* after the due date (i.e. the entire grace period plus the 7 days preceding the due date) – this is reserved for very serious medical situations. The grace period is effectively a blanket extension granted to everyone in acknowledgement that things come up (people get sick, accidents happen, technical issues arise, schedules get busy, unexpected tragedies occur, etc.), but further extensions will not be granted on top of this. Students are encouraged start assignments well ahead of time and to turn in work early to avoid potential problems – updates can be submitted until the end of the grace period. Only the latest (most recent) submission will be marked. Essays submitted after the due date, however, will not receive feedback or comments, due to timing limitations.

Like the essays, podcasts will not be granted extensions, but the due date will be followed by a similar three-day grace period (exactly 72 hours) – the particulars and justification for this policy are otherwise the same as those for the essay. While podcasts submitted during the grace period will receive no grading penalty, they will not be eligible to receive votes, meaning they will not be in the running to earn a potential bonus mark.

Please note: These late policies supersede all requests for academic consideration as per the University's current policy on Academic Consideration.

**Use of Electronic Devices:** The use of electronic devices for the purposes of taking notes is allowed; however, the use of any device to record audio or video during lectures and/or tutorials is forbidden. The use of devices to converse with others, play games, check social media, or engage in any other activities unrelated to the course is not permitted – quietly leave class and do this elsewhere if you must.

**Collaboration:** Although discussion of topics is to be expected, all work produced and presented for grading needs to be the product of the individual, independent and original efforts of the student in question.

**Privacy:** Students' names may be divulged in the classroom/OWL, both orally and in written form, to other members of the class. Students who are concerned about such disclosures should contact the course instructor to identify whether there are any possible alternatives to such disclosures.

**AI:** All work submitted by students in this class is to be original and entirely their own, and the use of generative AI tools (such as, but not limited to, ChatGPT) is not permitted in any form unless it is explicitly stated otherwise in the instructions of an assignment. If instructions allow for the use of AI for a particular evaluation, its use should be limited to the specific way(s) stipulated in the instructions, including a full explanation of its use if required. The use of AI in any way beyond those explicitly permitted is not allowed and will be considered an act of academic misconduct and prosecuted accordingly.

**Copyright and Intellectual Property:** The educational materials developed for this course, including, but not limited to, videos, lecture notes, slides, PowerPoint files and displays, handout materials, assignments, evaluations, and any original materials posted to OWL, are the intellectual property of the course instructor. These materials have been developed for student use only and they are not intended for wider dissemination and/or communication outside of a given course. Posting or providing unauthorized audio, video, or textual material of lecture content, or any other materials developed for this course, to any third-party violates an instructor's intellectual property rights, and the Canadian Copyright Act. Recording lectures in any way is prohibited in this course unless specific permission has been granted by the instructor. Failure to follow these instructions may be in contravention of the university's code of student conduct and/or academic integrity policies, and will result in appropriate penalties. Participation in this course constitutes an agreement by all parties to abide by the relevant university policies, and to respect the intellectual property of others during and after their association with Western University.

**Submitting Work:** Aside from requests for research topic approval and podcast votes (both should be sent by email), all evaluations must be submitted using OWL. Any work submitted by email, as a hardcopy, or in any other manner will not be accepted. If a grace period applies, any work submitted after this expires (even a second after) will not be accepted.

**Technical Issues:** Technical issues will not be considered grounds for any extra accommodation (such as an extension, exemption, or re-write). Please plan ahead, do not leave things to the last minute/day/week, and ensure you have access to a stable and reliable internet connection when submitting assignments and completing quizzes.

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: [https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_module\\_information/policies.html](https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html) for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.