

# The WORLD, the FLESH and the DEVIL

## Introduction to Medieval Literature



EL 201 | Fall 2019 | WWF 348 | TB 240. TB 415.

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This class will introduce you to the history, ideas, and literature of the so-called “Middle Ages” between classical antiquity and modernity. This period was in many ways a pre-eminently Christian age, but we will pay particular attention to the ways that Christian theological preoccupations--especially its apparently world-denying theology of sin--paradoxically laid the groundwork for secularity, whether conceived in terms of space (the world and worldliness) or time (life-span or *saeculum*).

### Assessment

Essays: 48% | Midterm: 20% | Final: 20% | Participation: 12%

**Essays:** Four essays, 3-4 pages, each worth 12%. The goal of these assignments is for you to learn how to use textual evidence in a written paper, to practice doing close readings of literary texts, and to begin to learn how to make arguments through textual evidence. My emphasis is on improvement throughout the semester.

**Midterm and Final:** Exams test your level of engagement in the class. Are you doing the reading outside of class, and listening to lectures, taking notes, formulating your own thoughts in class?

**Participation:** Are you actively engaged in class? Are you asking questions, offering your own readings of texts, thoughts, etc.? The participation grade will assess that dimension of classroom performance. Attendance if, of course, a necessary feature of participation, although it is not sufficient!

## **Weekly Schedule**

### **Week 1: The End of Antiquity and the Birth of Worldliness**

Friday: Introduction: The Conversion of Constantine, from Eusebius's *Oration to Constantine*; The Edict of Milan; The Nicene Creed; The Codex Theodosianus (selections)  
Recommended: Zosimus, from *Historia Nova*; Letter of Pope Gelasius to Anastatius Augustus

### **Week 2**

Wednesday: Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 1, 1.1-8.13.  
Recommended: Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, Bk 19;; Tertullian, "On Pagan Learning"; Clement of Alexandria, from *Exhortation to the Heathen*  
Friday: Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 2, 1.1-10.18.

### **Week 3**

Wednesday: Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 3, 1.1-10.18  
Friday: Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 8

### **Week 4: The "High Middle Ages", Viewed Otherwise**

Wednesday: Augustine, *Confessions*, Book 10  
Friday: Urban II and the Crusades, from *The Chronicle* of Fulcher of Chartres; Frankish boors, from the autobiography of Usamah Ibn Munqidh

## **Essay 1 Due**

### **Week 5: Into Hell**

Wednesday: Marie de France, *Lanval* and *Chevrefoil*  
Friday: Fra Dolcino and the Spirituals; Julian of Norwich, from "A Book of Showings"

### **Week 6: The Flesh**

Wednesday: Dante, *Inferno*, canto 1; Dante, "Letter to Cangrande"  
Friday: *Inferno*, 1-3

**Week 7: The World**

Wednesday: *Inferno*, 4-5

Friday: *Inferno*, 6; 10-11

**Week 8**

Wednesday: *Inferno*, 13-15

Friday: *Inferno*, 19, 26-27

**Essay 2 Due****Week 9: The Devil**

Wednesday: *Inferno*, 28; 32-34

Friday: *Inferno*, 28; 32

**Week 10: Exuberant Worldliness**

Wednesday: *Inferno*, 33-34

Friday: Chaucer, General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*; Miller's Tale (begin).

**Week 11**

Wednesday: Miller's Tale (end)

Friday: Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale

**Essay 3 Due****Week 12**

Wednesday: Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale

Friday: Pardoner's Tale

**Week 13**

Wednesday: Pardoner's Tale (Prioress's Tale if time)

Friday: Prioress's Tale (if time); Nun's Priest's Tale

**Week 14**

Wednesday: Nun's Priest's Tale; Chaucer's Retraction

**Essay 4 Due****Final Exam TBA**