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## The High Middle Ages

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The High Middle Ages

Scope:
This course of twenty-four lectures will examine the history of a period known as the High Middle Ages. During the three centuries under consideration here, Europe ceased to be an economically underdeveloped, intellectually derivative, and geopolitically passive part of the world. Instead, a newly invigorated medieval society experienced a revival of urban life; it witnessed the birth of new philosophical movements and educational institutions; and it expanded at the expense of neighbors who traditionally had expanded at Europe’s expense. We will examine how and why Europe experienced this reversal of fortune and analyze the social, intellectual, religious, and political transformations that, taken together, constituted the flowering of medieval civilization. In addition, we will also study the very concept of “the Middle Ages” to understand how the period came to be so designated.

The lectures fall into three groups. The first eight lectures treat medieval society: the warrior aristocracy of knights, castellans, counts, and dukes; the free and unfree peasants whose work in the fields made the existence of medieval society possible; and the townspeople, both artisans and merchants, who represented the newest arrivals on the medieval scene. Lectures Nine through Sixteen examine the intellectual and religious history of high medieval Europe. We will study monks and the monastic life; charismatic preachers, such as Francis of Assisi; and theologians, such as Thomas Aquinas. Attention will also be paid to those who found themselves outside the religious mainstream, especially the heretics and Jews of high medieval Europe. The final eight lectures discuss the major political developments and events between 1000 and 1300, including the First Crusade, the Norman Conquest of England, and the granting of Magna Carta.

The general educational level of this material is intermediate. Each lecture could easily be expanded into a dozen; many other issues and geographical areas could be substituted for the ones that we will explore. Nonetheless, by examining one subperiod in the Middle Ages, we will be able to delve into our topics and problems with a reasonably high degree of specificity—and certainly with more specificity than is possible in the broadest of survey courses. I hope that this course will make students familiar with the major figures and developments of the High Middle Ages and that students will gain an understanding of the connections among the social, religious, and political phenomena of this period. Most important, I hope that by the end of this course, students will share my own desire to know and understand more about the Middle Ages and that such students will use this course as a springboard from which to launch their own investigations into medieval history.
Lecture One
Why the Middle Ages?

Scope: To those who lived in Europe between 1000 and 1300, the news that they were living in the Middle Ages would have come as quite a shock. It was only during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that Italian humanists developed the concept of a “Middle Ages” that came between the fall of the Roman Empire and their own day and age, namely, the Renaissance. This lecture will examine how and why humanists invented the concept of the Middle Ages, how the reputation of the Middle Ages has fared since then, and some of the problems involved in the study of medieval history. In addition, it will explain the reasoning behind this course’s structure and approach.

Outline

I. Knowledge of medieval history provides a context for understanding the modern world. Many institutions, ideas, and practices that we may think are modern are, in fact, very old. To understand what is truly modern, and prone to change, and to understand what is not peculiarly modern and relatively immune to change, you need to know pre-modern history, including the Middle Ages.
   A. It would be impossible to understand such events as the French Revolution without some understanding of the Middle Ages, because those who took part in such events had the Middle Ages and its legacies in mind.
   B. In our final lecture, we will examine how various historians have answered the question of why one should study the Middle Ages.
   C. One respect in which the modern and the medieval are very different is social theory.
      1. In the High Middle Ages, authors who theorized about the structure of society described it as consisting of three orders: those who prayed, those who fought, and those who worked.
      2. These groups were defined by function, not by wealth.
      3. Their relationships to one another were presumed to be harmonious; there was no suggestion of class struggle, although the reality was not as harmonious as depicted.
   D. Another point of difference between modern and medieval attitudes is the fact that modern society is obsessed with trying to define its place in the broad sweep of history.
      1. No one who lived between 1000 and 1300, however, had ever heard of the Middle Ages.
      2. They followed the ideas of Saint Augustine, an early Christian Church Father, who believed that he and all subsequent generations were living in the sixth stage of human history, just before the end of the world.
   E. The individual who deserves the most credit (or blame) for inventing the concept of the Middle Ages is Francesco Petrarca (d. 1374), known in English as Petrarch.
      1. Petrarch was a Renaissance humanist for whom classical art and literature was perfection itself.
      2. Petrarch defined historical periods in cultural, rather than religious, terms.
      3. As a humanist, he desired to restore classical art and classical Latin to their original purity.
      4. Art and language needed to be purified, because according to Petrarch, they had fallen into decay since the fall of the Roman Empire, which he equated with the sack of Rome in 410 C.E.
      5. Petrarch defined this intervening period of literary and artistic rot as an “Age of Darkness.” The concept of the Middle Ages originates with Petrarch’s concept of the “Age of Darkness,” even though he did not use the term “the Middle Ages” himself.
      6. The Latin term “medium aevum” (the Middle Age) first appears in the fifteenth century.

II. Although Petrarch and other humanists had a dismal view of the Middle Ages, the period’s reputation has had its ups and downs.
   A. During the Protestant Reformation, Protestants attacked the Middle Ages as a period when the original doctrines and rituals of Christianity had been polluted; it was a period of religious, rather than literary and artistic, corruption. In response to these attacks, Catholic reformers began to develop a counterimage of the medieval era, depicting it as a period of great social and religious harmony.
B. Protestant and Catholic scholars during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries wrote polemically; nonetheless, they produced the first genuine historical scholarship devoted specifically to the “Middle Ages.”

C. Members of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment scorned the Middle Ages, seeing it as a period when religious faith, which they equated with superstition, dominated Europe. Nineteenth-century Romantics, on the other hand, extolled the Middle Ages as a period in which human emotion was given free play.

D. In twentieth-century popular culture, both the negative and positive images of the Middle Ages exist, but the negative is more prominent.

III. We will not study the Middle Ages to condemn them or to defend them. Rather, our goal will be to understand the interrelationship among social, cultural, and political changes during a crucial three-hundred-year period in European and world history.

A. We will combine a narrative and an analytical approach in this course.
   1. We will try to convey a sense of historical change, of how Europe in 1300 differed from Europe in 1000.
   2. To illustrate the connections among individual developments and broader forces for change, however, we will sometimes examine events in a thematic, rather than a strictly chronological, order.

B. The study of the Middle Ages involves peculiar difficulties, some of which we can avoid in this course, some of which we cannot. These difficulties are both technical and conceptual in nature.
   1. Technically, the source material for medieval history is rather limited. Personal documents, such as letters, diaries, and so on, are exceedingly rare. The source material is written, for the most part, in Latin, and unedited documents require special training to read.
   2. Conceptually, the study of the Middle Ages is bedeviled by the fact that, although English and a few other European languages speak of the “Middle Ages,” most major European languages (German, French, Spanish, and Italian) speak of the “Middle Age,” in the singular.
   3. By focusing on the “High Middle Ages,” I am accepting that the Middle Ages, in fact, consisted of several distinct periods. Indeed, this course will attempt to identify those characteristics that set the years 1000–1300 apart from what came before and after. Drawing such chronological boundaries involves, of course, a certain arbitrariness, and we freely admit that other dividing lines could be (and have been) drawn.

IV. Italian humanists developed the concept of the Middle Ages to denigrate the era thus designated and, thereby, glorify themselves.

A. Since the era of the Protestant Reformation, historians have pursued the study of the Middle Ages with increasing sophistication. Modern historians, to a certain extent, have broken away from the polemics that dominated the field until recently.

B. They have also introduced the concept of subperiods, such as the Early, High, and Late Middle Ages, to reflect how much change this period, which lasted for more than a millennium, encompassed.

C. The field of medieval studies thrives today, but it is a technically daunting one that requires competence in arcane skills.

Suggested Readings:

Questions to Consider:
1. Should historians reject the term “Middle Ages” because it is a postmedieval construct and, therefore, alien to the mindset of those who lived between 1000 and 1300? Or should they continue to apply the term because of its heuristic usefulness?
2. Do labels, such as the “Middle Ages,” obscure more than they reveal, or are they an essential part of historical study, necessary for bringing order to the chaotic infinity of events?
Lecture Two
Demography and the Commercial Revolution

Scope: Although its mortality rates were appallingly high and life expectancies appallingly low by modern standards, the population of Europe roughly doubled between 1000 and 1300. This growth in population distinguished the High Middle Ages from the Early Middle Ages and the Late Middle Ages, both of which were periods of relative demographic stagnation and even regression. Europe’s population growth resulted from a combination of factors, such as climatic change, the disappearance of bubonic plague, the end of the Viking invasions, and the introduction of better agricultural technology. The upsurge in population would ultimately be responsible for many of this period’s other developments, including the commercial revolution, whereby local markers, long-distance trade, and the use of money revived throughout Europe.

Outline

I. The three centuries between 1000 and 1300 witnessed a doubling of Europe’s population. Life expectancies were probably not much higher than age twenty-five around 1000, but closer to thirty-five by 1300.

A. By 1300, the population of Europe is estimated at 50–100 million. This phenomenal growth had important consequences.
   1. It spurred a revival of urban life in medieval Europe.
   2. It generated a commercial revolution.

B. Certain factors that had previously held back demographic expansion disappeared; their disappearance helps to explain why Europe’s population doubled.
   1. Bubonic plague, the lethality and recurring outbreaks of which acted as a powerful brake on population growth, vanished from Europe during the first half of the eighth century and did not return until the middle of the fourteenth century.
   2. The Viking, Arab, and Hungarian raids of the ninth and tenth centuries that killed or displaced a substantial part of the European population had ended on the European continent by the year 1000.
   3. European agricultural slave populations were unable to sustain their numbers—slave deaths outnumbered slave births. However, the dwindling away of agricultural slavery before the year 1000 lifted yet another limit on population growth.

C. New technological and climatic developments fostered population growth, too.
   1. The heavy plow and the horse collar, introduced to Western Europe before the year 1000, as well as the water mill, which began to be used on a large scale during the eleventh century, boosted agricultural production, especially in northern Europe.
   2. The period from circa 800 to circa 1200 is known as the “little optimum.” During this period, relatively warm, dry weather in Europe aided agricultural production.

II. Quantitative change resulted in qualitative change; population growth resulted in a revival of urban life everywhere in Europe but especially in Mediterranean Europe.

A. Urban life was at low ebb in Europe around 1000. The largest towns in Christian Europe were found in northern Italy, and these numbered only 10,000–20,000 inhabitants. The largest towns in northern Europe had only 4,000–5,000 inhabitants.

B. By 1300, Europe contained a substantial number of fairly large cities. Northern Italy had numerous cities with populations between 100,000 and 200,000, but even Germany, northern France, and England had cities with 40,000 to 50,000 inhabitants.

III. The revival of urban life had, in turn, its own consequences, including the revival and increasing sophistication of commercial life in Europe. Historians refer to this phenomenon as the “commercial revolution.”

A. Commercial contacts between Europe and the rest of the world expanded considerably during the High Middle Ages, as Italian merchants shuttled products back and forth between Europe and the eastern Mediterranean. Marco Polo even made his way to China in the late thirteenth century.

B. Italian merchants, after bringing goods back to Europe, sold the goods to merchants of various nationalities at fairs, such as the famous fairs of Champagne in central France.
C. The increased amount of commerce necessitated changes in the methods of doing business; these changes included the revival of gold coinage in the form of the florin. By 1300, Christian Europe had regained the monetary sophistication that had once existed under the Roman Empire.

IV. One of the most powerful, but easily overlooked, forces for historical change is demography.
   A. In a period such as the Middle Ages, when the line between sufficiency and dearth was so thin, seemingly minor innovations and events could decisively alter the balance between population decline and population growth.
   B. Thanks to a combination of technological, climatic, social, and geopolitical changes, the population of Europe grew steadily and substantially between 1000 and 1300.
   C. Population growth led to reurbanization and the commercial revolution, and these changes, in turn, would have consequences that we will examine during the rest of this course.

Suggested Readings:


Questions to Consider:
1. Why are historians and individuals more generally prone to leave demography out of their historical thinking?
2. Are the economic changes that took place in high medieval Europe sufficiently important to warrant the label of “commercial revolution?”
Lecture Three
Those Who Fought: The Nobles

Scope: Medieval social theorists often divided medieval society into three categories, or orders: those who prayed, those who fought, and those who worked. Perched atop the society of high medieval Europe were those who fought, namely, the warrior aristocracy. Members of the warrior aristocracy shared a common way of fighting (on horseback, in armor, as knights). By the end of the High Middle Ages, the warrior aristocracy had also come to form a noble class, defined as a hereditary group whose membership was determined by blood and whose members possessed specific legal privileges that were not shared by commoners.

The aristocracy’s violence, especially its private wars and robbery, was one of the great social problems of the High Middle Ages. To tame and civilize the warrior aristocracy, medieval clergy devised various methods, such as the Peace and Truce of God movement.

Outline

I. Social divisions existed among the various members of the warrior aristocracy, but they all shared a common way of fighting.
   A. The warrior aristocracy generally consisted of two groups: a lower level of knights and castellans (individuals who possessed castles) and an upper level of counts, dukes, and barons.
   B. The warrior aristocracy owed its social dominance to its military effectiveness. Aristocrats fought in heavy armor, on horseback, wielding swords and especially couched lances; during the High Middle Ages, an individual who was unable to afford a knight’s equipment could do little to resist one who fought as a knight.
   C. The introduction of the stirrup and the high saddle seem to have been crucial for the development of knights and knightly warfare in Europe. Controversy, however, surrounds the chronology of their introduction. Current scholarly thought holds that the switch began as early as the eighth century, yet it took many centuries for warriors to embrace knightly fighting completely—the transition was still ongoing during the eleventh century.

II. Although the dominant social elite in 1300, as in 1000, was a warrior class, nonetheless the medieval nobility underwent important changes during this three-hundred-year period.
   A. By 1300, “noble” had come to mean something much more specific than it had meant in 1000.
      1. Around the year 1000, the nobility was a rather amorphous group. No formal regulations governed membership. To become a knight, one merely had to secure the necessary equipment.
      2. By 1300, the European nobility had become a much more exclusive social class, a largely hereditary group with specific legal privileges. Nobles proudly proclaimed their bloodlines and ancestry through coats of arms and genealogies and bore family names (which had not existed in 1000). Knighthood was restricted to those who had undergone a specific ceremony, called dubbing.
   B. Increasing economic competition from townspeople appears to be the primary reason for the nobility’s greater class-consciousness and exclusivity.

III. Throughout the High Middle Ages, fighting and warfare among the nobility was a major social problem, as was the nobility’s sometimes brutal treatment of non-nobles.
   A. Aristocrats, especially those in possession of castles, imposed and maintained their rights of lordship over surrounding peasants.
      1. Rights of lordship included a bewildering variety of rents and fiscal exactions, rights to exact unpaid labor services, and rights of justice over others.
      2. Sometimes these rights of lordship originated in public powers that nobles had usurped from public authorities; sometimes they were entirely new creations.
      3. Because the rights of lordship were so lucrative, they were often the reason that nobles waged war against one another and one another’s peasants.
B. The proliferation of private castles and of lordships generally occurred wherever and whenever ruling authorities were unable to prevent it.
   1. Around the year 1000, the western half of the former Carolingian Empire (France, northeastern Spain, northern Italy) experienced a collapse of authority and an explosion in the number of castles and lordships.
   2. The eastern half of the former Carolingian Empire (Germany) did not experience as drastic a collapse around the year 1000, nor did England, which was not a part of the Carolingian Empire.

IV. To deal with the problem of noble violence and the inability of rulers to check it, local clergy launched the Peace and Truce of God movement circa 1000 in those areas that needed it.
   A. The Peace of God, first proclaimed at the Council of Charroux (southern France) in 989, granted immunity from noble violence to certain defenseless groups.
   B. The Truce of God, first proclaimed at the Council of Touluges (southern France) in 1027, forbade nobles to fight during certain days of the week and periods of the year.
   C. Enforcement of the Peace and Truce of God was generally ineffective, because clerics had to rely on religious sanctions and, ultimately, the nobles’ own consciences.

V. The nobility of high medieval Europe was a warrior class; its social dominance was rooted in the effectiveness of its knightly fighting techniques.
   A. During the period, the nobility became much more exclusive and sharply defined, restricting knighthood to those who had undergone dubbing, restricting eligibility for knighthood to those of noble descent, and making their bloodlines visible through coats of arms.
   B. The incessant warfare of the nobility, especially in areas where royal power was weak, would be one of the major social problems of the High Middle Ages. The Peace and Truce of God Movement was an early response to noble violence, but it was hardly the only one.
   C. Indeed, many of the developments that we will examine in future lectures, such as the rise of chivalry, urban communal movements, and the Crusades, can be understood only when seen against the backdrop of noble bellicosity.

Suggested Readings:

Questions to Consider:
1. Should medieval society be seen as much more hierarchical in structure than modern society?
2. Is it right that historians have lavished so much attention on the medieval nobility when it existed as a very small percentage of the overall population? If so, why, and if not, why not?
Lecture Four
The Chivalric Code

Scope: Some clerics sought to reshape the warrior aristocracy through literature. The result was the emergence of new literary genres, such as the courtesy book and, most important, the chivalric romance. Such authors as Chrétien de Troyes used chivalric romances to craft role models for medieval knights. Chivalric heroes practiced courtly love, whereby they devoted themselves to a single lady and strove always to be worthy of her. Their devotion led to their moral improvement; to win and retain love, these fictional heroes upheld the chivalric code of behavior, which required knights to use their martial prowess for the benefit of those who could not help themselves. Determining whether chivalry altered actual behavior is difficult. To judge from the manner in which medieval tournaments evolved, it would appear that the warrior aristocracy was successfully civilized by 1300—but only to a certain extent.

Outline

I. To knights, the Peace and Truce of God offered only condemnations and restrictions; therefore, their appeal was limited. The chivalric code, on the other hand, offered to knights a positive role in society and held greater appeal for them.
   
   A. The chivalric knight was expected to possess such qualities as bravery, honesty, generosity, and loyalty. Furthermore, chivalric knights were supposed to use their martial prowess to defend, rather than to oppress, the defenseless.

   B. Chivalric knights were supposed to acquire these qualities by practicing courtly love. In courtly love, the knight dedicated himself to a single lady, whom he treated with the utmost respect; the knight strove always to win her admiration and to do whatever pleased her. The love that a knight felt for his lady, because it compelled him to do good deeds, ennobled his character.

   C. In courtly love, the knight’s love was not necessarily platonic, and it could even be adulterous.

II. Literature, especially the genre of the chivalric romance, was the means by which chivalric values were transmitted to the nobility.

   A. Although some in the Church, such as monks, condemned chivalric romances for their lewdness, the authors of chivalric romances were often clerics, especially court chaplains. For this reason, it is justifiable to see chivalry as part of the Church’s long-standing struggle to cope with aristocratic violence.

   B. Before the emergence of the chivalric romance, clerics had tried to reshape the warrior aristocracy through the genre of courtesy books, which appeared in the first half of the twelfth century.

      1. Courtesy books consisted of advice designed to improve aristocratic manners.

      2. This advice was presented in a scolding fashion, which did not make the books appealing to the intended audience. Furthermore, courtesy books were written in Latin to be read, but aristocrats were usually illiterate and ignorant of Latin.

   C. Chivalric romances consisted of the thrilling adventures of knights who were the perfect embodiment of chivalry. Thanks to their engaging presentation, to the fact that they were written in vernacular languages rather than Latin, and the fact that they were meant to be heard rather than read, chivalric romances had a much greater impact on the aristocracy.

III. The genre of the chivalric romance emerges circa 1150 and quickly takes off during the second half of the twelfth century.

   A. Perhaps the most famous author of chivalric romances during the twelfth century is Chrétien de Troyes.

      1. As a court chaplain attached to the court of the count and countess of Champagne, Chrétien de Troyes wrote such romances as Erec and Enide, Yvain (The Knight with the Lion), and Lancelot (The Knight of the Cart).

      2. In these romances, Chrétien de Troyes explored the relationship between love and martial prowess. Some of his romances, such as Yvain, straightforwardly demonstrate how love redeems the savage warrior; others, such as Lancelot, are so filled with complexity and ambiguity that critics remain uncertain of the text’s social meaning.
B. The most famous female author of chivalric romances was Marie de France, whose short poems, or *lais*, often explore the darker recesses of courtly love.

C. Andreas Capellanus, or Andrew the Chaplain, wrote “The Art of Courtly Love,” a how-to handbook designed to help courtly lovers to attain the love of their ladies.

IV. Assessing the impact of chivalric ideals on aristocratic behavior is difficult. To judge from the history of the aristocracy’s favorite pastime, namely, the tournament, it appears that the warrior aristocracy became more civilized during the High Middle Ages—but the civilizing process was far from complete by 1300.

A. Tournaments first appear in Europe circa 1100; at first, little distinguished these from real warfare.
   1. Fighting took the form of free-for-all melees; participants fought with unblunted weapons and attempted to render their opponents unconscious or dead.
   2. There were no physical boundaries, and people living in the vicinity of a tournament could find themselves literally in the middle of life-threatening fighting.

