The Roman Empire and the Middle Ages: Syllabus

In this course, I will introduce you to some of the ways that western civilization developed from the first through the fourteenth centuries of the Common Era. I will take you chronologically from imperial Rome to late Roman North Africa, to early medieval England and Scandinavia, to high medieval France, and finally to late medieval Germany and Italy. Together we will read and discuss works of history and of literature that will help you understand how people thought the world worked and how they grappled with change in each of these periods. In lectures, I will provide you with the information you will need to anchor the readings in the economic, social, political, and religious evolution of the Mediterranean world and of Europe.

Readings:


Course requirements: The course focuses on the reading, analysis, and discussion of the works listed above. You must, therefore, attend all class meetings and actively take part in discussions. If you miss more than two classes, you will fail the course. Moreover, the course emphasizes the development of writing skills. In the first week, I will ask you to write a short (1-2p.) paper reacting to the first two chapters of a book on writing, namely Joseph Williams’ *Style*. In the second week, I will assign a paper, of a minimum of 2000 words, on the first of our readings. I will then ask you to revise it as an exercise. In the sixth week, I will assign a second paper, also of at least 2000 words, likewise dealing with questions about the course readings; this paper too will be revised. I will provide suggestions for paper topics in advance. If you have questions of your own that you would like to pursue, you may of course do so; I ask only that you clear your topics with me. The course will end with a final examination.

Grading: The course will be graded pass/fail for freshmen. 50% of your grade will depend on your written work (the short first paper, the two essays and the essay revisions). Another 25% will depend on your attendance and participation in class discussions. The remaining 25% will come from the final exam. YOU MUST PASS ALL THREE PARTS
OF THE COURSE INDIVIDUALLY. A failing grade in any one part at the end of the course will result in a failing grade for the entire course.

Schedule:

WEEK ONE:
Readings: Joseph Williams, Style, c. 1-2 (handout); Virgil, Aeneid, Books I-VIII
Sep. 27: Course introduction
Sep. 29: The Roman Empire; WILLIAMS C. 1-2 REACTION PAPER DUE

WEEK TWO:
Readings: Williams, Aeneid
Oct. 4: Discussion of Williams/Aeneid; PAPER I TOPICS HANDED OUT
Oct. 6: Continue discussion of Aeneid

WEEK THREE:
Readings: Aeneid
Oct. 11: Continue discussion of Aeneid
Oct. 13: Early Christianity; PAPER I DUE

WEEK FOUR
Readings: Augustine, Confessions
Oct. 18: Discussion of Confessions
Oct. 20: NO CLASS

WEEK FIVE
Readings: Confessions/Beowulf
Oct. 25: Continue discussion of Confessions; PAPER I REVISIONS DUE
Oct. 27: The Dawn of Medieval Europe

WEEK SIX
Readings: Beowulf
Nov. 1: Discussion of Beowulf
Nov. 3: Continue discussion of Beowulf; PAPER II TOPICS HANDED OUT

WEEK SEVEN
Readings: Erec and Enide
Nov. 8: Writing discussion
Nov. 10: The High Medieval Aristocracy

WEEK EIGHT
Readings: Erec and Enide
Nov. 15: Discussion of Erec and Enide; PAPER II DUE
Nov. 17: Continue discussion of Erec and Enide

WEEK NINE
Readings: Dante, Inferno
Nov. 22: The Church, the Empire, and Italy
Nov. 24: THANKSGIVING

WEEK TEN
Readings: *Inferno*
Nov. 29: Discussion of *Inferno*
Dec. 1: Continue discussion of *Inferno*; Preparation for Final Exam; PAPER II
REVISIONS DUE