MEDIEVAL CULTURE

Course Description
This course covers medieval culture in a world context, with a focus on connections between the world of ideas and the productions that reflect changing and emerging flows of thought. Students will study works in the areas of literature, theatre, architecture, philosophy, music, art history, religion, and history will discuss them from different critical stances. Students will demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the works by responding to questions focusing on the connections, and which lend themselves to interpretive possibilities. Students will develop potential interpretations of the causes, impacts, and meanings of elements within a culture by responding to questions. This course is intended for students who already possess a bachelor's and, ideally, a master's degree, and who would like to develop interdisciplinary perspectives that integrate with their prior knowledge and experience.

About the Professor
Susan Smith Nash has developed numerous literature courses in the humanities, including world literature, American literature, and film. She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Oklahoma, where she currently holds an appointment. Nash is widely published in the areas of literature, film criticism, e-learning, and discourse of science. In addition, she has served as editor for journals focusing on literature and literary criticism. She prepared the following Study Guides: American Cinema, Poetry, Fiction, Ancient Literature, Medieval Literature, Enlightenment Literature, 19th Century Literature, and 20th Century Literature.

Study Guide

Medieval Culture

Instructions for the Study Guide: Please use the questions to develop a deeper understanding of the text and to review the concepts. As you read, consider the questions. Keeping careful notes or a journal will help you prepare to write the essays at the end of each section as well as the final essay. Your required and supplemental readings can be found in the "Readings" file.

Instructions for Essays: Please write a 1,250 – 1,500 word essay that responds to the essay questions.   Then, send your essay to your professor.   You may send an outline and drafts to your instructor for feedback and guidance before you send your finished essay.

Instructions for Final Essay: Please write a 5,000 word essay that responds to the essay questions.   Then, send your essay to your professor.   You may send an outline and drafts to your instructor for feedback and guidance before you send your finished essay.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

O1.   Identify and describe the relationship between the medieval worldview, world structure (cosmology), and its literature, art, and philosophy. Provide examples, such as Dante's Divine Comedy.

O2. Explain the romance, and how the chivalric code manifested itself in medieval literature and art.

O3. List works of mysticism in medieval Christian literature, and discuss the notion of a transformative journey of the self and the soul. How does this relate to Medieval philosophical text and ideas?

O4. Discuss the signs and symbols of medieval art and architecture. Discuss how medieval architecture changed over time, and how the changes reflected evolving ideas about the role of the human being in the world.

O5. Discuss examples of confessions, biography, and art used to illustrate a conversion experience, or religious enlightenment.

O6. Relate the readings, themes, and ideas of medieval literature and philosophy to one's own contemporary life, and discuss the persistence and influence of certain basic, paradigm-shifting notions and how they maintain a place in the literary imagination, even today. Examples could be mysticism, chivalric romance, and the spiritual journey / conversion narrative.

UNIT	WEEKS	TOPICS
I		**Literature**
	1-3	*Epic Poetry*
		Beowulf
	Overview	An Ancient English Epic
	Introduction	With *Beowulf* we move to an epic which shares no cultural roots with either the Homer/Virgil tradition, or with *Gilgamesh*. Composed around the eighth century A.D.—the poem's time of creation, historical reference, and author are all vague— *Beowulf* continues to haunt us. The hero of the poem is a Dane, inheritor of ancient Germanic/Scandinavian traditions, who is called to England to defeat unsettling monsters, themselves symptoms of pollution in the society they imperil. We wander

among ancient pagan as well as—at the end of the poem—Christian motifs, and become aware that the poem before us is the product of multiple authorship, oral add-ons, and a multi-leveled body of literary traditions. (The epic has always appealed to oral tradition, from Homer to our day.) If we need prompting, to find the enduring power of this epic, we might want to think back to *Gilgamesh*, that archaic but oddly modern Sumerian epic. The heroes of both of these poems are male strugglers, explicitly viewed both as youthful and then, later, as heavily loaded with experience. You will remember that Gilgamesh makes his debut as an all-undertaking young ruler, all swagger and genuinely effective in his concern for his city; in the end, after the struggle with Humbaba, he is tamed and wise. Beowulf is a mild Christian spirit, at the end of the epic, but a potent strongman for civilization earlier in the game. The reader is led to reflect on his/her own life course, and to experience that ultimate lesson in stylized language.