B. By 1300, free-for-all melees had given way to jousting, blunted weapons were used, and the carnage associated with tournaments was considerably less than it had been.

C. Knights who had violated the chivalric code in some way, who were subject to reproach, were barred from tournaments.

D. Some medieval tournaments were held as round table tournaments in which participants picked a character from chivalric literature and pretended to be that person for the duration of the tournament.

V. The image of the chivalric knight who devoted himself to the love of his lady and defended the helpless was precisely that: an image. As such, it never conformed to reality. However, it was an image with a purpose, and the distance between image and reality varied over time.

A. Through chivalric romances, authors—often court chaplains—tried to get knights to internalize the chivalric code and, thereby, restrain their propensity to fight.

B. To judge from the development of the tournament, the nobility had indeed lost some, but only some, of its bloodthirstiness during the High Middle Ages.

Suggested Readings:


Questions to Consider:
1. Recently, historians have argued that chivalry was an inherently limited, perhaps even self-contradictory, method for channeling violent impulses, because chivalry glorified the bloody martial prowess of such heroes as Yvain and Lancelot. Do you agree or disagree with this argument?

2. To what extent did chivalry attempt to implant alien values in the warrior aristocracy, and to what extent did it affirm preexisting aristocratic values?
Lecture Five

Feudalism

Scope: Few words are so closely associated with the Middle Ages as “feudalism.” Yet historians have used the term with many different meanings—so many, in fact, that some have called for the word to be expunged from historians’ vocabulary.

I will use the word “feudalism” in a narrow, technical sense. Feudalism consisted of a set of relationships among the members of the warrior aristocracy. In a feudal relationship, one individual became the vassal of another, more powerful, member of the warrior aristocracy, called the lord. Both the vassal and the lord had specific obligations to one another, and the lord granted a fief (usually land) to the vassal in return for the vassal’s military service. As the High Middle Ages progressed, feudalism became more of a financial relationship and less a military one, and the nature of feudal obligations changed to the advantage of vassals and the disadvantage of lords.

Outline

I. For more than two decades, the use of the word “feudalism” has been controversial among historians, in part because they have used the term in different ways and in part because many non-historians use the term even more loosely to describe anything having to do with the Middle Ages.

A. The classic view of feudalism, articulated most influentially by François-Louis Ganshof, sees it as system of relationships among members of the warrior aristocracy.
   1. In these relationships, vassals commended themselves to lords, and lords granted fiefs (feudum in Latin) to vassals in return for military service.
   2. In this way, lords were able to create sizable military retinues, and vassals were able to acquire the means to support themselves.

B. Marc Bloch espoused a broader, more sociological view of “feudal society” in his classic book of the same name.
   1. Bloch was a French historian whom some consider to have been the most influential medievalist of the twentieth century.
   2. Bloch defined feudal society as one in which vertical ties of dependence, such as those between lords and vassals, as well as those between lords and peasants, were crucial structural elements.
   3. These ties did, in fact, more than anything else, distinguish medieval society from our atomized, modern society.

C. Marxist historians interpret feudalism economically, seeing it as a mode of production whereby lords extract surplus wealth through their rights of lordship and control over means of production (such as mills, ovens, and so on).

D. Critics of the word “feudalism” have argued that historians ought to eschew the use of the word entirely, alleging the following reasons.
   1. Historians have used the word too diversely for it to have any usefulness any more; furthermore, the word “feudalism” was not used in the Middle Ages.
   2. Relationships in the warrior aristocracy did not always conform to “feudalism” that historians have described. Sometimes lords demanded military service from vassals without granting them fiefs; sometimes lords granted fiefs to vassals without demanding military service; and so forth.
   3. Emphasizing vertical relationships of dependence ignores the horizontal ties and the importance of collective action in medieval society.

E. I accept the force of these objections. Nonetheless, the prominence of horizontal bonds does not negate the existence of vertical ties of dependence, and the English language would be impoverished if it were purged of all words with multiple meanings.
   1. The problem of imprecise usage can be avoided when historians specify which definition of feudalism they are using.
   2. Although an element of truth and insight can be found in each of the definitions, I am partial to Ganshof’s. His definition, therefore, will be the one that we use.
II. When two members of the warrior aristocracy entered into a feudal relationship, each took on certain obligations toward the other.

A. The lord owed his vassal maintenance and protection.
   1. Maintenance took the form of the fief, generally a parcel of land from which the vassal could collect revenues.
   2. Protection meant that the lord would defend the vassal’s person and property from those who would do them harm.

B. The vassal owed his lord aid and counsel.
   1. When the lord was considering a matter of importance, the vassal was obliged to answer the lord’s summons and advise the lord on the matter.
   2. Aid meant, first and foremost, military service, performed with the equipment that the vassal owned, wholly or partly, thanks to the income of the fief.

C. The feudal relationship was a contractual and personal one. If either party failed to fulfill his or her obligations, then the feudal bond was broken, and the fief was supposed to be returned. The feudal bond also dissolved on the death of either party and had to be renewed by the heir of the deceased party.

III. To become a vassal, one had to undergo a ceremony known as commendation. The ceremony itself usually had two components: the act of homage and the oath of fealty.

A. In the act of homage, a bareheaded and weaponless vassal kneeled before the lord, clasped his hands together, then extended the clasped hands toward the lord. The lord placed his hands around the hands of the vassal. The vassal declared his intention to become the vassal of the lord, and the lord declared his intention to accept him as a vassal.

B. When the oath of fealty was to be sworn, the vassal stood up, placed his right hand on the Bible or on a saint’s relic, and swore that he would be faithful to his lord and not injure him.

IV. Feudal relationships answered the needs of both lords and vassals.

A. Lords were able to amass sizable military retinues, probably larger than they could have amassed otherwise.

B. By distributing fiefs, they were better able to defend what they already possessed and to gain even more.

C. Vassals, for their part, were better able to equip and maintain themselves.
   1. A knight’s equipment was very expensive.
   2. Furthermore, a good deal of skill and training was required to fight as a knight.

V. Feudalism existed before the High Middle Ages, and already before the year 1000, the nature of feudalism had changed in ways that worked to the disadvantage of lords and the advantage of vassals. This trend continued during the High Middle Ages, when feudalism became less of a military relationship and more of an economic one.

A. Even before the year 1000, fiefs had become hereditary; vassals won the right to bequeath their fiefs to their heirs.
   1. Vassals favored keeping fiefs in their own families; lords suffered from this practice, because the heir might be a child or a woman, neither of whom could perform military service.
   2. At most, the lord might hope to get the military service from the widow’s new husband—if she remarried.
   3. Lords had the right to propose new husbands to women who had inherited fiefs and to levy a fine if the woman refused to marry the lord’s candidate.

B. By the year 1000, a common practice was for vassals to commend themselves to different lords in return for various fiefs.
   1. This practice created conflicts of interest, because vassals found themselves obliged to lords at war with one another.
   2. After the year 1000, some forms of homage were designated as “liege homage”; a vassal’s obligations to a liege lord were supposed to outweigh all others.
   3. However, vassals simply began to do liege homage to multiple lords.
C. During the High Middle Ages, the military services that vassals owed for their fiefs became increasingly lighter, and often vassals commuted their military services into cash payments.
   1. Vassals wheedled lords into promising that military service would have to be performed only in certain geographical areas, which were inevitably close to the vassal’s fief.
   2. Vassals cajoled lords into setting a time limit on the amount of military service; forty days per year was a reasonably common time limit. Vassals performing military service increasingly demanded and got cash payments that supplemented the revenues from the fiefs.
   3. Vassals were permitted to buy out their military service through a payment known as “scutage.”

VI. Historians have argued, and continue to argue, heatedly over the term “feudalism.” They debate what it might mean and whether it should be used at all. There is no scholarly consensus on this issue—and even if there were, the consensus might well be mistaken.

A. In light of the frequency with which medieval texts mention lords, vassals, fiefs, commendation, fealty, and homage, as well as the interrelationships among these phenomena, we will define feudalism as a set of relationships among members of the warrior aristocracy.

B. Through these relationships, lords created their own armies, and vassals acquired more land than they would have otherwise.

C. The institution of feudalism was constantly changing, though, and overall, it changed in ways that benefited vassals and hurt lords, thereby making it an increasingly ineffective way of procuring military service.

Suggested Readings:

Questions to Consider:
1. What other terms, freely used by historians, might be challenged on the same grounds that “feudalism” has been challenged?
2. If the term “feudalism” were to be stricken from the historical lexicon, would the Middle Ages be easier or more difficult to understand? Would historians’ descriptions of the Middle Ages be rendered more accurate or less accurate?
Lecture Six
Those Who Worked: The Peasants

Scope: Although they made up the vast majority of the European population, peasants rarely left a mark in the historical record. Most peasants felt, in one way or another, the burdens of aristocratic lordship. At the beginning of the High Middle Ages, the most disadvantaged peasants were serfs. Serfs were legally unfree peasants who, although not quite as unfree as slaves were, still faced considerable hardships. Their freedom of movement and freedom to marry were severely restricted, and they had to perform unpaid labor services for their lords. Yet the broader demographic and economic trends of high medieval Europe tended to work in favor of peasants, so much so that by 1300, serfdom was considerably less common than it had been in 1000, while its burdens, too, had grown lighter.

Outline
I. To understand medieval peasant life, one needs to understand the structure of the high medieval estates, or manors, on which peasants worked.
   A. Medieval estates generally consisted of two parts: the demesne, which was land that remained in the direct possession of the estate’s owner, and the tenancies, which consisted of land that the owner of the estate let out to others.
   B. The owners of manors did not farm the demesne themselves; rather, they relied on peasant labor, which might be hired wage labor, but might also be unpaid labor provided by peasants who owed labor obligations to the manor’s lord.
   C. Not all peasants worked on medieval manors. Small, individual peasant farms also existed, although manors tended to swallow up these smaller units.

II. Peasants in the Middle Ages shared a variety of legal and economic statuses.
   A. Economically, peasants could be tenants (who worked lands belonging to someone else), freeholders (who worked lands that they owned themselves), or both.
   B. Legally, peasants could be free or unfree, and unfree peasants might be slaves or serfs. Serfdom was the more common condition—agricultural slavery was dying out in medieval Europe by 1000.
   C. Slaves and serfs had much in common.
      1. Slavery and serfdom were both hereditary conditions.
      2. Slaves and serfs were owned property and had to perform unpaid labor services on the lands of their owners.
      3. They also faced legal disabilities. Serfs, for example, were tied to the land on which they lived; they were forbidden to leave without the permission of their owners. The same Latin word, servus, was used of both.
   D. Nonetheless, important differences existed between slavery and serfdom; serfdom was a less harsh (though still onerous) form of servitude.
      1. Slaves lived in barracks, worked in slave gangs, and depended entirely on their owners for food.
      2. Serfs resided in individual homes on specific plots of land belonging to their masters; serfs worked these tenancies with their own families, supporting themselves.
      3. Slaves, theoretically, owed unlimited labor services to their owners, and everything that they produced went to the owner.
      4. The labor obligations of serfs were limited—three days of unpaid work per week on the owner’s demesne was a common requirement around the year 1000. The rest of the time, serfs worked on their own tenancies, keeping part of what they produced there.
   E. Peasants became serfs in a number of ways. Some were slaves who had been settled on tenancies by their owners; some were simply forced into serfdom by more powerful individuals; some became serfs voluntarily, because they needed protection.
III. Most peasants, free and unfree, found themselves under the lordship of more powerful individuals (nobles) and institutions (monasteries, bishoprics, and so on).

A. Such peasants owed various seigniorial (from the French word for lord, *seigneur*) obligations to their lords. In general, the burdens of lordship were harsher for unfree than for free peasants, but during the High Middle Ages, there was little correlation between specific seigniorial obligations and legal status.

B. Three forms of lordship existed, under which peasants might find themselves. In each case, a peasant might lose his or her freedom to the lord.
   1. Landlordship was when a peasant agreed to farm land belonging to another individual. This form of lordship was primarily economic.
   2. Domestic lordship was when a peasant commended himself or herself to a lord, looking for protection, and became a part of that lord’s household. This form was primarily personal.
   3. Banal lordship was when a peasant became subject to a nearby castellan who possessed the *bannum* (the right to command and to punish). Although theoretically only a public official could hold the *bannum*, some lords seized the *bannum* for themselves and extended it to all the peasants in the vicinity of their castles. This form of lordship was primarily territorial.
   4. These forms of lordship were not mutually exclusive; peasants might find themselves subjected to all three at once and might have several lords wielding different powers of lordship. In general, banal lordship was the harshest of the three.

C. Lords, in addition to extracting unpaid labor services, possessed various economic and judicial rights over the peasants under them.
   1. Peasants owed lords various seigniorial dues, which were payments made in cash or in kind.
   2. The levying of these dues was often arbitrary, both in terms of the amounts collected and the frequency of collection.
   3. Lords possessed rights of justice over their peasants, trying them for certain crimes and collecting the fines.
   4. Lords with the *bannum* could also collect the very lucrative *banalités*, which consisted of a set of monopolies. Peasants under banal lordship could buy wine only from their lords, and they could use only their lord’s mills, ovens, winepresses—for a fee.

D. Because free and unfree peasants were subjected to the same forms of lordship, contemporaries often could not tell which individuals were free and which were unfree.

E. Many important differences can be found between the commendation of a peasant to a lord and the commendation of a knight to a lord.
   1. When a knight commended himself to a lord, thus becoming a vassal, he got a fief.
   2. Peasants who commended themselves to a lord did not get fiefs; often, they even had to hand their land over to the lord.
   3. Knights almost never lost their freedom by commending themselves; the only service they owed to their lord was military service, which was an honorable service.
   4. Peasants usually lost their freedom by commending themselves; they became serfs and owed agricultural service.

IV. Between 1000 and 1300, the burdens of serfdom and lordship generally grew less onerous for peasants. As broader economic and geopolitical changes put peasants in an increasingly advantageous position, serfdom became less common.

A. The reurbanization of Europe helped the peasantry.
   1. Serfs who migrated to towns and met the citizenship requirements (often, residence for a year and a day) generally became free.
   2. Lords, fearing the flight of peasants to towns or to frontier regions, gradually reduced the burdens of lordship and freed serfs.

B. The expansion of Christian Europe into Muslim Spain, Slavic Eastern Europe, Celtic Ireland, and Syria and Palestine created frontier zones where serfdom was rare or nonexistent among Christian settlers.

C. Technological changes, such as the introduction of the heavy plow and the horse collar, also reduced the need for peasant physical labor.
D. The remonetarization of Europe permitted peasants to buy their freedom and to commute labor services into cash payments.

V. The peasantry, despite comprising the vast majority of human beings, remains the most difficult social group to study—it figures all too rarely in documents from the medieval period.

A. Nonetheless, it seems clear that the rights of lords weighed heavily on peasants, who saw much of what they produced pass into the hands of their social superiors.

B. Serfs, legally unfree peasants tied to the land on which they lived and worked, were especially burdened.

C. Towns and frontier regions, however, provided avenues for escape, and thanks to the existence of these escape hatches, the burdens of lordship were lighter in 1300 than in 1000.

D. It seems fair to say that by 1300, most peasants were free—although in much of Europe, serfdom continued to exist into the modern period.

Suggested Readings:

Questions to Consider:
1. Do you think that medieval peasants were resentful of serfdom, or do you think that they accepted it as a largely inevitable fate?
2. In what ways could serfdom be considered “exploitative?”
Lecture Seven
Those Who Worked: The Townspeople

Scope: Thanks to the revival of urban life during the High Middle Ages, occupational diversity began to flourish, and townspeople became a prominent part of medieval European society. The nature and mindset of medieval townspeople, however, continues to be debated. Were townspeople different from, and at odds with, the warrior aristocracy? Or did townspeople, too, share a “feudal” mentality very similar to that of the aristocracy? An examination of urban institutions suggests that the answer to both questions is yes. Perhaps the most famous high medieval institution was the commune. A commune was a defensive organization based on an oath of mutual assistance sworn by all the citizens of a town. Communes protected townspeople from aristocratic attack, yet they used the same violent tactics as the aristocracy did; thus, communes reflected a combination of hostility, envy, and emulation.

Outline

I. The revival of urban life was one of the most important transformations to occur in high medieval Europe. Medieval urban society was economically stratified and strictly regulated.
   A. In medieval Italy, contemporaries divided urban society into the *populo grosso* (the fat people) and the *populo minuto* (the little people).
      1. The *populo grosso* consisted of merchants and landlords (merchants who had grown wealthy enough to live off the land that they had bought).
      2. The *populo minuto* consisted of those who worked with their hands: retail merchants, artisans, and farmers.
   B. In parts of Mediterranean Europe, such as southern France and Italy, where urban life had never died out, nobles frequently lived in towns for at least part of the year. Elsewhere, especially in northern Europe, nobles rarely resided in towns.
   C. Medieval town governments, largely controlled by the *populo grosso*, strictly regulated urban life to forestall resentment on the part of the “little people.” Clothing, funerals, and weddings were regulated to prevent “little people” from trying to ape the *populo grosso*.

II. Because of the problem of noble violence and the inability of royal governments and the Peace and Truce of God to solve it, towns formed communes.
   A. Although each commune had its own individual characteristics, communes were sworn associations of mutual defense.
      1. When townspeople formed a commune, they swore to defend themselves against all those who were not members of their commune; they also often swore to maintain peace in their town.
      2. During the formation of a commune, townspeople also created officials, known in Italy as consuls, whose job was to supervise the commune. Consuls were elected officials, chosen by a variety of methods by the townspeople themselves; they served for a set period of time, often one year.
      3. The communal movement arose during the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries in northern Italy and northeastern France. From there, it spread to much of Europe—especially to areas where royal authority was, or had been, relatively weak.
   B. Communes defended townspeople by having the consuls judge those who injured its members, then exacting vengeance from those who refused to accept the consuls’ judgment.
   C. The attitude of kings and bishops to the communes ranged from support to outright hostility. Kings and bishops sympathized with the desire of townspeople to be safe from aristocratic violence. However, they had their own solutions to that problem and feared that communes were a usurpation of their powers.
   D. This hostility to communes sometimes touched off communal revolts, such as the insurrection of the commune of Laon against that town’s bishop in 1112, which resulted in the bishop’s murder.

III. Most of the townspeople’s time was spent in economic pursuits.
   A. At the level of international commerce, very little specialization was found.
B. The preference was for luxury goods that were light and easily transported.
C. The tendency was to make large profits from a limited number of goods that were made to order.

IV. Much as communes protected all the citizens of an individual town, guilds protected the practitioners of various trades from economic hardship and competition.

A. Although each town had only one commune, it might have as many as one hundred different guilds, one for each trade: the bakers, the dyers, the carpenters, and so on.
B. Guilds strictly regulated the economic life of each town.
   1. Those who did not belong to the guild could not practice the guild’s trade.
   2. Guilds enforced standards of quality among a town’s artisans.
   3. Guilds standardized the production and distribution of goods so that no individual gained an advantage over his or her colleagues. They determined the raw materials, tools, and techniques that could be used and sometimes working hours, as well. Guilds sometimes forbade advertising or any action, such as sneezing or nodding at passers-by, that could be construed as an attempt to draw attention to one’s products.
   4. In addition to their economic function, guilds served a social function. They took care of sick and incapacitated members, as well as members’ families after an artisan’s death.

V. In certain respects, medieval townspeople shared the mind-set of the warrior aristocracy; yet the nature of urban life also produced certain characteristics that were peculiar to townspeople.

A. Medieval townspeople were just as prone to violence as the warrior aristocracy was.
   1. Communes used the same brutal tactics that aristocrats did to impose and sustain their lordships.
   2. Wealthy families in Italian towns built towers, similar to rural castles, from which they fought their feuds against rival families.
   3. The goal of the wealthiest townspeople was to lead an aristocratic lifestyle, living off one’s estates and even joining the ranks of the aristocracy by becoming a knight.
B. Because of the frequent contact of townspeople with money and their need to sign contracts and keep records, medieval towns witnessed a revival of numeracy and lay literacy during the High Middle Ages.
   1. During the High Middle Ages, Roman numerals were replaced by Arabic numerals.
   2. Arabic numerals introduced the number zero to European accounting.
   3. Without the revival of numeracy and literacy in the towns of high medieval Europe, later developments, such as the emergence of the printing press in the fifteenth century and the scientific revolution of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, would not have taken place.

VI. The significance of the revival of urban life can scarcely be overestimated.

A. In the countryside, social relations were often structured by vertical ties of dependence, such as those between lords and vassals, on the one hand, and those between lords and peasants (including serfs), on the other hand.
B. In towns, however, horizontal bonds of association played a distinctive role in ordering social relations. Despite the existence of social divisions among townspeople, communes and guilds protected all members equally, and each member of the organization had the same obligations toward the other members.
C. Their relatively high literacy rates and their skill with numbers also distinguished townspeople from others.
D. Nonetheless, viewing medieval townspeople as a modern bourgeoisie would be a mistake—the brutal methods that communes used against malefactors show that townspeople were perfectly at home in a world of private warfare.

Suggested Readings:
Questions to Consider:

1. A saying in the Middle Ages held that “city air makes you free.” How free were medieval urban populations, juridically, politically, and economically?

2. Historians have sometimes been tempted to describe conflicts between the *populo grosso* and the *populo minuto* as early examples of “class struggle.” Is the phrase appropriate for the study of the Middle Ages? Why or why not?
Lecture Eight
Women in Medieval Society

Scope: Long marginalized by a type of history that emphasized the political and military to the exclusion of the social, women’s history and gender history have become two of the fastest growing fields in medieval studies. In many ways, the opportunities for leadership and rulership were greater in medieval Europe than they would be in modern Europe until very recently. Such individuals as Eleanor of Aquitaine and Hildegard of Bingen were able to exercise a considerable influence on the twelfth century. Yet the High Middle Ages cannot be seen as a golden age of female autonomy. All women, regardless of their social statues, faced certain legal disabilities, and some of the era’s larger trends, such as the revival of urban life, limited rather than broadened the political and educational opportunities available to women.

Outline
I. As a group, women were subject to certain legal advantages and, more often, disadvantages.
   A. Some adult women were under the legal guardianship of their husbands. Nonetheless, adult unmarried women were legally independent and had full rights to own and to dispose of their own property.
   B. The same was true of a married woman who practiced a trade different from that of her husband; such a woman was known as a femme sole.
   C. In terms of criminal law, different punishments were sometimes inflicted on men and women. Women were exempted from certain forms of torture, such as being broken on the wheel, and pregnant women were exempted from all forms of torture and from execution.
   D. Although male criminals might be executed in various ways (beheading, hanging, burning at the stake), women were always burned at the stake—according to contemporaries, to preserve female modesty.

II. Because so many forms of medieval rulership were dynastic, women had more opportunities to gain formal political power than would be the case in later centuries. Likewise, women participated in a greater range of professions and occupations during the High Middle Ages than would be the case later.
   A. Women might achieve formal political power as regents or queens.
      1. When a ruler died and the heir to the throne was a child, a regency might be established. The regent would govern the kingdom until the heir was old enough to rule, and the child’s mother was sometimes chosen to act as regent.
      2. If there was no direct male heir to the throne, the crown might pass to a woman, who then acted as queen for the rest of her life.
      3. In the same way, women might become the rulers of duchies, counties, and castellanies.
   B. Economically, the number of professions that excluded women was relatively small.
      1. A survey of one hundred guilds in Paris circa 1300 showed that women participated in eighty-six of the occupations listed.
      2. Most commonly, family members trained female artisans. Sometimes women were sent to other families to train as apprentices, and sometimes women trained male apprentices.

III. Christianity and the Church, too, offered women a combination of opportunities and restrictions.
   A. Women could become nuns, and nunneries offered some women the opportunity for managerial power and a certain amount of autonomy.
   B. Medieval religious orders, however, were often ambivalent about women, and women could not become priests or bishops.

IV. The lives of two famous high medieval women, Eleanor of Aquitaine (d. 1204) and Hildegard of Bingen (d. 1179), reveal much about medieval women, their opportunities, and their restrictions.
   A. Hildegard of Bingen was perhaps the most famous female mystic of the High Middle Ages. Thanks to her visions, which she had since the age of five, and the texts she wrote describing them, Hildegard enjoyed more freedom than that accorded the ordinary medieval nun.
      1. Her parents dedicated her to a religious life at the age of six.
2. In 1136, she became head of a Benedictine convent.
3. In 1141, she had an especially powerful religious vision through which she became convinced that she had acquired a unique insight into the meaning of both the Old and the New Testaments.
4. She claimed that she had been commanded by a voice to describe her vision to others orally and in writing.
5. She preached publicly and completed her first major written work by about 1151.
6. She even composed music and wrote medical treatises.
7. Popes and kings sought her advice, and Hildegard did not hesitate to reply and to reprimand them.
8. Hildegard’s life shows that the possibility existed for women to fulfill roles that were generally reserved for males.
9. However, few medieval women, if any, attained Hildegard’s importance.

B. Hailing from the highest aristocracy of southern France, Eleanor of Aquitaine was an important early patroness of the chivalric romance.
1. She was born around 1122, the daughter of the Duke of Aquitaine.
2. She was wife to King Louis VII of France and accompanied him on the Second Crusade. (It was highly unusual for a wife to accompany her husband on a crusade.)
3. Whether because of her rumored affairs or because of her failure to produce any male children, Eleanor and her husband separated, and their marriage was annulled in 1152.
4. Several months later, she married the future King Henry II of England.
5. When the two became estranged, Eleanor of Aquitaine fomented so many rebellions among his disgruntled sons (including Richard Lionheart and John Lackland) that Henry II subjected her to a comfortable imprisonment in a royal castle.
6. On Henry II’s death in 1189, however, her sons liberated her.
7. Eleanor’s favorite son, Richard Lionheart, became the new king.
8. Now nearly in her seventies, Eleanor went on to play a crucial role in some of the most important episodes of her son’s reign.

V. Although such women as Eleanor and Hildegard were famous and powerful in their day, their power consisted largely of their ability to manipulate the male figures in their lives.

Suggested Readings:

Questions to Consider:
1. Should historians regard “women” as an analytical category equal in importance to more familiar categories, such as “nobles,” “peasants,” and so on?
2. Does the intrinsic interest of Eleanor of Aquitaine’s life justify all the attention that has been lavished on her? Or has that attention created a skewed picture of female life during the Middle Ages?
Lecture Nine
Those Who Prayed: The Monks

Scope: At the beginning of the High Middle Ages, monks constituted medieval Europe’s spiritual elite. Living according to the Rule of Saint Benedict, which sought to foster the monastic virtues of humility, obedience, and stability, monks led lives that involved constant struggle against their own wills. Through the austerity of their lives, monks not only furthered their own salvation but also benefited all of society; the prayers of monks were believed to be especially efficacious in God’s eyes. Monastic life, however, did not always match the ideals established in the Rule of Saint Benedict. The result was a series of reform movements, including the Cistercian Reform led by Bernard of Clairvaux, who was one of the most austere and eloquent defenders of monastic ideals. But monastic reform movements were generally unsuccessful, because they tended to succumb to the same forces that had necessitated reform in the first place.

Outline

I. By the year 1000, one form of monasticism—Benedictine monasticism—had become dominant across Europe.
   A. On entering a monastery, monks took vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity. In theory, monks led strictly regulated lives devoted to the performance of the liturgy, manual labor, and physical labor.
   B. Most of the monastic day was devoted to the performance of the liturgical hours, prayers that were said continually throughout the day and the night.
   C. The head of the monastery, or abbot, was responsible for enforcing the Rule of Saint Benedict, the most widely observed monastic rule during the High Middle Ages. The Rule of Saint Benedict demanded that monks internalize the monastic virtues of humility, obedience, and stability.
      1. Monks were to show obedience in various ways. They were forbidden to question the authority of the abbot, and they were forbidden to own private property; they could merely use what the abbot might provide for them.
      2. Monks were to show humility by always walking with their heads down, by prostrating themselves before their brothers for even slight faults, and by observing strict silence (except during the performance of the liturgy.)
      3. Monks were to show stability by never traveling beyond the walls of the monastery except when commanded to do so by the abbot. They were to remain, with their monastery, deep in the countryside, cut off from the outside world as much as possible.

II. Both religious and social factors made the monastic vocation appealing.
   A. For individuals seeking a challenging spiritual test, monasticism provided it.
   B. Elderly individuals sometimes joined monasteries at the end of their lives—in that sense, monasteries functioned as retirement homes.
   C. Young children were sometimes given to a monastery to be raised; such children were known as oblates. The problem of providing for younger children was especially pressing in the High Middle Ages, because during this period, primogeniture (the practice of allowing the oldest male son to inherit the bulk of a family’s estate) gradually supplanted partible inheritance (the practice of dividing up an inheritance equally among various heirs).

III. The reality of monastic life often fell short of the ideal.
   A. Observance of the rigorous Rule of Saint Benedict tended to become increasingly lax over time, simply because it demanded so much of individuals.
   B. Although individual monks were forbidden to own property, the monastery, as a corporation, could and did own property—often quite a lot. A considerable amount of wealth was required to support a community of several dozen, or perhaps even two hundred, monks.
      1. Those who donated children to monasteries, or even joined themselves, also donated land and money to the monastery.
      2. Individual patrons donated land to the monastery in return for the monks’ prayers.
3. The possession of so much corporate wealth made it difficult for individual monks to live as austerely
as they should have.

C. Oblates and retirees sometimes lacked the spiritual drive that a strict observance of the Rule of Saint
Benedict required.

IV. The High Middle Ages witnessed various attempts to reform Benedictine monasticism, such as the Cluniac
Reform, which originated with the monastery of Cluny, and the Cistercian Reform, which originated with the
monastery of Cîteaux.

A. Cluniac monks attempted to reimpose the Rule of Saint Benedict on monasteries that came under their
control and were famous for their long, elaborate liturgical services.

B. To effect monastic reform, Cluniac monks adopted a more hierarchical structure among their monasteries,
abandoning the relatively decentralized structure of earlier Benedictine monasticism.

C. Thanks to their austerity, Cluniacs attracted generous donations from lay patrons, but the increasing wealth
of the Cluniac monasteries then sapped their reforming zeal.

D. Bernard of Clairvaux was the driving force behind the Cistercian Reform. Legendary for his personal
austerity and one of the most eloquent authors of his day, his charisma and energy fueled the enormous
growth of the Cistercians during the twelfth century.

E. The Cistercians accused the Cluniacs of failing to observe the Rule of Saint Benedict strictly enough and
sought to lead lives of even greater austerity.

1. Cistercians reduced the length of the monastic liturgy, thus leaving more time for physical labor.
2. Unlike Cluniac churches, which were elaborately decorated, Cistercian churches were simple.
3. Cistercian monasteries refused to accept oblates and certain forms of income.

F. The Cistercians, like the Cluniacs, attracted many lay donations, so that by 1200, little difference could be
found between a Cistercian house and any other sort of Benedictine house.

V. At the beginning of the High Middle Ages, monks were the dominant spiritual elite in medieval society.

A. Isolated from the world, living their lives in accordance with the Rule of Saint Benedict, and devoting
themselves to work, scholarship, and most especially the performance of the liturgy, monks pursued their
salvation through the obliteration of their own wills. Their prayers also aided the salvation of their
monasteries’ benefactors.

B. However, the rigors of monastic life were such that monks and monasteries often fell short of their ideals,
necessitating reform movements, such as the Cluniac and the Cistercian. These reform movements only
partly succeeded in restoring the observance of the Rule of Saint Benedict—and as time passed, their
success diminished.

Suggested Readings:

Questions to Consider:
1. Can you identify with the yearnings that would lead one to embrace the monastic life, or do you find the
monastic ideal to be entirely alien? Does your ability or inability to identify personally with the monastic
vocation hamper or help your efforts to understand monasticism?

2. It has been suggested that the ultimate purpose of monasticism was to “infantilize” monks, to return them to a
state of infancy by robbing them of the powers of decision, subjecting them to the sleeping patterns of a
newborn, and so on. Do you regard this analysis of monasticism to be helpful or far-fetched?
Lecture Ten
Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan Movement

Scope: The son of a wealthy Italian merchant, Francis of Assisi’s personal crises would lead him toward the establishment of a new, innovative, and explosively successful religious order, namely, the Franciscans. Francis of Assisi’s life of wandering, poverty, begging, and preaching struck a chord in the soul of urban Europe; his charisma and his acts of seeming irrationality (such as preaching to birds and animals) attracted followers who sought to emulate him. Collectively, the Franciscans filled a large hole in the religious life of medieval Europe and pioneered a specifically urban spirituality, one based on a complicated and simultaneous rejection and acceptance of urban life and its corollaries. Already during his lifetime, Francis of Assisi grew disenchanted with the direction of the Franciscans, and shortly after Francis of Assisi’s death, the order began to bend its founder’s rules concerning poverty.

Outline

I. During his brief life (he died when he was about forty-four years old), Francis of Assisi altered the religious landscape of High Medieval Europe.
   A. Francis of Assisi was the son of a wealthy cloth merchant from Assisi (Italy). His socioeconomic background, therefore, was rather unusual for a medieval holy man; Bernard of Clairvaux, for example, came from a noble family.
   B. While in his early twenties, Francis of Assisi underwent a spiritual crisis. He renounced his previous life and gradually adopted the life of a poor wandering preacher.
   C. During his lifetime, he began to attract followers. In 1210, Francis and his followers received permission to found a new religious order, the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans).
   D. Toward the end of his life, Francis of Assisi withdrew somewhat from actively running the Franciscan Order. He traveled to Egypt in 1219 and 1220, where he unsuccessfully attempted to convert a local Muslim ruler. He reportedly received the stigmata two years before his premature death.

II. The Franciscans represented a new type of religious ideal, one that combined the functions of a monk and a priest.
   A. The Franciscans attempted to lead the vita apostolica, or apostolic life, which was modeled on the lives of Christ’s first followers, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.
   B. The Franciscans were mendicants; they traveled from town to town and begged for a living, embracing both individual and corporate poverty. In addition to wandering and begging, the Franciscans (like priests) preached and heard confessions. All these activities set the Franciscans apart from traditional Benedictine monks.
   C. Like monks, however, the Franciscans lived according a religious rule, namely, the Rule of Saint Francis, which was first redacted in 1220, then revised in 1223.

III. Because the Franciscans were so successful at meeting the spiritual needs and aspirations of townspeople, the new religious order grew at an astounding speed.
   A. By 1300, about 1,400 Franciscan religious houses existed throughout Europe and, perhaps, 28,000 Franciscans.
   B. Townspeople welcomed the Franciscans, because by supporting the new religious order, they could assuage the guilt caused by their greed and their obsession with time.
      1. The Franciscans initially refused to accept any money beyond what was needed for each day.
      2. Francis had an almost pathological hatred for money.
      3. The first Franciscans were famous for their refusal to plan or to worry about the future.
      4. When the Franciscans first sent some sixty of their members to preach in Germany in 1219, they did not bother to learn German, trusting that God would work some miracle to allow them to communicate. In fact, the miracle did not happen and their linguistic ineptitude got them into trouble.
C. Although the Franciscans were, in some ways, the antithesis of medieval urban life, they nonetheless ministered to townspeople, which also made them popular with urban populations. The Franciscans’ practice was different from that of monks, who kept as far away from towns as possible.

1. Rather than condemning urban life wholesale, Franciscans attempted to find some spiritual merit in urban professions.

2. Franciscan preachers and confessors specialized in engaging listeners and penitents in debate. Their frequent use of debate appealed to townspeople, whose lives revolved around haggling.

3. They also took a distinctive approach to penance, which was traditionally a rigidly enforced discipline that meted out punishment regardless of the circumstances of the sin.

4. Franciscans attempted to understand the circumstances of the sin and engaged in discussion and debate with the sinner.

IV. The Franciscan Order encountered some hostility; even before Francis of Assisi’s death in 1226, it had begun to lose some of its originality.

A. Local clergy, including priests and bishops, sometimes resented the success with which the mendicants performed jobs that historically had been theirs.

B. The rules forbidding ownership of property were gradually relaxed during the thirteenth century, which caused the Franciscan Order to split into “Spiritual Franciscans,” who favored strict adherence to the prohibitions against property, and the “Conventual Franciscans,” who favored the change.

C. Heated arguments often took place between these two groups.

D. By 1300, the Franciscans had acquired a reputation for being gold-diggers, handing out especially light penances to attract more confessors and more donations by grateful penitents.

E. By the early fourteenth century, several “Spiritual Franciscans” had been condemned and executed as heretics.

V. The reurbanization of Europe created a need for new spiritual models; Francis of Assisi and the Franciscans fulfilled that need.

A. Like monks, they followed a religious rule, but unlike monks, they moved about from town to town, preaching, hearing confessions, and ministering to urban populations.

B. They condemned urban vices, such as greed and the obsession with time, yet accepted that townspeople could lead spiritually meritorious lives and used tactics that appealed to townspeople.

C. The growth of the Franciscan Order was phenomenal, yet that growth also led to more and more compromises of the original Franciscan ideals.

Suggested Readings:


Questions to Consider:
1. Does the modern popularity of Francis of Assisi reflect how powerfully his message transcends time and place, or does it reflect how badly modern individuals have understood Francis and how they have wrenched him from his medieval context?

2. Modern historians often speak warmly of the mendicants and Francis of Assisi, yet would shun any twenty-first century individual who acted in the same way. Is there anything intellectually dishonest about historians praising in the past that which they reject in the present?
Lecture Eleven
Heretics and Heresy

Scope: During the High Middle Ages, heresy and heretical movements spread across much of Europe. The reurbanization of Europe and a rise in lay literacy seem to have been the major reasons for this spread. Disillusion with ecclesiastical reform movements contributed to an increase in heresy, too; increased contact with southeastern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean may also have played a role. The two major heretical movements of the High Middle Ages were Waldensianism and Catharism. Waldensians, who in some respects resembled the early Franciscans, emphasized the literal interpretation of the Bible, the right of laypeople to read the Bible, and the religious value of poverty. Cathars claimed that the principles of good and evil were equally balanced in the universe. Catharism’s appeal, however, owed more to its rituals and the commitment of its preachers than it did to Cathar theology.

Outline

I. Francis of Assisi and the Franciscans received papal approval, in part because the papacy hoped that the popularity of Francis would draw people away from heretical movements, which had become a major problem by 1200.
   A. Heresy is an error or a deviation from accepted Christian belief or practice. For an error or deviation to be heretical, the guilty individual must be nominally Christian (i.e., must have been baptized).
   B. Some medieval theologians also insisted that for an error to be heretical, the heretic had to defend it obstinately and publicly, even when confronted with the true teaching or practice.
   C. As far as historians can tell, mass heretical movements did not exist in western Europe around 1000. The few heretics of the ninth and tenth centuries were isolated individual theologians.

II. During the High Middle Ages, however, heresy became more widespread, especially in Italy and southern France. Several factors led to the rise of heretical movements between 1000 and 1300.
   A. Disappointment in the failure of ecclesiastical reform movements sometimes led people to join heretical sects, where they hoped to find greater religious purity.
   B. Increasing lay literacy—a consequence of reurbanization and the commercial revolution—also contributed to the growth of heresy. Laypeople with access to the Bible sometimes came to conclusions that differed from the Church’s interpretations and teachings.
   C. Southeastern Europe had long been home to a heresy known as Bogomilism.
      1. Bogomilism was a dualist heresy, positing that Satan and God were equal in strength.
      2. Some historians have pointed to the similarities between Bogomilism and western European heresies, such as Catharism, and speculated that crusaders traveling through southeastern Europe may have come across heretical beliefs there and brought them back to Europe.

III. From circa 1000 to circa 1150, heretical groups were small, localized, and relatively unthreatening. From 1150 onward, international heretical movements arose; they actively proselytized for converts.
   A. During the first half of the High Middle Ages, heretical groups largely kept to themselves and were discovered accidentally. Wandering heretical preachers, such as Henry the Monk and Peter of Bruis, however, set the stage for broader heretical movements.
      1. Henry the Monk began life as a radical Gregorian Reformer, then crossed the line into outright heresy.
      2. He operated in the towns of central and southern France, sometimes visiting Italy between 1116 and the 1140s.
      3. Henry denied the existence of original sin and the efficacy of prayers for the dead. He rejected infant baptism and the spiritual efficacy of the sacraments and, by extension, the sacramental powers of the clergy.
      4. Peter Bruis shared many of Henry’s views and had a few more of his own, including his denial that the Old Testament was divinely inspired and a contempt for the materialization of the Church.
   B. After 1150, two major international heretical movements arose: the Waldensians and the Cathars.
C. The Cathars had no single founder; their presence is first noted in Europe in the 1140s.
   1. Theologically, the Cathars were dualists, believing that good and evil were equally powerful. They also viewed the material world as entirely corrupt and believed in metempsychosis, a form of reincarnation.
   2. Catharism developed a ritual known as the *consolamentum*. Wandering Cathar preachers, known as *perfecti*, received the *consolamentum* long before death and had to live lives of strict chastity afterward. Ordinary Cathar believers received the *consolamentum* just before death and often were forbidden to eat or drink after the ceremony had been performed.

D. The Waldensians were followers of a merchant from Lyon named Waldo (aka) Valdes.
   1. Around 1170, Waldo underwent a spiritual crisis very similar to the one that Francis of Assisi would experience about forty years later.
   2. Waldo, however, failed to win official recognition of his right to preach. He and his followers were denied permission to preach by the pope.
   3. They went on preaching, however, and were excommunicated and labeled as heretics in the early 1180s.
   4. Initially, there was little that was doctrinally deviant about the Waldensians, but they soon adopted increasingly unorthodox ideas: that the sacraments were useless for salvation and that the Waldensians, rather than the Catholic clergy, were the true heirs of the apostles.
   5. Eventually, they demanded the right of laypeople to read the Bible, and they insisted on a literal interpretation of the Bible.
   6. Not surprisingly, the next time a Mediterranean merchant approached the papacy for permission to live a life of preaching, wandering, and begging, the answer would be yes, as happened with Francis of Assisi.

IV. The growth of lay literacy and disenchantment with religious reform movements fostered the spread of heresy in high medieval Europe.
   A. Heretics deviated in their beliefs and practices from the norms of the medieval Christian Church.
   B. Small, isolated pockets of heresy during the first half of the period gave way to large, international movements during the second half.
   C. Waldensians, with their emphasis on reading and interpreting the Bible literally, and Cathars, with their elaborate theology and distinctive rituals, were especially prominent in Italy and southern France.
   D. The need to combat heresy not only helped the Franciscan Order to achieve papal recognition but also led to such events as the Albigensian Crusade, which altered the political landscape of France, and the creation of the inquisition; both of these will be examined in subsequent lectures.

Suggested Readings:

Questions to Consider:
1. Most of what modern historians know, or think they know, about medieval heretics, comes from the pens of Church officials who were openly hostile to the heretics. Given this source, how possible is it to study and understand medieval heresy?
2. Why was the existence of heresy felt to be so troubling in the Middle Ages that heretics were executed?
Lecture Twelve
The Medieval Inquisitions

Scope: The term “The Inquisition” is misleading, because it implies that a single inquisition existed since the twelfth century. One should speak, instead, of various medieval and early modern “inquisitions.” The High Middle Ages saw the episcopal inquisition, established in 1184, and the papal inquisition, established in several steps during the 1230s. The episcopal inquisition and the papal inquisition had different organizations and methods. The episcopal inquisition relied on bishops to investigate heresy in their dioceses, while the papal inquisition relied on full-time, professional inquisitors. Yet both inquisitions had the same purpose: to identify heretics and to convince them to renounce their errors. In certain respects, the papal inquisition’s history has been badly distorted. The use of torture was not peculiar to inquisitorial courts, and inquisitorial torture differed little from other forms of judicial torture. Yet certain procedures peculiar to the papal inquisition did put defendants at a disadvantage.

Outline

I. The first of the medieval inquisitions, which historians call the episcopal inquisition, was created in 1184 by the papal bull *Ad abolendam*.
   A. The episcopal inquisition required local bishops to investigate the inhabitants of their dioceses, examining their religious beliefs to ascertain whether those beliefs were heretical.
      1. If the beliefs were heretical, the heretics were to be taught the correct beliefs.
      2. If the heretics refused to accept the correct beliefs, the bishops were to hand them over to secular authorities for punishment.
   B. The episcopal inquisition was relatively ineffective.
      1. Some bishops were absentees (i.e., they did not live in their own dioceses) and, therefore, could not examine the inhabitants of their dioceses.
      2. Local bishops rarely had the time or the necessary training to conduct these examinations.
      3. When someone denounced another individual as a heretic, the episcopal inquisition revealed the identity of the accuser to the defendant. This practice not infrequently resulted in the murder of the accuser, which hindered prosecution.

II. The papal inquisition, established in a series of steps during the 1230s, was much more efficient at identifying heretics.
   A. The papal inquisition was staffed, not by bishops, but by professionally trained, full-time inquisitors. These inquisitors were often drawn from the Dominican Order.
      1. The Dominicans were a mendicant religious order, founded at roughly the same time as the Franciscan Order.
      2. Because of their skill at debate, their mobility, and their sophisticated theological training, Dominicans were well suited to be inquisitors.
   B. The papal inquisition kept careful written records of its interrogations and prosecutions. These dossiers made it easier to keep track of heretics.

III. The papal inquisition developed a distinctive procedure for investigating heresy.
   A. When they arrived at a village or town, inquisitors invited individuals to confess their heretical beliefs and to denounce others (secretly) who were heretics. Those who confessed at this point were given a lenient penance—as long as they revealed to the inquisitors all that they knew about other heretics in the area.
   B. In addition, inquisitors could simply compel individuals to submit to interrogation.
   C. Once the information had been gathered, the inquisitors could begin an inquisitorial “trial.” Incriminating testimony by at least two witnesses or accusers was needed before a trial could begin.
IV. The nature of inquisitorial trials has been, in certain respects, badly misunderstood, yet one cannot ignore the ways in which these trials favored the prosecution.

A. Inquisitorial trials were conducted in secret—usually the only individuals present were the inquisitors, the defendant, and a few members of the inquisitorial staff.

B. An accused individual could be held for an indefinite period, even years, before trial.
   1. During this time, suspected heretics were not told the specific charges against them, but they were repeatedly invited to confess.
   2. This tactic often got defendants to divulge information about themselves that the inquisitors might not have known about otherwise.

C. Inquisitors sequestered the property of the defendant.

D. As of 1252, inquisitors were permitted to torture suspects.
   1. Torture, however, had already become a common part of medieval judicial procedure during the thirteenth century—it was not peculiar to the inquisition.
   2. The techniques of inquisitorial torture were also used by secular law courts, and inquisitors were forbidden to use methods of torture that resulted in bloodshed, mutilation, or death.

E. No appeal was available if the inquisition found the defendant guilty of heresy.

F. The rights of the defendant were safeguarded in various (but not always effective) ways.
   1. At the beginning of an inquisitorial trial, defendants were invited to name those who had “mortal hatred” against them. If their accusers were among those whom the defendants named, then the charges were dismissed.
   2. No confession obtained under torture was legally admissible. Defendants who confessed under torture then had to repeat the confession, without torture, at a later date—although they knew that a retraction of the confession would lead to still more torture.

V. Inquisitorial trials could end in various ways.

A. Sometimes inquisitors found the accused to be innocent or declared that the evidence was insufficient for a guilty verdict.

B. The accused often had to wait for quite some time, perhaps months or years, before learning the outcome of the trial.

C. The inquisitors waited for numerous cases to be settled, then held a public ceremony to announce their verdicts.

D. Those who confessed to their heresy were given a penance, such as wearing a yellow cross on their garments for the rest of their lives.

E. Those who refused to recant their heresy, or had relapsed into heresy after previously being tried by the inquisition, were handed over to secular authorities to be burned to death.

F. Inquisitors were often in no hurry to execute the relapsed and stubborn. Once dead, the convicted could reveal no more information. Furthermore, the imprisonment of one heretic often led others, who feared their imprisoned brethren might denounce them, to confess.

VI. The medieval inquisition has provided ammunition to those who would besmirch the Middle Ages.

A. The result has been, on the one hand, an exaggeration of inquisitorial power and cruelty and, on the other hand, a whitewashing of the ways in which inquisitors placed defendants at a grave disadvantage.

B. The inquisition, like every medieval institution, underwent continual change; the episcopal and papal inquisitions differed substantially in their procedures.

C. Nonetheless, both shared the same goal: the identification and correction of heretics and, if need be, the execution of those who would not be corrected or who relapsed.

D. Although the inquisition did not use methods of torture beyond those commonly used in thirteenth-century legal proceedings, its efficiency made it a formidable instrument of coercion.
Suggested Readings:

Questions to Consider:
1. Can the medieval inquisition be considered an instrument of coercive control similar to those found in modern totalitarian states?
2. Given inquisitorial procedure, how likely was it that the inquisition would accidentally convict innocent individuals?
Timeline

987 .................................................. Capetians become ruling dynasty of the Kingdom of France.
989 .................................................. Council of Charroux—Peace of God first proclaimed.
1025 ................................................ End of the Ottonian dynasty in Germany.
1027 ................................................ Council of Touluges—Truce of God first proclaimed.
1042 ................................................ Edward the Confessor returns to England from Normandy, becomes king.
1049 ................................................ Pope Leo IX, a prominent Gregorian Reformer, is elected.
1054 ................................................ Mutual excommunications of the pope and the patriarch of Constantinople; beginning of the Great Schism between the Catholic and Orthodox Christianity.
1059 ................................................ Papal Election Decree proclaimed—creation of College of Cardinals.
1066 ................................................ William the Conqueror wins the Battle of Hastings, crowned King of England.
1073–1085 ...................................... Pontificate of Pope Gregory VII.
1075 ................................................ Gregory VII publishes First Investiture Decree.
1076 ................................................ Emperor Henry IV and German bishops at Diet of Worms depose Pope Gregory VII; Pope Gregory VII excommunicates and deposes Emperor Henry IV.
1077 ................................................ Emperor Henry IV and Pope Gregory VII meet at Canossa, are temporarily reconciled.
c. 1080 ............................................. Communal movements arise in northern Italy, northeastern France, and Flanders.
1086 ................................................ Compilation of Domesday Book.
1095 ................................................ Council of Clermont—Pope Urban II launches the First Crusade.
1096–1097 ..................................... Massacres of Jews in Rhine Valley by Popular Crusade.
1098 ................................................ Foundation of Cistercian Order by Robert of Molesme. Crusaders besiege and capture Antioch.
1099 ................................................ Jerusalem captured by First Crusade.
1112 ................................................ Bernard of Clairvaux joins the Cistercians.
1122 ................................................ Concordat of Worms accepted by Holy Roman Empire and Papacy. Peter Abelard writes *Sic et non* (*Yes and No*).
1124 ................................................ End of the Salian dynasty in Germany.
1142 ................................................ Death of Peter Abelard.
1152 ................................................ Marriage of the future King Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine.
1153 ................................................ Death of Bernard of Clairvaux.
1170 ................................................ Murder of Thomas Becket.
c. 1173 ............................................. Valdez begins preaching at Lyon.
1179 ................................................ Death of Hildegard of Bingen.
1184 ................................................ Papal bull *Ad abolendam* establishes the episcopal inquisition.
1187 ................................................ Jerusalem captured by Saladin.
c. 1200 ............................ Universities of Paris and Bologna are established.

1204................................. Crusaders capture and sack Constantinople.

1209–1229 ............................. Albigensian Crusade.

1210 ................................. Establishment of the Franciscan Order.

1211–1250 ........................... Reign of Frederick II Hohenstaufen, King of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor.

1214 ................................. King Philip II Augustus of France wins the Battle of Bouvines.

1215 ................................. King John Lackland of England accepts Magna Carta. Fourth Lateran Council requires that Jews wear distinguishing badges on their garments.

1220s ............................. Establishment of the papal inquisition.

1226 ................................. Death of Francis of Assisi.

1228–1229 ........................... Emperor Frederick II recovers Jerusalem.

1244 ................................. Muslims capture Jerusalem.

1245 ................................. First Council of Lyons deposes Emperor Frederick II.

1254 ................................. End of the Hohenstaufen dynasty in Germany.

1254–1273 ............................ Great Interregnum in the Holy Roman Empire.

1274 ................................. Death of Thomas Aquinas.

1277 ................................. Bishop of Paris condemns 219 Aristotelian theses.

1290 ................................. Jews expelled from England.
Glossary

banalités: a set of economic monopolies held by lords in possession of the bannum.

bannum: “the ban,” or the right to command and punish. Those in possession of the ban had the right to collect revenues from, and impose services on, those under the ban.

consolamentum: a Cathar ceremony of spiritual baptism. Cathar preachers received it long before death and thereafter had to lead lives of strict austerity. Ordinary Cathars received it just before death, and some Cathar groups required members to embark on a suicidal fast after receiving the consolamentum.

determinatio: “the determination.” At the end of a disputatio (see below), the master would attempt to resolve all the various arguments that had been raised during the disputation, showing how any contradictions were only apparent, not real. The resolution of the arguments was known as “the determination.”

disputatio: “disputation,” a scholastic classroom exercise in which masters and students debated the pros and cons of a thesis.

femme sole: a woman who practiced a trade different from her husband’s. For legal purposes, the property owned by a femme sole was considered to be hers alone, independent of her husband’s property; should her husband be sentenced to a fine, for instance, her property could not be used to pay that fine.

feudum: “fief.” Property, often land, granted by a lord to a vassal, often in return for military service. The term “feudalism” is derived from the Latin feudum.

magister: “master,” the term used of teachers and university professors in the Middle Ages.

perfecti: “the perfect ones,” the term used to describe Cathar preachers.

populo grosso: “the fat people,” a term used in Italian towns to refer to wealthy merchants and rentiers (those who lived primarily from the rents and revenues generated by the lands they owned).

populo minuto: “the little people,” a term used in Italian towns to describe those of modest means, especially artisans.

quadriivium: part of the seven liberal arts, it consisted of astronomy, geometry, arithmetic, and music.

trivium: part of the seven liberal arts, it consisted of grammar, rhetoric, and logic.

vita apostolica: “the apostolic life.” To lead the “apostolic life,” or a life modeled on the lives of Christ’s first followers as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, was a powerful religious ideal in the High Middle Ages. Benedictine monks and Franciscans all claimed to be leading the vita apostolica, even though they interpreted it in very different ways.
Biographical Notes

Alexius I Comnenus: Byzantine emperor from 1081 to 1118. His appeal to the West for assistance against the Muslims led to the calling of the First Crusade.

Augustine of Hippo: died 430. Bishop of Hippo in North Africa and a Church Father, his writings and theory of history were very influential throughout the Middle Ages and beyond.

Averroes: known in Arabic as Ibn Rushd, died 1198. A Muslim philosopher from Spain, his commentaries on Aristotle’s works were widely read and admired by scholastics.

Bernard of Clairvaux: died 1153. French and from a noble family, he was one of the greatest champions of monasticism in high medieval Europe, the driving force behind the Cistercian reform, and a fierce opponent of Peter Abelard.

Bohemond: died 1111. A Norman from southern Italy and a participant in the First Crusade, he became ruler of Antioch. After his invasion of the Byzantine Empire in 1108 failed, he died penniless in Italy.

Chrétien de Troyes: died circa 1190. A French author of Arthurian literature and chivalric romances, he wrote for his patroness, Countess Marie of Champagne.


Francesco Petrarca/Petrarch: died 1374. Italian humanist who developed the concept of the Middle Ages, which he called the “Age of Darkness.”

Francis of Assisi: died 1226. An Italian and the son of a cloth merchant, Francis of Assisi founded the Franciscan Order. He was one of the most inspiring religious figures of his day.

Frederick II Hohenstaufen: King of Germany from 1211 to 1250; also Holy Roman Emperor. Of Sicilian background, he was a ruler with diverse intellectual interests and a reputation for a lack of piety. Despite winning Jerusalem back for Christendom briefly, his conflicts with the papacy weakened the already tottering Holy Roman Empire.

Henry Plantagenet: died 1189. He was king of England from 1154 to 1189. England’s possessions on the European continent reached their greatest extent during his reign, which was marred by his disputes with Eleanor of Aquitaine and their children, as well as by the murder of Thomas Becket.

Hildegard of Bingen: died 1179. A German nun and mystic, the fame of her visions allowed her to become an important advisor to popes and kings—and her music sells very well today.

John “Lackland”: King of England from 1199 to 1215. He lost most of the Angevin Empire’s holdings in France and was forced by English barons to accept Magna Carta.

Peter Abelard: died 1142. From a noble family from Brittany (northwestern France), Peter Abelard was an early and controversial pioneer of the scholastic method. Twice, Church councils condemned him for heresy, and the relatives of a young woman with whom he had a love affair had Abelard castrated. He discussed these events in an autobiography aptly titled History of Misfortunes.

Philip II Augustus: King of France from 1180 to 1223. His efforts to seize western France from the kings of England and to expand royal power into southern France were largely successful; he put the French monarchy on a firm footing.

Raymond of Saint-Gilles, Count of Toulouse: died 1105. A noble from the south of France who participated in the First Crusade, his disputes with Bohemond sometimes brought the Crusade to a halt. Died in the Holy Land, where he remained after the First Crusade.

Siger of Brabant: died 1284. A master at the University of Paris, his reputation as a strong devotee of Aristotle led to his expulsion from the university.
**Thomas Aquinas**: died 1274. An Italian scholastic and a member of the Dominican Order. His massive writings, including the famous *Summa theologiae*, are often hailed today as masterpieces of scholastic thought.

**Thomas Becket**: died 1170. He was a friend (for a while) of King Henry II of England, who appointed Becket as archbishop of Canterbury. After the two fell out over the issue of Henry’s interference in ecclesiastical matters, English knights with ties to Henry murdered Becket, who was quickly hailed as a martyr and a saint.

**Urban II**: pope from 1088 to 1099. A Cluniac monk and a staunch supporter of the Gregorian Reform, Urban II is best known for launching the First Crusade.
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The High Middle Ages

Scope:

This course of twenty-four lectures will examine the history of a period known as the High Middle Ages. During the three centuries under consideration here, Europe ceased to be an economically underdeveloped, intellectually derivative, and geopolitically passive part of the world. Instead, a newly invigorated medieval society experienced a revival of urban life; it witnessed the birth of new philosophical movements and educational institutions; and it expanded at the expense of neighbors who traditionally had expanded at Europe’s expense. We will examine how and why Europe experienced this reversal of fortune and analyze the social, intellectual, religious, and political transformations that, taken together, constituted the flowering of medieval civilization. In addition, we will also study the very concept of “the Middle Ages” to understand how the period came to be so designated.

The lectures fall into three groups. The first eight lectures treat medieval society: the warrior aristocracy of knights, castellans, counts, and dukes; the free and unfree peasants whose work in the fields made the existence of medieval society possible; and the townspeople, both artisans and merchants, who represented the newest arrivals on the medieval scene. Lectures Nine through Sixteen examine the intellectual and religious history of high medieval Europe. We will study monks and the monastic life; charismatic preachers, such as Francis of Assisi; and theologians, such as Thomas Aquinas. Attention will also be paid to those who found themselves outside the religious mainstream, especially the heretics and Jews of high medieval Europe. The final eight lectures discuss the major political developments and events between 1000 and 1300, including the First Crusade, the Norman Conquest of England, and the granting of Magna Carta.

The general educational level of this material is intermediate. Each lecture could easily be expanded into a dozen; many other issues and geographical areas could be substituted for the ones that we will explore. Nonetheless, by examining one subperiod in the Middle Ages, we will be able to delve into our topics and problems with a reasonably high degree of specificity—and certainly with more specificity than is possible in the broadest of survey courses. I hope that this course will make students familiar with the major figures and developments of the High Middle Ages and that students will gain an understanding of the connections among the social, religious, and political phenomena of this period. Most important, I hope that by the end of this course, students will share my own desire to know and understand more about the Middle Ages and that such students will use this course as a springboard from which to launch their own investigations into medieval history.
Lecture Thirteen
Jews and Christians

Scope: Jews were the largest religious minority in high medieval Europe. Curiously, despite the relative prosperity and economic growth of this period, the treatment of Jews became noticeably harsher. Jews were periodically expelled from kingdoms and forced to wear distinctive badges and garments, while outbreaks of popular violence, or pogroms, became increasingly common. This period also saw the rise of seemingly bizarre accusations against Jewish communities, including the blood libel, in which Jews were accused of crucifying Christian children. The reasons for these changes were complex. Foremost, however, may have been the revival of urban and commercial life, which meant that Christians found themselves involved in activities, such as moneylending and usury, for which they were condemned by clerical moralists. Jews, being mostly town dwellers, were disproportionately involved in the same activities that caused Christian guilt, and Christians turned on Jews to rid themselves of their own feelings of guilt.

Outline

I. Jews were the largest religious minority in Christian Europe. As such, they received a certain amount of toleration, and even protection, from secular and ecclesiastical authorities.
   A. Church law, or canon law, forbade the forced conversions of Jews to Christianity.
   B. Kings generally placed all of their kingdoms’ Jews under royal protection; a crime committed against a Jew was tantamount to an offense against the king himself.
   C. In Mediterranean Europe especially, Jews tended to live in a designated section of each town. A protective wall often surrounded the Jewish quarter; it was not unknown for a town’s Jews to ask for the creation of a Jewish quarter.

II. Despite this protection, the High Middle Ages saw several developments that disadvantaged and harmed Europe’s Jews.
   A. Royal and ecclesiastical authorities were sometimes lukewarm in the protection they gave to Europe’s Jews.
      1. Kings, looking for quick cash, occasionally expelled all of a kingdom’s Jews and seized Jewish property. This happened in France in 1182 and in England in 1290. In the former case, Jews were permitted to return in 1198; in the latter case, they were not permitted to return until 1656.
      2. The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 required Jews to wear garments that would distinguish them from Christians. As a result, Jews were generally required to wear yellow badges sewn onto their garments and/or conical hats, sometimes with attached capes. Jews greatly resented wearing such garments and sought to avoid this restriction by various means.
   B. Popular antipathy against Europe’s Jews appears to have grown stronger during the High Middle Ages; mob violence, which is easier to measure, certainly did. Pogroms against Jews were rare before the High Middle Ages but became increasingly common during the late eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries.
      1. The First Crusade, launched in 1095, sparked a series of massacres of Jewish communities in the Rhine Valley. Thereafter, the launching of a Crusade inevitably resulted in riots against Jewish communities.
      2. Accusations that local Jews had kidnapped and crucified missing or dead Christian children first appear in England in 1144. Such accusations, known as blood libel, became more frequent as time passed and often resulted in spontaneous outbreaks of violence against Jews.
      3. These accusations were frequently made around Easter.
      4. Jewish communities often scoured the area to find the missing child to disprove the accusations and, thereby, avoid the pogrom that was likely to follow.
      5. No authority, neither a king nor a pope, gave any credence to these accusations, but a blood accusation could sometimes trigger uncontrollable anti-Jewish rioting.
III. Christianity and Judaism had always been, on a certain level, antagonistic. However, increasing violence against Jews during the High Middle Ages must be explained in terms of the broader social and economic developments of that period.

A. The rise of the Crusading movement is part of the answer. Crusaders, setting out to attack the Muslim unbelievers in the eastern Mediterranean, saw little sense in allowing Jewish unbelievers to remain in Europe. In addition, they also wanted to use Jewish wealth to finance their own participation in the Crusade.

B. A disproportionate percentage of the Jewish population was involved in moneylending, and as the commercial revolution took hold, Jewish involvement in lending at interest fueled hostility toward Jews.
   1. On the simplest level, Christian debtors resented Jewish creditors to whom they owed money.
   2. On a more complex level, attacks against Jews allowed Christians to assuage the guilt that Christians felt because of their own involvement in urban mercantile life. Christian townspeople, condemned by ecclesiastical authorities for their greed and their obsession with time, saw Jews (who actively participated in urban economic life) as the very personification of these vices. By projecting their own sense of guilt onto Jews, Christians turned Jews into scapegoats.

IV. Although the High Middle Ages was a period of considerable intellectual creativity, the history of high medieval Europe’s heretics and Jews considerably darkens the era’s sunny image.

A. Europe’s Jews increasingly faced violent attacks and national expulsions—such events had been relatively rare before the year 1000.

B. Furthermore, Jews faced extremely prejudicial accusations, such as the blood libel, which could whip local populations into a frenzy of hatred.

C. The reasons for this increasing hostility toward Jews are many:
   1. Deep-seated antipathy toward a religion that denied Christian truths.
   2. The rise of crusading fervor against non-Christians.
   3. Jewish involvement in economic activities that caused Christians great guilt.

D. These factors combined to make the position of Jews in Europe increasingly precarious.

Suggested Readings:


Questions to Consider:
1. How do the Jewish policies of high medieval Europe compare to the Jewish policies of Nazi Germany between 1933 and 1939?

2. Does the knowledge that European Jewry suffered the Holocaust in the twentieth century place the history of Jews in high medieval Europe in a different and more illuminating light? Or is such knowledge of later events unhelpful and, indeed, likely to result in anachronism?
Lecture Fourteen
The Origins of Scholasticism

Scope: The major philosophical and theological change to take place during the High Middle Ages was the rise of scholasticism. Scholasticism was an analytical method that scholars began to use circa 1100. Unlike monastic studies, which were contemplative and literary in orientation, scholastic studies were argumentative and logical. Scholastics identified questions on which the established religious and intellectual authorities differed. Scholastics juxtaposed these seemingly contradictory opinions; then, through a dialectical process, they used philology and the rules of formal logic to show how the contradictions were apparent rather than real. Among the leading scholastics of the early twelfth century was the supremely self-confident Peter Abelard, who was both a gifted teacher and a brilliant scholar. Abelard’s career reflects both the promise and the danger of early scholasticism; after initial success, his controversial intellectual methods and his involvement in a scandalous love affair led to his condemnation for heresy and his personal mutilation.

Outline

I. Before the development of the scholastic method, monastic methods of teaching and writing were predominant.
   A. Just as monks were forbidden to question the authority of their abbots, so, too, they were not supposed to question the texts that they studied: the Bible and the writings of Church Fathers.
   B. The Rule of Saint Benedict required monks to sit passively and merely listen to what was read to them during meals, a procedure known as the lectio.
   C. One distinctively monastic literary genre was the gloss, in which an author went through a text line by line, merely commenting on difficult words and phrases or expounding on the underlying spiritual significance of the text.
      1. The gloss was especially appropriate to monasticism, because it gave the author relatively little opportunity to expound his or her own views.
      2. Monastic authors wrote in a meditative and associative, rather than in an argumentative, manner.
      3. For example, a word in the gloss would remind the monastic author of a biblical passage, which he or she would then discuss, even though no logical connection existed between the two.

II. During the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, new, scholastic methods of teaching and writing emerged and flourished, especially among urban teachers.
   A. Reurbanization was making towns into centers of haggling, bargaining, and haranguing. The hallmark of scholasticism was argument.
   B. Scholasticism, both in writing and in the classroom, was more argumentative than meditative and associative.
      1. Scholastics searched for points and problems on which the most respected intellectual authorities differed.
      2. Once a problem had been identified, scholastics attempted to resolve the discrepancy through philological analysis and application of the rules of formal logic.
   C. Scholastics turned to the most respected texts: the Bible; the writings of Church Fathers, such as St. Augustine; Roman law; and classical literature.
   D. They gradually shifted away from Bible commentaries and developed new, more suitable genres.
      1. By about 1200, scholastics tended to write works in the form of questiones (questions), which were lists of questions about certain points of the Christian faith, organized by topic.
      2. The genre with which the scholastics are most often associated is the summa. This was a massive attempt to give a systematic exposition of the Christian faith by putting all the questiones into a logical order and answering them using the scholastic method.
      3. The most famous summa is the Summa theologicae of Thomas Aquinas of the thirteenth century.
   E. In the classroom, scholastic teaching took two forms, the lectio and the disputatio.
      1. The lectio was more of a reading than a lecture.
2. The debating of a problem, with the adduction of authorities both pro and con, was known as *disputatio*, or disputation.

3. The teacher’s attempt to reconcile the apparent contradictions was known as *determinatio*, or the determination.

4. It should be emphasized that scholasticism was a technique, not a set of beliefs.

III. Although scholastic techniques differed greatly from monastic techniques, one should not ignore the similarities between the two or exaggerate the novelty of scholasticism.

A. Scholastic and monastic authors both agreed that all learning began with the study of ancient texts and accepted the superiority of ancient intellectual authority.

B. Scholastic and monastic authors also saw faith as a necessary precondition to understanding.

C. A scholar whose work pointed the way toward scholasticism, Anselm of Bec (d. 1109), defined the scholastic mission as “faith seeking understanding.” For Anselm, as for all scholastics, faith had to precede understanding. Understanding could only supplement faith; it could not supplant faith.

D. Nonetheless, scholastic authors understood that by using their powers of reasoning to clear up apparent discrepancies, they were advancing knowledge.

1. One scholastic described himself and his fellow scholars as “dwarves sitting on the shoulders of giants”; the giants are the intellectual authorities of the past.

2. This image nicely encapsulates the scholastics’ complex image of themselves. On the one hand, the scholastics are miniscule in comparison to past scholars; on the other hand, thanks to the giants, the dwarves can see somewhat farther than the giants themselves could see.

IV. One of the most influential and controversial of the earliest scholastics was Peter Abelard (1079–1142).

A. His intellectual gifts were matched only by his arrogance. As a young student, Abelard used his skill at disputation to challenge and humiliate some of the leading scholars of his day.

B. He opened his own school near Paris and wrote *Sic et non* (Yes and No) in 1122. This book was a pioneering scholastic handbook. In it, Abelard juxtaposed contradictory biblical and patristic passages concerning 168 different questions. However, Abelard did not attempt to reconcile the contradictions himself—he merely gave guidelines to students about how they might do so.

C. Abelard’s career went badly awry, however, both for personal and for intellectual reasons.

1. His affair with a young woman whom he tutored, named Heloise, ultimately led to Abelard’s castration at the hands of her relatives and their servants. After this experience, Abelard became a monk.

2. Bernard of Clairvaux, who despised scholasticism, became one of Abelard’s staunchest enemies. Twice, Church councils condemned Abelard for heresy, once in 1121 and again in 1140.

V. By 1300, scholasticism had captured the best minds of the day.

A. The major reason for the rise of scholasticism would appear to be the revival of urban life in Europe, where debating skills were everyday necessities.

B. Although it is difficult to appreciate today the excitement that the rise of the scholastic movement caused, early scholastics found the experience of using logic to resolve apparent discrepancies among ancient intellectual authorities to be liberating.

Suggested Readings:


Questions to Consider:

1. Does scholasticism represent an important stage in the gradual overthrow of ancient texts as the ultimate intellectual authority, to be replaced by reason and empiricism? Or did scholasticism reinforce the dominance of ancient textual authority, merely postponing the end?

2. To what extent do modern classrooms bear the imprint of scholastic methods?
Lecture Fifteen
Aquinas and the Problem of Aristotle

Scope: Today, the most well known medieval philosopher is Thomas Aquinas. An Italian member of the Dominican Order, Aquinas’s most famous work is his massive Summa theologiae, an attempt to give a systematic exposition of the Christian faith using scholastic methods. During his lifetime, Aquinas was merely one of a number of important intellectuals. Despite his personal reticence and modesty, Aquinas and scholastics in general continued to be regarded with some ambivalence by popes and bishops. Aquinas, like other scholastics, relied on the works of Aristotle to assist him in his philosophical and theological studies. The Church feared the heavy use that scholastics made of non-Christian philosophers; it also feared that by using the rules of formal logic to supplement Scripture and the Church Fathers, scholastics, intentionally or unintentionally, called the sufficiency of Scripture into question. The result was that scholastics, and even Aquinas himself, could not escape ecclesiastical censure during the thirteenth century.

Outline

I. Scholasticism was highly controversial, and not just because of Peter Abelard’s abrasive yet inspirational personality.
   A. On the one hand, the Church welcomed the development of scholasticism because better techniques of argumentation and debate would help in the fight against heresy.
      1. Dominic Guzman had been inspired to found the Dominican Order, in part because he had seen how the monastic Cistercians were inadequate in the fight against heresy.
      2. Early in his order’s training, he dispatched Dominicans to Paris and Bologna for advanced scholastic training.
   B. On the other hand, scholastics opened themselves up to a number of serious accusations.
      1. Scholastics were accused of putting too much faith in logic and their own powers of reasoning and too little faith in the Bible and the Church Fathers.
      2. Scholastics made heavy use of non-Christian intellectual authorities; this reliance made scholastics vulnerable to the charge that they valued non-Christian authorities more than Christian ones.

II. The two non-Christian intellectual authorities on whom scholastics relied most heavily were Aristotle and Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), known in Christian Europe as Averroes.
   A. Since Christianity’s earliest days, most Christian intellectuals had mixed feelings about pagan authors, such as Cicero and Plato.
      1. Although these authors were admired for their learning, they were regarded with hostility for their religion and for the risk they posed to students, who could be led into religious error.
      2. Even St. Augustine, whose City of God, written in the early fifth century, contained a withering attack on classical culture, admired Plato.
      3. Monks were willing to read pagan authors, not because they saw any inherent value in classical scholarship, but because they felt that the study of classical literature would sharpen a monk’s mind and Latin. The exercise would, thereby, prepare monks for those texts that were truly objects of study in and of themselves, such as the Bible and the writings of the Church Fathers.
   B. Scholastics deeply admired Aristotle’s writings on logic.
      1. Aristotle’s dry and systematic approach to his subject did not appeal to monastic sensibilities, which were more attuned to flowery, poetic authors.
      2. But the same qualities that made Aristotle unappealing to monastic authors made him appealing to scholastics.
      3. Very few of Aristotle’s writings were known in Europe before 1150, but between 1150 and 1300, the Aristotelian corpus was translated into Latin from Greek or Arabic and eagerly lapped up by scholastics.
   C. Averroes was a Muslim philosopher who lived in Spain. His commentaries on Aristotle were widely used and greatly respected by scholastics.
D. So profound was the scholastics’ respect for these two authors that they referred to Aristotle simply as “the philosopher” and to Averroes simply as “the commentator.”

E. However, Aristotle and Christianity could not be reconciled on certain points. Scholastics who relied heavily on Aristotelian logic were accused of accepting his irreconcilably non-Christian views as well.
   1. Aristotle maintained that the world had always existed and would always exist.
   2. This contradicted the Christian belief that the world had been created at a specific moment in time and that it would end some day.
   3. Aristotle believed that one god existed who was greater than any other god. However, he still accepted the existence of many gods, and his one superior god was neither omnipotent nor omniscient; Aristotle’s superior god was ignorant of what was happening in the world and did not interfere in human lives. This belief was the antithesis of the Christian conception of God.
   4. Aristotle did not believe in the immortality of the individual soul, contradicting the Christian belief that individual souls could be rewarded or punished after death.

III. Because of these contradictions with Christian beliefs, ecclesiastical authorities periodically attempted to restrict or forbid the teaching of Aristotle. These restrictions and prohibitions were rarely followed, although some scholars’ careers were hurt.
   A. In 1210, the pope forbade the teaching of some of Aristotle’s books at the University of Paris.
   B. In 1231, another pope ordered that the books banned in 1210 should not be taught at Paris until passages that contradicted Christian belief were removed from those books, at which point they could be taught.
   C. In 1277, the bishop of Paris condemned 219 articles taken from Aristotle, Averroes, and the writings of scholastics who relied on Aristotle, including a few from Thomas Aquinas.

D. Even though the teaching of Aristotle continued, some teachers fell victim to these attempts at repression.
   1. The most famous of these is Siger of Brabant (d. 1284).
   2. Critics accused Siger of Brabant of teaching an idea known as “double truth”; that one thing, such as the eternality of the world, might be true according to reason, while another thing, the creation of the world, had to be accepted as true according to faith.
   3. Siger also had the alarming habit of never referring to the Bible in his teachings, relying solely on Aristotle.
   4. The condemnation of 1277 forced Siger of Brabant out of the University of Paris.
   5. This condemnation, however, was limited to specific articles, revealing the extent to which the attempts to stamp out the teaching of Aristotle had failed.

IV. Not all scholastics had reputations as controversial as Peter Abelard’s and Siger of Brabant’s. Thomas Aquinas, for one, was canonized as a saint shortly after his death.
   A. Thomas Aquinas was an important theologian, but in his own day, he was merely one of several. His current reputation for being the greatest of all medieval theologians is largely a post-Reformation construct.
   B. Thomas Aquinas studied and taught, for the most part, at Paris. He died rather young, before the age of fifty. After undergoing a spiritual experience that he refused to discuss with others, he stopped writing some time before his death.
   C. Even before his death, his personal reserve and the simplicity of his life were widely known and respected.
   D. He left behind a vast corpus of writings, of which the *Summa theologiae* is the most famous.
   E. Although they agreed on many points, Aquinas and Augustine differed on certain crucial points, and Aquinas was rather more positive than Augustine in his conceptions of politics, salvation, and knowledge.
      1. Augustine argued that the state was a consequence of original sin.
      2. Aquinas, influenced by Aristotle, argued that the state and political organization were natural parts of the human condition.
      3. Augustine believed in predestination—because of original sin, humans could do nothing to merit their own salvation; they were dependent on the power of divine grace to save them.
      4. Aquinas, like all Christians, accepted predestination, but his concept was different. He believed that God knew whether a human being would be damned or saved, but humans had to cooperate with divine grace and exercise it in order to be saved. Thus, for Aquinas, humans have some role in achieving their own salvation.
5. On knowledge, Augustine argued that humans could never know anything unless they received a special divine illumination, which God might or might not grant, that would allow them to know.
6. Aquinas argued that humans could attain knowledge through their own efforts, without divine inspiration; by observing the natural world, humans could reason back to the existence of God. Aquinas’s five proofs for the existence of God continue to inspire discussion to this day.

V. Controversy swirled around scholasticism in high medieval Europe.
   A. By relying heavily on pagan philosophers, such as Aristotle, and Muslim philosophers, such as Averroes, scholastics opened themselves to the accusation that they preferred non-Christian authorities to Christian ones.
   B. By relying on their own logical analyses to resolve apparent discrepancies among revered religious texts, scholastics opened themselves to the charge that they esteemed themselves more highly than they esteemed the Church Fathers.
   C. The result was condemnation and attempts to suppress the teaching of Aristotle.
   D. Despite this hostility, such scholastics as Thomas Aquinas created monumental works that are still widely read today, and Aquinas himself was credited with sainthood.

Suggested Readings:

Questions to Consider:
1. Were such individuals as Bernard of Clairvaux right (intellectually and/or morally) to feel threatened by scholasticism?
2. Who was more important for the history of scholasticism and the intellectual history of Europe more generally: Peter Abelard or Thomas Aquinas?
Lecture Sixteen
The First Universities

Scope: The High Middle Ages gave birth not only to new intellectual methods, but also to a new educational institution where the scholastic method flourished: the university. The first universities emerged around the year 1200 in Paris and Bologna, and by 1300, some twenty universities existed in Europe. Universities emerged, first and foremost, in response to the needs of students and teachers, who banded together in universities to gain a stronger bargaining position vis-à-vis the towns in which they lived.

In many respects, the medieval university was quite unlike its modern descendant. Latin was the common language of instruction; courses were taught on specific texts, not on topics; and all students followed the same course of study in the seven liberal arts. Most strikingly, these universities possessed no campuses or buildings—they were simply collections of individuals. Yet student life was just as lively as it is today—perhaps even livelier.

Outline

I. Before circa 1200, the highest levels of education were organized relatively loosely.
   A. Monastic schools, located in rural monasteries, primarily provided education for those who intended to become monks.
   B. Wandering scholars, such as Peter Abelard, would open their own “schools,” which consisted of a single teacher, in urban centers.
   C. Bishops operated cathedral schools in towns.

II. Around 1200, the first two universities were established in Europe, at Paris and at Bologna. By 1300, about twenty universities had been founded in Europe.
   A. Medieval universities were unlike modern universities in that they were corporations of people, rather than physical places. The University of Paris had no campus and no buildings; it was simply a collection of students and teachers who held classes wherever they could.
   B. Ecclesiastical authorities favored establishing universities, because doing so made supervising the teachers easier.
   C. Teachers favored universities, because they reduced cutthroat competition for students.
   D. Teachers and students also banded together as universities to safeguard their common interests.
      1. Because students and teachers often came from all over Europe and did not necessarily speak the local language, they were often at the mercy of local landlords and merchants.
      2. As a university, students and teachers demanded concessions from local towns—and if the concessions were not granted, they simply went on strike and left the town, sometimes for years on end.

III. The Universities of Paris and Bologna provided two distinct models for subsequent foundations.
   A. The University of Paris, known for its theology, was run by the teachers, or masters (magistri). The students ran the University of Bologna, known for its law.
      1. At the University of Paris, most teachers were paid through church salaries, known as benefices. This arrangement made the teachers relatively independent of student control.
      2. At the University of Bologna, teachers were paid directly by students, which made the faculty beholden to students.
   B. European universities consisted of four faculties: the faculty of arts and the faculties of law, medicine, and theology. One had to pass through the faculty of arts before entering one of the three higher faculties.
      1. In the faculty of arts, one studied the quadrivium, which dealt with the content of knowledge, and the trivium, which dealt with the expression of knowledge.
      2. The quadrivium consisted of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music theory; the trivium consisted of grammar, logic, and rhetoric. In fact, the vast majority of the students’ time was spent on the trivium, especially on logic.
C. Although the medieval system of degrees has remained essentially unchanged (Bachelor of Arts; Master of Arts; and Doctor of Law, Medicine, or Theology), university education was rather different from what we experience today.

1. All students in a medieval university had to take the same prescribed set of courses, although students sometimes had a choice about the teacher from whom they would take the course.
2. Individual courses were offered on specific books (such as, for example, Aristotle’s *Physics*), rather than on topics or problems.
3. Students took much more time to earn their degrees in the Middle Ages than is required today, approximately six years for a bachelor’s degree and twelve years for a doctorate.

IV. Student life was fairly raucous in medieval Europe, thanks, in part, to certain legal privileges that medieval students possessed.

A. All university students were, for legal purposes, given clerical status (i.e., the same legal status as deacons, priests, bishops, and so on).

1. As clerics, university students could be tried for their crimes only by clerical courts, which could inflict only spiritual, rather than corporal, penalties.
2. Laypeople who laid hands on clerics were excommunicated with special severity—their excommunications could be lifted only by the pope himself.

B. Even though ecclesiastical authorities sometimes compromised on the issue of student legal status, nonetheless their relative immunity from prosecution made students a disruptive element in medieval towns.

C. The clerical status of students had another important consequence: women were not admitted to medieval universities, because they could not be members of the secular clergy.

D. Thus, women found themselves shut out of the institution that would gradually become the main, and often the sole, path to prestigious jobs.

V. Of all the institutions to which high medieval Europe gave rise, the university is the one that remains most visible and vibrant today—the university can be found throughout the world.

A. Yet universities were established primarily to better meet the material needs of students and teachers; the spread of the university in the thirteenth century attests to the institution’s effectiveness.

B. Although many aspects of the medieval university, such as the curriculum and the special legal status granted to students and teachers, have largely or entirely disappeared, other aspects, such as the system of degrees granted, remain recognizable.

Suggested Readings:


Questions to Consider:

1. Does the fact that the university has existed as an institution for eight hundred years reflect its tremendous resilience, adaptability, and continued usefulness? Or does it suggest that the institution is a dinosaur in the modern world, as out of place as monarchy and jousting?

2. Why might medieval universities have been especially receptive to scholasticism?
The People’s Crusade

Scope: The First Crusade, which ended with the capture of Jerusalem in 1099, demonstrated the rising power of Europe during the High Middle Ages. A crusade was a combination of a holy war and a pilgrimage; those who participated in a crusade received the spiritual benefits of both. With its combination of spiritual and material rewards, crusading’s attractiveness was very powerful—so powerful, in fact, that the First Crusade did not go quite as anyone had planned. The opening phase of the First Crusade, or the Popular Crusade, saw ill-organized bands of peasants, townspeople, and relatively few knights depart for the Holy Land. Before leaving Europe, they attacked and destroyed Jewish communities in the Rhine Valley on their way to the east. They fought with the Christian inhabitants of every territory through which they passed, and ultimately the Turks destroyed them in Asia Minor.

Outline

I. Although the First Crusade was launched in 1095, Latin terms for “Crusade” did not appear until about one hundred years later. The expedition launched in 1095 was called a pilgrimage, and those who took part in the expedition were known as pilgrims.

   A. The terminology of pilgrimage was appropriate, because crusaders were, in fact, pilgrims. They carried the traditional symbols of the pilgrim (a staff and a wallet), they were traveling to a specific destination (Jerusalem), and they received all the spiritual and legal benefits enjoyed by pilgrims.

   B. However, crusaders were a peculiar type of pilgrim. They were armed—traditionally pilgrims were supposed to be unarmed—and, indeed, they were participants in a holy war. Those who died during a holy war were considered to be martyrs.

   C. In addition to the older spiritual benefits enjoyed by pilgrims and participants in a holy war, crusaders enjoyed a new kind of spiritual benefit, which arose out of the crusading movement: the plenary indulgence.

      1. Sinners who confessed their sins avoided eternal damnation but still faced temporal punishment (i.e., punishment of a limited duration). This temporal punishment would take two forms: penance performed in this world and time spent in purgatory in the afterworld. Individuals could never know how much time they might have to spend in purgatory, which was worrisome.

      2. Even before the First Crusade, pilgrims had been allowed to substitute pilgrimages for other forms of penance.

      3. A plenary crusading indulgence, however, involved a remission of all temporal penalties that had resulted from sin; that is, participation in a crusade could substitute for all earthly penance and for all time to be spent in purgatory.

      4. It is unclear whether the pope actually offered a plenary indulgence to participants in the First Crusade, or whether local preachers invented the concept of a plenary indulgence. In any case, participants believed that they were receiving plenary indulgences, and by the time of the Second Crusade, the Church had largely accepted the legitimacy of indulgences.

   D. In addition to spiritual benefits, crusaders also hoped to win tangible, material benefits.

      1. Whether crusaders were motivated largely by material benefits or by spiritual considerations has been hotly debated. Among crusading leaders, some seem to have acted largely for religious reasons, while others were clearly in it for the money.

      2. Recent scholarship has tended to emphasize the enormous expenses that crusaders incurred, which suggest that religious considerations were more powerful.

      3. In addition to material and spiritual considerations, some crusaders participated because of their feudal military obligations, and some participated because their relatives had already vowed to take part.

II. Pope Urban II launched the First Crusade on November 27, 1095, at the Council of Clermont. He had several reasons for doing so.

   A. Earlier in 1095, the Emperor of the Byzantine Empire, Alexius I Comnenus, had appealed to the pope for help in dealing with the Turks of Asia Minor (modern Turkey).
1. After the Great Schism of 1054, when a papal representative and the patriarch of Constantinople had excommunicated each other, the Byzantine Empire had ceased to accept the pope’s spiritual overlordship.

2. Pope Urban II hoped that the Crusade would bring assistance to the Byzantine Empire, thereby helping to end the Great Schism of 1054.

B. The Crusade would also allow the pope to deal with a major European problem: knights and their violence. Through the Crusade, Urban II hoped to direct aristocratic belligerence away from Europe and toward Syria and Palestine.

III. The response to Pope Urban II’s appeal was massive—and probably rather different from what he had anticipated.

A. The total number of participants in the First Crusade was approximately 100,000 people.

B. More than 90 percent of the participants were not knights and aristocrats but humbler individuals, known collectively as the *populus* (people.) Their expedition toward Jerusalem is known as the People’s Crusade.

IV. The People’s Crusade was disastrous in its course and consequences.

A. The People’s Crusade was badly organized and set out from Europe in the spring of 1096, long before it was supposed to set out.

B. Before departing Europe, various bands from the Popular Crusade massacred Jewish communities in the Rhine Valley, demanding that German Jews convert to Christianity or be killed. These attacks had various motives.
   1. Crusaders used the wealth taken from murdered Jews to finance the expedition.
   2. Millenarian beliefs about the end of the world also fueled massacres of Jews. Before the world could end, Jerusalem had to be retaken by Christians, but all unbelief throughout the world had to end, too.

C. On their way toward Constantinople, where the crusaders were to rendezvous, the Popular Crusade fought incessantly with the Christian inhabitants of the areas through which they passed, such as the Kingdom of Hungary and the Byzantine Balkans.

D. The ultimate fate of the Popular Crusade is known: in the autumn of 1096, the Turks of Asia Minor annihilated those who had survived the trip to Constantinople. However, contemporaries assigned the blame for this outcome differently.
   1. According to Byzantine authors, Alexius I Comnenus attempted to keep the Popular Crusade from entering Asia Minor, knowing as he did that it would not stand a chance against the Turks. However, the leaders of the Popular Crusade refused to heed his helpful advice.
   2. According to Western authors, Alexius I Comnenus, tired of the robbing and fighting, tricked the crusaders into going to Asia Minor, knowing full well what would happen when they encountered the Turks.

E. Byzantine-Western relations had never been harmonious; the Popular Crusade placed a further strain on those relations, and increased the mutual mistrust of the crusaders and the Byzantine Empire.

V. The High Middle Ages was one of considerable European expansion, and the most spectacular example of this expansion is the crusading movement.

A. The First Crusade, launched in 1095, arose out of a confluence of many different needs and impulses.
   1. The pope needed to heal the Great Schism and to channel noble violence in this pre-chivalric period.
   2. The crusader needed to fulfill feudal obligations, to uphold family solidarity, to accrue wealth, and to win salvation through plenary indulgence.
   3. This combination of material and spiritual benefits, especially the plenary indulgence, offered to crusaders proved too powerful, and the response to the First Crusade was overwhelming.

B. Because of this, the First Crusade took on a life of its own. No individual or group would be able to control it effectively.

C. The opening movement of the First Crusade, the Popular Crusade, was a bloody fiasco. It massacred Jewish communities and soured Western-Byzantine relations—making the success of the second movement, the Baron’s Crusade, all the more amazing.
Suggested Readings:

Questions to Consider:
1. In what ways did the outcome of the People’s Crusade frustrate, or at least fail to assist, the ambitions of Pope Urban II and Emperor Alexius I Comnenus?
2. What do the response to Urban II’s call and the existence of the People’s Crusade reveal about medieval society, if anything?
Lecture Eighteen
The Conquest of Jerusalem

Scope: The First Crusade did not end with the disasters of the Popular Crusade. The Barons’ Crusade, which constituted the second wave of crusaders, departed Europe in a more orderly fashion. It was led by various—and often mutually resentful—nobles, such as Bohemond, a Norman freebooter more interested in profit than in piety, and Raymond of Saint-Gilles, Count of Toulouse, who was older and deeply religious. At several crucial battles during the Barons’ Crusade, such as the sieges of Nicaea and Antioch, relations among the Crusaders nearly collapsed; relations between the Crusaders and their Greek allies actually did collapse. Yet these disputes did not prevent the Crusaders from taking Jerusalem, thereby establishing a Western presence in Syria and Palestine that would last for nearly two hundred years, although Jerusalem itself would be lost in 1187.

Outline

I. Following the destruction of the Popular Crusade, the various bands that made up the Barons’ Crusade began to assemble at Constantinople, beginning in December 1096.
   A. There was no single leader of the Barons’ Crusade. The pope’s representative, Bishop Adhemar of Le Puy, was nominally in charge, but important barons controlled their own followers.
   B. Raymond of Saint-Gilles, Count of Toulouse, led the southern French knights. He was one of the most powerful barons in Europe and undertook the Crusade even though he was close to sixty years old. Because of his age and wealth, Raymond of Saint-Gilles appears to have participated for religious reasons.
   C. Bohemond led the Norman knights from Italy. He and his father were descended from Norman freebooters and had fought against the Byzantine Empire before the First Crusade. Bohemond’s younger brothers had stolen his inheritance from him; he appears to have participated in the Crusade solely to make his fortune.
   D. Other important barons included Hugh, Count of Vermandois, brother of the king of France; Robert, Duke of Normandy, brother of the king of England; Baldwin, Count of Flanders; and Geoffrey of Bouillon, Duke of Lower Lorraine.

II. As the barons and their followers made their rendezvous at Constantinople, the Byzantines’ mistrust of the crusaders became apparent, which only made relations more fraught.
   A. Alexius I Comnenus had already suffered at the hands of the Popular Crusade and was determined to exercise better control over the Barons’ Crusade. He demanded that each baron, after he had arrived at Constantinople, swear an oath of loyalty to the Byzantine Empire. Under the terms of this oath, the barons promised that if the Crusaders captured any former Byzantine possessions on their way to Jerusalem, the Crusaders would return them to the Byzantine Empire.
   B. The various barons refused to swear this oath and, thereby, submit themselves to Byzantine authority. Fighting periodically broke out between the Crusaders and the Byzantines; only after Alexius I cut off their food supplies did the barons agree to swear the oath of loyalty demanded of them.
   C. Finally, in the spring of 1097, the Barons’ Crusade set out for Jerusalem, accompanied by Byzantine troops but not by Alexius I Comnenus, who remained in the rear, organizing supplies, much to the Crusaders’ disgust.

III. It would take more than two years for the Crusaders to fight their way from Constantinople to Jerusalem, which they finally reached in June 1099. Along the way, relations between the Byzantines and the Crusaders reached a breaking point.
   A. At the siege of Nicaea in May 1097, the Byzantines convinced the town’s defenders to surrender the city to themselves, rather than to the Crusaders.
      1. They did not inform the Crusaders about this beforehand and, once in control of the city, the Byzantines refused to allow the Crusaders to sack it.
      2. Perhaps most shocking in the Crusaders’ eyes was Alexius’s lenient treatment of prisoners. Because the Byzantines shared a continuous border with Arabs and Turks and had been fighting on and off for several centuries, they tended to respect certain rules of warfare, including leniency toward captives.
3. Thus, the first victory of the Barons’ Crusade had, paradoxically, made the Byzantines and Crusaders even more mistrustful of each other.

B. The Crusaders were nearly annihilated at the siege of Antioch, which lasted from October 1097 to June 1098.
   1. Thanks to the city’s size, the Crusaders were unable to surround it completely.
   2. Tatizius, the Byzantine general accompanying the Crusaders abandoned the siege, which caused great resentment among them.
   3. Tatizius claimed that Bohemond told him that the other Crusade leaders were plotting against his life.
   4. It was rumored that Bohemond had plans of his own to take Antioch for himself through blackmail.
   5. Bohemond bribed a Muslim inhabitant to allow the Crusaders into the city—but he would allow the Crusaders into the city only on the condition that they give the town to him, rather than returning it to Alexius I Comnenus.
   6. The Crusaders finally agreed to Bohemond’s demand. They were let into the city and killed everyone they could get their hands on.
   7. Once inside Antioch, the Crusaders were themselves besieged by a Muslim army that had arrived intending to relieve the original inhabitants of the city.
   8. They hoped Alexius would come to their rescue. But Alexius had turned around and was headed back to Constantinople.
   9. Running out of food and water, the Crusaders’ spirits were raised by the alleged discovery, by one Peter Bartholomew, of the Holy Lance, one of the most sacred Christian relics.
  10. This “miracle” gave them the strength to make a desperate attempt to break the siege. They succeeded on June 18, 1098.
  11. The Muslim army fled and the Crusaders were left in possession of Antioch.

IV. After several months of rest, the Crusaders—minus Bohemond, who remained behind in Antioch—began to march toward Jerusalem.
   A. Despite the thinning of their ranks—most knights had died or returned home already—the Crusaders besieged Jerusalem in June 1099 and broke through the city’s walls in July 1099.
      1. It has been estimated that 7,000 knights took part in the Barons’ Crusade. When the knights reached Jerusalem, only 1,200 were left.
      2. Once again, their morale was bolstered by a religious vision, this time declared by a priest named Peter Desiderius.
      3. Desiderius claimed that if the Crusaders went on a procession around the city barefoot, the city would fall in nine days.
      4. The Crusaders fasted, then made a barefoot procession around Jerusalem.
      5. On July 15, they entered the city.
   B. The Crusaders massacred nearly the entire population of Jerusalem during their capture of the city.
   C. After the capture of Jerusalem, the city would remain in Christian hands until 1187, when the Muslim leader Saladin recaptured it. Parts of Syria and/or Palestine would remain under Western rule until 1291.

V. The Barons’ Crusade achieved what the Popular Crusade had not.
   A. Consisting of various independent bands operating under different leaders, the Barons’ Crusade was constantly plagued by squabbles among its leaders, especially between Raymond of Saint-Gilles and the mercenary Bohemond.
   B. Squabbles between the Barons’ Crusade and the Byzantine Empire were even more severe. At the siege of Nicaea and again at the siege of Antioch, Byzantine-Crusader relations deteriorated so badly that the Byzantines abandoned the Crusaders, who would have to carry out the conquest of Jerusalem alone.
   C. Nonetheless, they succeeded. The bloody conquest of Jerusalem led to the establishment of Crusader states in Syria and Palestine that would last for nearly two centuries; the need to defend those states guaranteed that numerous crusades to the eastern Mediterranean would take place in the future.
   D. The First Crusade was a sign that Western Europe was now capable of generating expansionist movements at the expense of parts of the world that, historically, had been more populous, more urbanized, more economically and intellectually complex, and more powerful than Europe.
Suggested Readings:
Please refer to the readings for Lecture Seventeen.

Questions to Consider:
1. Was the collapse of Byzantine-Western relations during the First Crusade almost inevitable, or could it have easily been avoided and the First Crusade, thereby, turned into a successful exercise in Christian cooperation?
2. An eighteenth-century Scottish historian called the Crusades a “singular monument of human folly.” Would you agree with this statement? Why, or why not?
Lecture Nineteen
The Norman Conquest

Scope: Broad, impersonal forces shaped medieval history; yet one must not forget how historical accidents and individual events could also have enormous consequences. In 1066, the Anglo-Saxon King of England died without leaving behind a direct heir. Various claimants to the throne emerged: William the Bastard, Duke of Normandy; Harold, an Anglo-Saxon aristocrat; and the King of Norway. The weather prevented William the Bastard from reaching England before the King of Norway did. This turned out to be a stroke of good fortune—although the Anglo-Saxons were victorious against the Norwegians, they were unable to withstand the Norman assault, and William the Bastard became King of England. As a result, the English monarchy became one of the strongest in Europe; a French-speaking aristocracy ruled over England for centuries to come; and because kings of England were often also dukes of Normandy, England and France became deeply entangled in one another’s affairs.

Outline

I. Even before the Norman Conquest of England, which began in 1066, close ties had existed between Anglo-Saxon England and Normandy.
   A. The ninth century was the period of the most intense Viking raids on Europe. When Viking raids against England resumed in the 980s, the Anglo-Saxon kings of England turned to Normandy for assistance.
   B. The dukes of Normandy were themselves descended from Vikings, who had settled in Normandy during the tenth century.
   C. In 991, to cement an alliance between them, King Aethelred (978–1016) of England married the daughter of the Duke of Normandy.
   D. When Aethelred fled England in 1013, he fled to Normandy, and England came under Danish rule until 1042, at which time the Anglo-Saxon King Edward the Confessor (1042–1066) returned to England from Normandy.

II. When Edward the Confessor died childless in 1066, several individuals laid claim to the English throne.
   A. William the Bastard, Duke of Normandy, and Harald Hardrada, King of Norway, both claimed that they should be recognized as the new king of England.
   B. The Anglo-Saxon aristocracy threw its support behind a fellow Anglo-Saxon named Harold Godwinson.
   C. Prevailing winds kept William the Bastard from sailing for England immediately, so Harald Hardrada reached England first. He and his fellow Scandinavians were defeated at the Battle of Stamford Bridge (1066), but they greatly weakened the Anglo-Saxon army, thus inadvertently doing William the Bastard a favor.
   D. William the Bastard finally reached England, defeated the Anglo-Saxon army at the Battle of Hastings (1066), and was crowned as King of England on December 25 of that same year.
   E. Not until 1070 did William the Bastard, proceeding from south to north, finally subdue the Anglo-Saxon opposition.

III. The Norman Conquest changed the course of English history in various ways.
   A. Even before the Norman Conquest, the English government was one of the most sophisticated in Europe.
      1. Its administrative structure was remarkably uniform by early medieval standards: the whole of England was divided into units called shires and the royal officials, called shire reeves (from which derives the word sheriff), were relatively loyal and efficient royal administrators.
      2. Anglo-Saxon kings were precocious in their use of written documents, or writs, to govern their kingdom, rather than relying on oral instructions, as did so many of their continental counterparts.
      3. Furthermore, Anglo-Saxon kings established permanent seats of government, such as the royal treasury at Winchester, in contrast to the peripatetic European royal governments.
   B. The Norman conquerors maintained the level of administrative sophistication.
1. Perhaps the most remarkable sign of the sophistication of the English government after the Norman Conquest was the Domesday Book, compiled in 1086.

2. This was a sort of national census of the Kingdom of England. It was incomplete and full of mathematical errors but nevertheless represented the first attempt to survey the resources of an entire kingdom since the days of the Roman Empire.

3. King Henry I (1100–1135) created a government accounting office—the exchequer—at which every shire reeve had to appear a certain number of times a year to hand over the king’s revenues. Accountants figured out the amounts owed by moving counters on a checkered cloth.

4. Scrupulous records were kept, called pipe rolls, and a handbook was written in the 1170s explaining how the exchequer should function. It would be impossible to find anything comparable on the European continent at that date.

C. The Normans further strengthened royal authority in England.

1. William the Bastard hounded most of the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy out of England and distributed their lands among his Norman followers.

2. Whenever Anglo-Saxon bishops and abbots died, he replaced them with Normans as well.

D. Because they were a very small group surrounded by a hostile native population, the Anglo-Norman aristocracy was relatively loyal to English kings.

E. The scattered nature of Anglo-Norman aristocratic landholdings also worked to the king’s advantage.

1. William the Bastard had distributed land piecemeal as the conquest of England proceeded.

2. As a result, each aristocrat’s English lands were scattered throughout the kingdom and, therefore, difficult to defend.

3. Furthermore, Norman aristocrats who had come to England in 1066 did not abandon their possessions in Normandy. Defending both their English and Norman possessions simultaneously was nearly impossible.

F. As a result of the Norman Conquest, French would remain the aristocracy’s language for hundreds of years, while the vast majority of the population remained English speaking.

G. The Norman Conquest created a very complicated relationship between the kings of France and the kings of England.

1. The dukes of Normandy were technically vassals of, and therefore, subordinate to, the kings of France.

2. Yet, because of the Norman Conquest, the dukes of Normandy also possessed the title of kings of England, which made them the king of France’s equals.

IV. The relationship between kings of France and kings of England became even more strained with the formation of the Angevin Empire in the 1150s.

A. The reign of King Stephen (1139–1154) was marked by continual civil war between himself, on the one hand, and his cousin Mathilda and her husband, Geoffrey Plantagenet, Count of Anjou, on the other. Shortly before his death, Stephen named Henry Plantagenet, who was the son of Mathilda and Geoffrey, as his heir.


V. The Norman Conquest altered the trajectory of English history and of medieval history more generally.

A. Before the Norman Conquest, England had moved largely in a Scandinavian-North Sea orbit.

B. Thanks to the Norman Conquest, relations between England and the European continent became much closer—and much more complicated.

C. The dukes of Normandy became kings of England, and with the fusion of the Angevin Empire in the 1150s, they became perhaps the most powerful rulers in western Europe.

Suggested Readings:
Questions to Consider:

1. How might subsequent history have been different if either Harold Godwinson or Harald Hardrada had triumphed in 1066?

2. Which event was more important for subsequent European history: the First Crusade or the Norman Conquest of England?
Lecture Twenty
Philip II of France

Scope: In contrast to its English counterpart, the French monarchy was, for most of the High Middle Ages, weak and ineffective. By the time that the Capetian dynasty came to the throne in 987, royal authority had been reduced to a small area around Paris—the rest of the kingdom was more or less independent of royal control.

Yet the history of the French monarchy is one of the great comeback stories of high medieval Europe, and the king most responsible for this turnaround was Philip II Augustus (1180–1223). Neurotic, a hypochondriac, and averse to battle, Philip II Augustus would seem ill-suited to the task at hand. However, his patience and cunning allowed him to outmaneuver his opponents, and in a series of swift moves, he reclaimed much of France from the kings of England. Philip II Augustus laid the foundation for future French influence on the European continent.

Outline

I. At the moment when the Capetian dynasty replaced the Carolingian dynasty once and for all (987), the Kingdom of France was badly fragmented, and royal authority was very weak.
   A. Most French counts and dukes no longer did homage and fealty to French kings, which is to say, they no longer accepted the kings of France as their feudal overlords.
   B. They had made their offices hereditary, thus robbing kings of the opportunity to replace them.
   C. They forbade royal officials to travel in the boundaries of their counties and duchies. Thus, royal officials no longer traveled or operated in most of the kingdom.
   D. Effective royal authority was reduced to a small territory around Paris, called the Ile de France; even in the Ile de France, unruly castellans opposed the Capetians as often as they obeyed them.
   E. Hugh Capet was elected as French king in 987. Because he was elected, the Capetians initially had no hereditary claim to the throne; they remained kings only as long as the northern French aristocracy wished it so.

II. Not until the reign of Louis VI (1108–1137) did the Capetians begin to make some headway in their effort to reassert royal authority in the Kingdom of France.
   A. The Capetian dynasty benefited from its biological good fortune.
      1. The Capetian line remained in existence from 987 to 1328—a remarkable run for a medieval dynasty.
      2. This continuity allowed Capetian monarchs to build on their predecessors’ successes and limited the ability of the French aristocracy to check royal power by fomenting civil wars.
   B. The Capetians established a hereditary claim to the throne through the practice of anticipatory succession, whereby each Capetian king, while still alive, secured the election of the next Capetian king. By the time of King Philip II Augustus, the Capetian claim to the throne was secure, and the practice of anticipatory succession was abandoned.
      1. The Capetians also practiced primogeniture, which allowed one heir to receive the bulk of the dynasty’s resources.
      2. To dampen the resentment of younger brothers who were not eligible to inherit the dynasty’s resources, the Capetians created *apanages*. These were land grants that younger brothers could keep for life and could bequeath to a direct heir.
      3. This system helped to reduce destructive rivalries among brothers.
   C. King Louis VI established Capetian control over the Ile de France by tirelessly wearing down the castellans of that area, then rewarding them for their cooperation with positions in the royal household.
   D. The Capetians’ biggest challenges were to regain control of the various independent counties and duchies and to reclaim the land in the western half of France that Henry II of England had acquired through inheritance and marriage.
   E. The Capetians were extremely patient in their attempts to regain control.
1. Sometimes they waited for a line of counts to die out.
2. Sometimes they tried to buy out counts and dukes.
3. Sometimes they persuaded the current count to do homage to them.

III. Philip II Augustus was the Capetian king who did the most to establish Capetian authority and power during the High Middle Ages.

A. Success did not come easily to Philip II Augustus.
   1. He was neurotic and a hypochondriac who did not care for warfare and much preferred administration.
   2. But he was very patient and deviously intelligent.
   3. For the first two decades of his reign, his attempts to create division in the English royal family failed to loosen the English grip on the western half of France.

B. In 1204, Philip II Augustus used his powers of feudal overlordship to deprive King John of England (r. 1199–1216) of most of the English king’s continental possessions. When John Lackland failed to respond to a summons issued by Philip II Augustus, the French king swiftly seized Normandy, Brittany, Anjou, and other territories from King John.

C. John Lackland sought to recover his lost lands by allying with the Holy Roman Emperor and launching a joint English-German invasion of France. Philip II Augustus defeated the Germans at the Battle of Bouvines (1214), and King John abandoned the effort, thereby earning the unflattering sobriquet “John Lackland.”

D. In addition to repossessing much of western France, Philip II Augustus was also partly responsible for the reassertion of Capetian authority in southern France, thanks to the Albigensian Crusade (1209–1229).
   1. Because of the strength of Catharism in southern France and because of the murder of a papal representative in southern France in 1208 (possibly at the hands of Cathars), in 1208, the pope proclaimed a crusade against the Cathars of southern France.
   2. Known as the Albigensian Crusade (the name comes from the town of Albi, a Cathar stronghold), this crusade attracted many northern French participants.
   3. Initially, Philip II Augustus held aloof from the Albigensian Crusade, because he was preoccupied with his struggles against King John of England. He then saw the potential usefulness of the Crusade. In 1218, Philip II Augustus dispatched his son, the future Louis VIII (1223–1226) to the south to take part in the Albigensian Crusade, which forced important members of the southern French aristocracy to accept the overlordship of the King of France.

IV. The revival of French royal power was a decisive political change in high medieval Europe.

A. Around the year 1000, the Capetian dynasty exercised little control over counts and dukes, who for the most part, were their vassals only in theory.

B. Those counts and dukes themselves were often unable to control the castellans in their own territories, much as the Capetians struggled with the castellans around Paris.

C. Although the process was slow, the Capetian monarchy restored royal power in the Kingdom of France, and the reign of Philip II Augustus marked a decisive turn in the kingdom’s history.

D. His triumph over the combined forces of Germany and England made visible the extent to which French monarchs were now the equals of any in Europe.

Suggested Readings:


Questions to Consider:

1. Which is more surprising: the fact that the Capetians managed to restore royal authority in the Kingdom of France or the fact that it took them so long to do so?

2. Could the Angevin Empire have lasted longer than it did? Was it largely inevitable that the Capetians would reclaim the continental holdings of English kings during the Middle Ages?
Lecture Twenty-One
Magna Carta

Scope: Because it developed a precociously powerful monarchy, England also developed, at a relatively early date, instruments for restraining monarchical power. Magna Carta was such an instrument. English kings had known serious humiliations even before Magna Carta was foisted on them—the punishment of King Henry II for having instigated the murder of Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, is a good example. Yet the long-term consequences of Magna Carta were considerably greater than the consequences of the murder of Thomas Becket. English barons often chafed at the power of their monarchs. When King John Lackland lost much of his (and their) territory on the European continent, barons took advantage of the situation and demanded that he accept Magna Carta. The document required the king to renounce certain rights and to respect certain written legal procedures—in other words, Magna Carta required the king to accept that his will could be bound.

Outline
I. Even before the English monarchy was forced to accept Magna Carta, it had encountered serious setbacks.
   A. King Henry II was plagued by two problems: his humiliation by the murder of Thomas Becket and his poor relations with his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and his various sons.
      1. In 1162, King Henry II appointed Thomas Becket as archbishop of Canterbury. Previously, Thomas Becket had been chancellor of England and Henry II’s good friend.
      2. Thomas Becket took his new position very seriously, denouncing Henry II for the king’s interference in ecclesiastical matters, especially his control over appointments, which was contrary to canon law.
      3. Henry was stunned by what he regarded as his friend’s betrayal.
      4. Relations between the two got so bad that Becket was forced into exile in France from 1164 to 1170.
      5. On his return to England in 1170, Becket resumed his criticism of Henry II.
      6. Henry became so exasperated that he allegedly asked the rhetorical question: “Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest?”
      7. Four of Henry’s knights took him literally and murdered Becket in Canterbury Cathedral.
      8. Thomas Becket was quickly hailed as a martyr and saint. Henry II, suspected of having instigated the murder, had to allow himself to be whipped by the monks of Canterbury as penance.
   B. Henry II was also bothered by squabbles in his family.
      1. Henry’s sons’ dissatisfaction with the land and responsibilities that their father bestowed on them, as well as their mother’s frequent scheming, led to period bouts of civil war between Henry II and his sons.
      2. He was estranged from his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and frequently from his sons as well, including the two who would succeed him as king: Richard Lionheart (1189–1199) and John Lackland (1199–1216).

II. The English monarchy’s greatest crisis, however, came during the reign of John Lackland, whom the English barons forced to accept Magna Carta.
   A. John Lackland came to the throne under a cloud of suspicion—he was accused of having murdered his chief rival, Arthur of Brittany, while Arthur was John’s captive.
   B. Philip II Augustus’s seizure of English continental possessions between 1204 and 1206 greatly annoyed the English barons.
      1. Many of them were forced either to abandon their English possessions while keeping their French ones or vice versa.
      2. They looked to John Lackland to reclaim what Philip Augustus had seized.
   C. John, however, was unable to respond quickly to this situation, because he had become embroiled in controversy over the archbishop of Canterbury.
      1. In 1206, the monks of Canterbury elected a new archbishop, against the wishes of King John.
      2. John ordered the monks to elect his candidate, which they did.
      3. However, the first candidate refused to resign.
4. The pope intervened and ordered the monks to elect a third candidate—Stephen Langton.
5. John refused to accept Langton.
6. Consequently, the pope excommunicated John in 1206 and placed all of England under a sentence of interdict: the English churches were closed; no masses, marriages, or funerals were conducted; only baptism and last rites were performed.
7. Not until 1213 did John accept Stephen Langton’s election, thereby freeing himself to recapture his lost continental possessions. But the German defeat at Bouvines ended his attempt.

III. On John’s return to England, English barons rebelled against the king, captured London, and forced John to accept Magna Carta, an important document in English constitutional history.

A. Magna Carta consists of sixty-three clauses, most of which imposed restrictions on the king and forced him to do things that he would have preferred not to do.
   1. For example, the king abolished certain unpopular royal taxes and promised to reduce the amount of land that was off limits to most of his subjects, because it had been designated as royal hunting grounds.
   2. More important, Magna Carta limited the ability of kings to act arbitrarily, especially in matters of judicial procedure; it forced kings to follow written law when judging crimes.
   3. Article thirty-nine states: “No free man shall be arrested, or imprisoned, or deprived of his property, or outlawed, or exiled, or in any way destroyed, nor shall we go against him or send against him, unless by legal judgment of his peers, or by the law of the land.”

B. In this sense, it is true that Magna Carta started England down the path toward constitutional monarchy.
C. John himself attempted to renounce Magna Carta, but he died in 1216, and his successors were more willing to accept the document.

IV. Although Magna Carta is justly famous, other thirteenth-century developments were equally important for subsequent English history. The emergence of Parliament is one such development.

A. Even before the Norman Conquest, English kings customarily made important decisions only after consulting the court, the composition of which was vague.
B. At Christmas, Easter, or when something very important had come up, kings would summon “great councils.” The English Parliament emerged from the periodically summoned great councils.
C. Henry III (1216–1276) increasingly summoned great councils merely to get their approval for new taxes, without consulting them about other matters. Barons resented being asked for money to fund various projects without being asked their opinions of the projects themselves.
D. In 1258, the barons imposed on Henry III yet another set of limitations, known as the Provisions of Oxford, which went far beyond Magna Carta in forcing kings to govern in consultation with their subjects. Great councils, now called Parliaments, were to be assembled three times a year, meeting regularly.
E. The exact composition of the English Parliament remained fluid well into the fourteenth century, when Parliament was divided into Lords and Commons. Nonetheless, from the Provisions of Oxford onward, Parliament would remain an important part of English political life.

V. The setbacks that Henry II and John Lackland encountered did not fundamentally undermine English royal authority.

A. Nonetheless, those setbacks did check that authority. The murder of Thomas Becket and the frequent rebellion of his sons at the instigation of their mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, humiliated Henry II, but far more serious was John Lackland’s loss of much of the Angevin Empire.
B. In light of this loss, English barons forced John Lackland to accept Magna Carta, which limited the ability of kings to act arbitrarily.
C. The development of Parliament in the thirteenth century created an institution with which kings would have to contend throughout the rest of English history.
D. Because it developed a precociously powerful monarchy, England also developed, at a relatively early date, instruments for restraining that power.
E. Magna Carta was such an instrument.
F. It is ironic that other European countries would one day develop absolutist governments, precisely because their own medieval governments had been relatively weak and, thus, did not require the establishment of effective counterweights, such as Magna Carta and the England Parliament.

Suggested Readings:

Questions to Consider:
1. Why have modern authors, such as T. S. Eliot, found the story of Thomas Becket to be so compelling?
2. Should Magna Carta be seen as a document with universal implications for the history of humanity or as a wholly medieval document with narrow implications that extend only to its time and place?
Lecture Twenty-Two
Empire versus Papacy

Scope: The most important conflict between secular and religious authorities in high medieval Europe was the Investiture Controversy. Before the Investiture Controversy, secular authorities generally controlled the elections of abbots, bishops, and even popes. The ceremony of investiture, whereby secular rulers presented recently elected religious officials with the physical symbols of their new authority, embodied this secular control of the religious. During the eleventh century, a reform movement called the Gregorian Reform attempted to free the Church from secular domination and denounced the ceremony of investiture. The ensuing conflict embroiled the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire (which included the Kingdom of Germany, northern Italy, and Burgundy) in wars lasting for two generations. The struggle over investiture resulted in slightly greater autonomy for religious authorities and an immense amount of damage to the Holy Roman Empire, which had previously been the preeminent political power in Christian Europe.

Outline

I. Around the year 1000, the Kingdom of Germany was one of the most powerful in Europe.
   A. It formed part of an even larger political entity known as the Holy Roman Empire, which included Germany, northern Italy, and Burgundy. Kings of Germany carried the title of emperor.
   B. Yet by 1300, the Kingdom of Germany and the Holy Roman Empire were in a wreck, having fragmented into numerous virtually independent political units.
   C. The Kingdom of Germany would remain this way until Otto von Bismarck, in the mid-nineteenth century, reunified it.

II. The Investiture Controversy was an attempt by certain clerics to free the Church from its traditional domination by secular rulers.
   A. The secular rulers with the greatest amount of control over the Church were the Holy Roman Emperors.
      1. In their empire, Holy Roman Emperors freely appointed bishops and abbots, even though, according to canon law, bishops and abbots were supposed to be elected by local clergy or monks.
      2. The situation was similar throughout Europe—secular authorities controlled ecclesiastical appointments.
      3. Holy Roman Emperors also controlled papal elections, securing the election of individuals favorably disposed toward the Holy Roman Empire and sometimes appointing popes outright.
      4. Popes alone had the right to crown emperors.
      5. When a bishop or abbot was “elected,” secular rulers presented the bishop or abbot with the symbols of his new office: a ring and a staff. This ceremony was known as investiture.
      6. Those who sought to liberate the Church from secular control saw the ceremony of investiture as the embodiment and most visible expression of secular domination.
   B. The Investiture Controversy developed out of an eleventh-century ecclesiastical reform movement called the Gregorian Reform, after one of its leading proponents, Pope Gregory VII (1073–1085.)
      1. Gregorian Reformers wanted to revitalize the secular clergy (priests, bishops, and so on), much as the Cluniacs wanted to revitalize monastic life. To this end, Gregorian Reformers wanted to end simony (the practice of selling Church offices) and to enforce clerical celibacy.
      2. Holy Roman Emperors generally supported the drive to end simony and to enforce clerical celibacy; indeed, Emperor Henry III appointed a prominent Gregorian Reformer, who took the name of Leo IX (1049–1054), as pope in 1049.
      3. However, Gregorian Reformers also wanted to end secular control of the Church, especially the ceremony of investiture.
      4. In 1059, the papacy took advantage of a minority in the Holy Roman Empire (the Emperor, Henry IV, was still a boy) and issued the Papal Election Decree of 1059. This decree transferred the responsibility for electing popes to a newly created College of Cardinals, the members of which were papal appointees.
III. The Investiture Controversy began in earnest during the pontificate of Gregory VII, whose defiance of the emperor led to nearly fifty years of civil war in the Holy Roman Empire.

A. In 1075, Gregory VII forbade the practice of investiture throughout Europe.

B. Although the prohibition theoretically applied to all Europe, Gregory VII was especially interested in asserting ecclesiastical independence, even superiority, vis-à-vis the Holy Roman Empire, because its territories bordered the papal states and its rulers (unlike ordinary kings) had to be crowned by popes.

C. In 1076, Emperor Henry IV (1056–1106), supported by German and northern Italian bishops, declared (but could not enforce) the deposition of Gregory VII.

D. Later that same year, Gregory VII excommunicated and deposed Emperor Henry IV.
   1. Not since the fourth century C.E. had a pope dared to excommunicate a Western ruler of Henry IV’s stature.
   2. Never before had a pope attempted to relieve a secular ruler of office.
   3. Nonetheless, Gregory VII announced that Henry IV’s subjects no longer owed obedience to him and encouraged them to choose another emperor.

E. Much of the German aristocracy rose in rebellion against Henry IV in response to Gregory VII’s call. The aristocrats’ motives were more material than religious: they wanted to build private stone castles and expand their rights of lordship over German peasants.

F. To buy time, Henry IV submitted himself to the pope at a humiliating meeting at Canossa, in northern Italy, in January 1077. Henry walked barefoot in the snow, wearing a hair shirt to signify his contrition.

G. Although Pope Gregory VII suspected that Henry was not being sincere, he had to forgive him, lift the sentence of excommunication, and declare him to be the legitimate emperor once again.

IV. Despite Henry IV’s submission at Canossa, the rebellion in the Holy Roman Empire did not end.

A. Many members of the German aristocracy were determined to exploit the situation by building castles without permission of the emperor. They could then impose their rights of lordship over the local peasantry, collect arbitrary amounts of money, and force the peasants to obey their laws.

B. They elected a rival king in 1077, a duke named Rudolf.

C. Henry IV defeated his rival in 1081 and retained the throne.

D. He invaded Italy and, in 1084, marched on Rome, intending to capture the pope.

E. The pope, however, secured the support of Normans, who drove the Germans out of Rome in 1085.

F. But in their efforts to rescue the pope, the Normans managed to sack Rome.

G. The Romans then turned against the pope, who was forced into exile in southern Italy, where he died in 1085.

V. The Investiture Controversy ended in a draw between the papacy and the empire, thanks to the Concordat of Worms, which the papacy and the empire accepted in 1122.

A. Under the terms of the Concordat of Worms, Holy Roman Emperors agreed to renounce the practice of investiture. They also agreed to allow free canonical elections of abbots and bishops.

B. In return, however, the papacy agreed to allow imperial representatives to attend the elections of abbots and bishops. When the outcome of an election was disputed, emperors were to decide the winner.

C. The Concordat of Worms was merely a truce. It did not put an end to the conflict between popes and German emperors, which would continue later in the High Middle Ages.

VI. Although the Concordat of Worms ended with a compromise that recognized royal interests, the Holy Roman Empire was badly shaken by the Investiture Controversy.

A. Imperial authority, both in northern Italy and in the Kingdom of Germany, would never fully recover.

B. The towns of northern Italy moved decisively in the direction of independent city-states.

C. The private stone castles and lordships created during the Investiture Controversy would not be removed.

D. Subsequent events, such as the reign of Frederick II Hohenstaufen, would only further the decomposition of the Holy Roman Empire.
Suggested Readings:

Questions to Consider:
1. Who was in the right during the Investiture Controversy, the Gregorian Reformers and the papacy or the German emperors?
2. Did the Concordat of Worms represent a reasonable conclusion to the Investiture Controversy?
Lecture Twenty-Three
Emperor Frederick II

Scope: Nicknamed the *stupor mundi*, or “wonder of the world,” Emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen (1211–1250) was one the most controversial figures of his age. Learned, deeply interested in Islam, and reputed to be a religious skeptic, Frederick II managed to negotiate a temporary return of Jerusalem to Christian rule, thereby accomplishing what no other crusader could. Yet some of his contemporaries reviled Frederick II. He ruled over a Holy Roman Empire shaken by civil war, and his conflicts with popes led to his excommunication, his deposition, and even the launching of a crusade against the Hohenstaufen dynasty. Although he clung to the throne until his death and despite his gaudy reputation, Frederick II proved unable to reverse the fragmentation of the Holy Roman Empire. By the end of the High Middle Ages, it had become what it would remain for centuries: a loose confederation of essentially independent duchies, bishoprics, and city-states.

Outline

I. After Henry IV, subsequent German rulers tried to undo the damage done by the Investiture Controversy without success.
   A. Various reasons exist to explain why the Holy Roman Empire never fully recovered from the Investiture Controversy and, indeed, would crumble still further as the High Middle Ages progressed.
      1. Part of the reason was dynastic discontinuity; frequent changes of dynasty kept the elective principle alive, imposing restraints on kings who wanted to see their own flesh and blood succeed them.
      2. Another reason was that the Concordat of Worms was a truce, not a peace treaty.
   B. The continuation of the conflict between the papacy and the Holy Roman Emperors led to the collapse of the Hohenstaufen dynasty and the final fragmentation of the Holy Roman Empire into various semi-independent units.

II. Frederick II Hohenstaufen became Holy Roman Emperor under difficult circumstances.
   A. When Frederick II’s father, Emperor Henry VI, died in 1197, Frederick II was only two years old. A civil war broke out between the Welf family, which chose a Welf named Otto of Brunswick to be the next emperor, and the Hohenstaufen family, which chose a Hohenstaufen named Philip of Swabia to be the next emperor.
   B. The Welfs and Hohenstaufen fought a civil war on and off between 1198 and 1214.
      1. Their struggle allowed the papacy to assert its authority over emperors once again.
      2. Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) declared that he would decide who was the legitimate emperor, and when Otto of Brunswick promised the pope that he would loosen imperial control over the Church still more, Innocent III sided with the Welfs.
   C. In 1209, Otto of Brunswick was crowned as emperor. When Otto of Brunswick failed to fulfill his promises to Innocent III, the pope excommunicated and deposed him and instead threw his support behind Frederick II Hohenstaufen, who was elected as King of Germany in 1211 and crowned in 1212.
   D. Otto of Brunswick’s defeat at the Battle of Bouvines (1214) caused his Welf followers to abandon him; Frederick II Hohenstaufen was finally crowned as emperor in 1220.

III. The civil war between 1198 and 1214 in Germany had many of the same consequences as the Investiture Controversy.
   A. Stone castles were built without royal authorization and they could not be torn down.
   B. The possessors of these castles could impose their rights of lordship over surrounding peasants, making themselves more independent of royal control.
   C. Kings bidding for the support of their nobles had to hand over huge tracts of land, thus impoverishing themselves and enriching the nobility.
IV. Yet worse was to come when the papacy proclaimed a crusade against a German emperor—Frederick II Hohenstaufen.
   A. Frederick II’s curious personality and unusual background would make him one of the most colorful and controversial figures of the High Middle Ages.
   B. Contemporaries nicknamed him *stupor mundi*, “wonder of the world.”
   C. He was raised in Sicily. As a Mediterranean island that had once been under Muslim rule (and still had a sizable Muslim population in Frederick II’s day), Sicily was an important center of cross-cultural contact.
   D. He was an author of treatises on hawking, fluent in Arabic, notoriously curious about Islam, and somewhat idiosyncratic in his religious beliefs.
   E. Rumors circulated that he had someone nailed shut in a barrel to determine whether the soul was immortal. When the person died, he opened the barrel to see if the soul was still inside.

V. Despite the fact that he came to the throne with papal support and later negotiated the (temporary) return of Jerusalem to Christian rule, Frederick II and the papacy clashed, and the Holy Roman Empire would never recover from this latest round of upheaval.
   A. In 1215 and again on being crowned emperor in 1220, Frederick II made crusading vows, which he was slow to fulfill, even though from 1225 to 1228, he held the title of King of Jerusalem (and was regent for the King of Jerusalem from 1228 to 1243).
   B. Frederick II set off on crusade in 1227, but fell ill en route, disembarked in Italy, and was excommunicated by the pope for failing to fulfill his crusading vow.
   C. Excommunication meant that no Christian was to have any contact with the excommunicated.
   D. The pope also forbade Frederick II to continue on his crusade until the excommunication had been lifted, which the pope was willing to do only if Frederick gave control of Sicily to him.
   E. Despite being excommunicated, Frederick II continued on his crusade, arriving in Acre in 1228. There, without fighting a single battle, he convinced the sultan of Egypt to hand Jerusalem over to Christian rulers. From 1229 to 1244, Jerusalem was again under Christian control.
   F. Thus, Frederick achieved what no one else had achieved since 1187.
   G. Because he was excommunicated, however, the local population and clergy refused to accept Frederick II; when he departed the Holy Land in 1229, they pelted him with garbage.
   H. The pope was furious with Frederick and sent a papal army to attack Sicily.

VI. Relations between Frederick II Hohenstaufen and the papacy grew so bad that a crusade was proclaimed against him.
   A. In 1239, Pope Gregory IX excommunicated Frederick II again. (The previous excommunication against Frederick had been lifted in 1230.)
      1. When Frederick II marched against Rome in 1240, Gregory IX ordered preachers to announce a crusade against Frederick II and his supporters in Germany and Italy.
      2. In 1241, Gregory IX ruled that all those who had taken vows to go crusading in the East could instead fulfill their vows by remaining in Europe and fighting against Frederick II.
      3. After Gregory’s death in 1241, another pope (Innocent IV, 1243–1254) turned out to be an even more intractable opponent of Frederick II. He re-excommunicated Frederick and called again for a crusade against him.
   B. After Frederick II died in 1250, a crusade was preached in Germany and in Sicily against Frederick II’s heir, Conrad IV. The papacy had committed itself to ending Hohenstaufen rule in Germany.
   C. The Holy Roman Empire reached its low point during the period from 1254 to 1273, known as the Great Interregnum. During this period, the Holy Roman Empire had essentially no ruler and finally split into a loose confederation of duchies, city-states, and episcopal sees.
VII. Because of his colorful character and broad interests, Frederick II Hohenstaufen appeals to many modern authors.

A. Yet his reign was a disastrous one for the Holy Roman Empire. His success in reacquiring Jerusalem for Christianity was impressive, but his relations with the papacy were so strained that popes launched crusades against him.

B. The Hohenstaufen dynasty never recovered, and the Holy Roman Empire turned into a loose confederacy of independent polities—a condition in which it would largely persist until its formal dissolution in the nineteenth century.

Suggested Readings:

Questions to Consider:
1. Should Frederick II be seen as, in some way, “ahead of his time” and a remarkably modern ruler? Or was he part and parcel of the Middle Ages and just a bit idiosyncratic?

2. If the Holy Roman Empire and the Kingdom of Germany had not fragmented during the High Middle Ages, necessitating its unification in the nineteenth century, how might the subsequent history of Europe have been different?
Scope: Historians once lavished attention on the High Middle Ages because they were seen as evidence that the medieval period was not, in fact, as miserable as commonly supposed. The twelfth century especially was singled out as a period of noteworthy achievement and creativity, fully deserving to be called a period of “renaissance.” Fortunately, today medieval historians rarely feel the need for such defensiveness, even as they continue to acknowledge that the High Middle Ages were a period of fundamental changes. These various changes, however, added up to one much larger change: by 1300, Europe had assumed an economic and political importance that would have been unimaginable in 1000. The High Middle Ages laid the groundwork for Europe’s future global expansion; although much of the world was as yet untouched, the European hand had begun to stretch forth.

Outline


   A. Haskins taught at Harvard University between 1912 and 1931.
      1. He was in large part responsible for the foundation of the Medieval Academy of America in the early 1920s.
      2. He focused largely on intellectual and high cultural history and argued that the creative achievements of the twelfth century equaled those of the Italian Renaissance.
      3. In arguing for the importance of the twelfth-century Renaissance, Haskins strongly emphasized those developments, such as the creation of universities, with legacies that were still visible in the twentieth century.
      4. His institutional history, *Norman Institutions*, demonstrates how the institutions of Norman government became more efficient, more sophisticated, and more rational over time and laid the groundwork for elements of modern government.

   B. Haskins was also involved in politics and was an advisor to Woodrow Wilson.

II. Some of Haskins’s students and successors, while studying different subjects, shared in his general approach. The most important of those was Joseph Strayer.

   A. Strayer taught at Princeton University for many decades beginning in the 1930s.

   B. Strayer, unlike Haskins, emphasized political rather than intellectual and high cultural history.

      1. Strayer studied institutions, such as the English Parliament, and political trends, such as government’s increasing power to tax, that seemed to have an immediate relevance in the twentieth century.
      2. For Strayer, this approach was the only way to prevent medieval history from becoming an antiquarian and marginalized field.

   D. Haskins and Strayer were heavily influenced by pre-1960s liberalism, believing that governments, when staffed with the best and brightest, would inevitably confer enormous benefits on everyone.
      1. For this reason, Haskin and Strayer focused on the history of medieval governments, their ability to bring order and stability, and the ways in which they grew more streamlined, efficient, and rational.
      2. By showing the benefits conferred on medieval society by increasingly modern government, Haskins and Strayer were implicitly arguing for the legitimacy of pre-1960s liberalism. Theirs were essentially celebratory studies.

III. Not all historians have studied the High Middle Ages to find and praise the seeds of the present.

   A. In the 1950s and 1960s, the historical profession grew rapidly. Traditionally the reserve of white, male, Anglo-Saxon Protestants, the historical profession expanded in the 1950s and 1960s to include historians of various ethnic and religious backgrounds and women.
B. These historians sought to expand the scope of medieval history studies, making social history and the history of popular culture central rather than peripheral.

C. Contemporary historians tend to be more sanguine in their evaluation of the High Middle Ages, and some of the most influential medieval historians have emphasized difference rather than similarity.

D. They have studied medieval behavior that was, when viewed from a modern point of view, seemingly bizarre, yet sensible when understood in terms of widely held medieval assumptions.

E. The study of peasants, Jews, heretics, and women has created a much less celebratory historiography. Indeed, some historians have neatly reversed Haskins’s approach; R. I. Moore’s *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250*, seeks to locate the origins of modern intolerance in medieval society.

F. Caroline Walker Bynum’s *Holy Feast, Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* shows how the occasionally gruesome ascetic practices of female medieval saints made sense in terms of medieval conceptions of food, the body, and gender roles.

IV. Globalization has also had an impact on medieval studies.

A. As different parts of the world have become ever more interdependent, historians have become dissatisfied with history that examined each region of the world in isolation.

B. Instead, their work has focused increasingly on interaction between Europe and other parts of the world and on frontier regions where different civilizations met.

C. In these areas, historians have focused more and more on the dynamics of conqueror and conquered, immigrant and indigenous, to determine whether or not high medieval expansion was fairly similar to what would happen in the Age of Exploration.

D. The study of high medieval European expansion, and the frontier areas it created, has become one of the most active fields of medieval European history.

E. The publication of Robert Bartlett’s *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Exchange, 950–1350*, marks a high point (but hardly the end) of this historiographical trend. It compares the various frontier areas of Europe and examines the similarities and differences in their colonial experiences.

F. The placement of medieval European history in more of a global context has altered the study of internal European developments; historians now search for those demographic and social changes that provided Europe with the resources it would need for its later colonial and imperialistic endeavors.

Suggested Readings:


Questions to Consider:
1. To understand the history of high medieval Europe (or of any period), is it necessary to know about the personalities, lives, and intellects of those historians who have written most influentially about that period to see how their own circumstances have shaped their works? Or is such information largely superfluous and relevant only in the case of bad historians, who have allowed their environment to affect their scholarship?

2. In what directions would you like to see the field of medieval studies move during the years to come?
# Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>987</td>
<td>Capetians become ruling dynasty of the Kingdom of France.</td>
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<tr>
<td>989</td>
<td>Council of Charroux—Peace of God first proclaimed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1025</td>
<td>End of the Ottonian dynasty in Germany.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1027</td>
<td>Council of Touluges—Truce of God first proclaimed.</td>
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<td>1042</td>
<td>Edward the Confessor returns to England from Normandy, becomes king.</td>
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<td>1049</td>
<td>Pope Leo IX, a prominent Gregorian Reformer, is elected.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1054</td>
<td>Mutual excommunications of the pope and the patriarch of Constantinople; beginning of the Great Schism between the Catholic and Orthodox Christianity.</td>
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<td>1059</td>
<td>Papal Election Decree proclaimed—creation of College of Cardinals.</td>
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<td>1066</td>
<td>William the Conqueror wins the Battle of Hastings, crowned King of England.</td>
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<td>1073–1085</td>
<td>Pontificate of Pope Gregory VII.</td>
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<td>1075</td>
<td>Gregory VII publishes First Investiture Decree.</td>
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<td>1076</td>
<td>Emperor Henry IV and German bishops at Diet of Worms depose Pope Gregory VII; Pope Gregory VII excommunicates and deposes Emperor Henry IV.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1077</td>
<td>Emperor Henry IV and Pope Gregory VII meet at Canossa, are temporarily reconciled.</td>
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<td>c. 1080</td>
<td>Communal movements arise in northern Italy, northeastern France, and Flanders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1086</td>
<td>Compilation of Domesday Book.</td>
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<td>1095</td>
<td>Council of Clermont—Pope Urban II launches the First Crusade.</td>
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<td>1096–1097</td>
<td>Massacres of Jews in Rhine Valley by Popular Crusade.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1098</td>
<td>Foundation of Cistercian Order by Robert of Molesme. Crusaders besiege and capture Antioch.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1099</td>
<td>Jerusalem captured by First Crusade.</td>
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<td>1112</td>
<td>Bernard of Clairvaux joins the Cistercians.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1122</td>
<td>Concordat of Worms accepted by Holy Roman Empire and Papacy. Peter Abelard writes <em>Sic et non (Yes and No).</em></td>
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<td>1124</td>
<td>End of the Salian dynasty in Germany.</td>
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<td>1142</td>
<td>Death of Peter Abelard.</td>
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<td>1152</td>
<td>Marriage of the future King Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1153</td>
<td>Death of Bernard of Clairvaux.</td>
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<td>1170</td>
<td>Murder of Thomas Becket.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 1173</td>
<td>Valdez begins preaching at Lyon.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1184</td>
<td>Papal bull <em>Ad abolendam</em> establishes the episcopal inquisition.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1187</td>
<td>Jerusalem captured by Saladin.</td>
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c. 1200 ............................................ Universities of Paris and Bologna are established.
1204 ............................................ Crusaders capture and sack Constantinople.
1209–1229 .................................... Albigensian Crusade.
1210 ............................................ Establishment of the Franciscan Order.
1211–1250 .................................... Reign of Frederick II Hohenstaufen, King of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor.
1214 ............................................ King Philip II Augustus of France wins the Battle of Bouvines.
1215 ............................................ King John Lackland of England accepts Magna Carta. Fourth Lateran Council requires that Jews wear distinguishing badges on their garments.
1220s .............................................. Establishment of the papal inquisition.
1226 ............................................ Death of Francis of Assisi.
1228–1229 .................................... Emperor Frederick II recovers Jerusalem.
1244 ............................................ Muslims capture Jerusalem.
1245 ............................................ First Council of Lyons deposes Emperor Frederick II.
1254 ............................................ End of the Hohenstaufen dynasty in Germany.
1254–1273 .................................... Great Interregnum in the Holy Roman Empire.
1274 ............................................ Death of Thomas Aquinas.
1277 ............................................ Bishop of Paris condemns 219 Aristotelian theses.
1290 ............................................ Jews expelled from England.
Glossary

**banalités**: a set of economic monopolies held by lords in possession of the *bannum*.

**bannum**: “the ban,” or the right to command and punish. Those in possession of the ban had the right to collect revenues from, and impose services on, those under the ban.

**consolamentum**: a Cathar ceremony of spiritual baptism. Cathar preachers received it long before death and thereafter had to lead lives of strict austerity. Ordinary Cathars received it just before death, and some Cathar groups required members to embark on a suicidal fast after receiving the *consolamentum*.

**determinatio**: “the determination.” At the end of a *disputatio* (see below), the master would attempt to resolve all the various arguments that had been raised during the disputation, showing how any contradictions were only apparent, not real. The resolution of the arguments was known as “the determination.”

**disputatio**: “disputation,” a scholastic classroom exercise in which masters and students debated the pros and cons of a thesis.

**femme sole**: a woman who practiced a trade different from her husband’s. For legal purposes, the property owned by a *femme sole* was considered to be hers alone, independent of her husband’s property; should her husband be sentenced to a fine, for instance, her property could not be used to pay that fine.

**feudum**: “fief.” Property, often land, granted by a lord to a vassal, often in return for military service. The term “feudalism” is derived from the Latin *feudum*.

**magister**: “master,” the term used of teachers and university professors in the Middle Ages.

**perfecti**: “the perfect ones,” the term used to describe Cathar preachers.

**populo grosso**: “the fat people,” a term used in Italian towns to refer to wealthy merchants and rentiers (those who lived primarily from the rents and revenues generated by the lands they owned).

**populo minuto**: “the little people,” a term used in Italian towns to describe those of modest means, especially artisans.

**quadrivium**: part of the seven liberal arts, it consisted of astronomy, geometry, arithmetic, and music.

**trivium**: part of the seven liberal arts, it consisted of grammar, rhetoric, and logic.

**vita apostolica**: “the apostolic life.” To lead the “apostolic life,” or a life modeled on the lives of Christ’s first followers as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, was a powerful religious ideal in the High Middle Ages. Benedictine monks and Franciscans all claimed to be leading the *vita apostolica*, even though they interpreted it in very different ways.
Biographical Notes

Alexius I Comnenus: Byzantine emperor from 1081 to 1118. His appeal to the West for assistance against the Muslims led to the calling of the First Crusade.

Augustine of Hippo: died 430. Bishop of Hippo in North Africa and a Church Father, his writings and theory of history were very influential throughout the Middle Ages and beyond.

Averroes: known in Arabic as Ibn Rushd, died 1198. A Muslim philosopher from Spain, his commentaries on Aristotle’s works were widely read and admired by scholastics.

Bernard of Clairvaux: died 1153. French and from a noble family, he was one of the greatest champions of monasticism in high medieval Europe, the driving force behind the Cistercian reform, and a fierce opponent of Peter Abelard.

Bohemon: died 1111. A Norman from southern Italy and a participant in the First Crusade, he became ruler of Antioch. After his invasion of the Byzantine Empire in 1108 failed, he died penniless in Italy.

Chrétien de Troyes: died circa 1190. A French author of Arthurian literature and chivalric romances, he wrote for his patroness, Countess Marie of Champagne.


Francesco Petrarca/Petrarch: died 1374. Italian humanist who developed the concept of the Middle Ages, which he called the “Age of Darkness.”

Francis of Assisi: died 1226. An Italian and the son of a cloth merchant, Francis of Assisi founded the Franciscan Order. He was one of the most inspiring religious figures of his day.

Frederick II Hohenstaufen: King of Germany from 1211 to 1250; also Holy Roman Emperor. Of Sicilian background, he was a ruler with diverse intellectual interests and a reputation for a lack of piety. Despite winning Jerusalem back for Christendom briefly, his conflicts with the papacy weakened the already tottering Holy Roman Empire.

Henry Plantagenet: died 1189. He was king of England from 1154 to 1189. England’s possessions on the European continent reached their greatest extent during his reign, which was marred by his disputes with Eleanor of Aquitaine and their children, as well as by the murder of Thomas Becket.

Hildegard of Bingen: died 1179. A German nun and mystic, the fame of her visions allowed her to become an important advisor to popes and kings—and her music sells very well today.

John “Lackland”: King of England from 1199 to 1215. He lost most of the Angevin Empire’s holdings in France and was forced by English barons to accept Magna Carta.

Peter Abelard: died 1142. From a noble family from Brittany (northwestern France), Peter Abelard was an early and controversial pioneer of the scholastic method. Twice, Church councils condemned him for heresy, and the relatives of a young woman with whom he had a love affair had Abelard castrated. He discussed these events in an autobiography aptly titled History of Misfortunes.

Philip II Augustus: King of France from 1180 to 1223. His efforts to seize western France from the kings of England and to expand royal power into southern France were largely successful; he put the French monarchy on a firm footing.

Raymond of Saint-Gilles, Count of Toulouse: died 1105. A noble from the south of France who participated in the First Crusade, his disputes with Bohemond sometimes brought the Crusade to a halt. Died in the Holy Land, where he remained after the First Crusade.

Siger of Brabant: died 1284. A master at the University of Paris, his reputation as a strong devotee of Aristotle led to his expulsion from the university.
**Thomas Aquinas**: died 1274. An Italian scholastic and a member of the Dominican Order. His massive writings, including the famous *Summa theologiae*, are often hailed today as masterpieces of scholastic thought.

**Thomas Becket**: died 1170. He was a friend (for a while) of King Henry II of England, who appointed Becket as archbishop of Canterbury. After the two fell out over the issue of Henry’s interference in ecclesiastical matters, English knights with ties to Henry murdered Becket, who was quickly hailed as a martyr and a saint.

**Urban II**: pope from 1088 to 1099. A Cluniac monk and a staunch supporter of the Gregorian Reform, Urban II is best known for launching the First Crusade.
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