Question	Q1. Do you see the epic form as uniquely qualified to convey universal human experience? Do you find yourself identifying with the hero of *Beowulf*?
Question Theme: Heroism	Q2. Discuss the heroic code of Germanic warriors and kings How do the virtues of courage, strength, loyalty play a role in the heroic code of warriors? Discuss the role of generosity, hospitality, and protection in the heroic code for the kings. Please give evidence from the book to support your observations. How do the ideas about heroism compare with others you are familiar with?

Song of Roland

Overview	Heroism in the Crusading Spirit
Introduction	*The Chanson de Roland* appears to have been composed some two centuries later than *Beowulf* (more or less) but unlike Beowulf this epic draws on traditional medieval lore, itself steeped in 'Christian' traditions. The Emperor Charlemagne, who depends on such proud Christian knights as Roland to support his Empire, is at the center of the time's anti-Islamic passion, which was devoted to extricating the Muslims from the sacred sites of the Holy Land. In the midst of a fervent battle, as the poem starkly recalls, Roland and his knights are cut off in an isolated Spanish pass, by the Muslims, and Roland is killed. Charlemagne does his best to rescue his heroic vassal, but it is too late. A great warrior has fallen, in the noble cause of victory.
Question	Q1. What do you feel after reading this epic? Does it tug at your heart strings, touch your sense of mortality? A superficial answer might be: for the first time in this course we are reading a great text which is openly one-sided, springing from a 'crusader' mentality. Would this be true? If it is true, is the significance of this truth easy to assess? Is there not a strangely moving dignity to Roland, as he acts and as he dies, which resounds in us as does the generosity of Achilles, returning the body of Priam?
Question Theme: Heroism	Q2. Discuss the heroic code of Song of Roland and compare it to the heroic code of Beowulf, which centers around individual exploits and honor. Discuss how Christian Warrior concept, which centers around a collective identity and sacrifice, explains any differences between Beowulf and Roland.
Theme: Heroism	Q3. Discuss the heroic code of groups in Europe in the Middle Ages, including the Germanic warriors and kings, and later, the Christian knights at home and in the Crusades. Discuss the role of generosity, hospitality, and protection in the heroic code for the kings. How do the virtues of courage, strength, loyalty play a role in the heroic code of warriors? Please give evidence from the texts to support your observations. How do the ideas about heroism compare with others you are familiar with?
Essay	E1. What is the structure of the world in each of the epic poems we have studied? What are the prevailing forces, and what kind of world is it that they describe? What are the outside threats to the world? How does the hero deal with them? What the essential characteristics of epic poetry in terms of structure of his world, characterization, and the characters, as we have seen in the readings for this unit?
4-6	*Lyric Poetry*

Courtly Love Lyrics of Spain and France

Overview	Courtly Love
Introduction	We have read lyric poetry from Ancient Egypt and Hebrew, from Sappho, and from Catullus. Now we are reading mediaeval poetry produced by both native courtly traditions in France and Spain, and by poetry generated from the interface of Islamic and Christian poets in the Islamic occupied areas of southern France and Spain. What differences do you observe between this lyric poetry and that of the more ancient lyric work we have read?
Question	Q1. A hint at what some critics think is this: that in this Mediaeval courtly poetry the person of the narrator/lover inflects his passion with a fine desire to care for and even adulate the beloved? This, goes the theory, distinguishes this poetry from the more object-possessive stance of Catullus or pre-Christian poetry. Does this theory hold up, in light of the poetic materials we are reading here?
Question Theme: Love	Q2. Discuss the theme of love in the poems. Discuss the narrator's experience in terms of perceptions and emotions. Is there any similarity in imagery or topic? How do the authors define love, whether secular or spiritual? In the poems, what impact does love have on the individual? Please list specific elements of the poem to support your argument.
Essay	E2. How would you characterize the values and the emotions found in courtly love lyrics? How do the authors define love, what do they regard as its ideal means of expression and its end? Are there similar forms in today's world? What might they be? If you were to set courtly love lyrics in a contemporary setting, how would you do it? Describe the elements.

7-9   *Short Story: Social Realism*

Boccaccio (1313-1375)
  Decameron

Overview	The Novelist's Imagination in a Late Mediaeval Setting
Introduction	We have been reading a wide variety of texts, some literary in the traditional sense, some, like the travel writings above, 'documentary.' As we get closer to the so-called Western Renaissance, which some date from the l5th century (in the West), we get closer to narrative tales written for a democratic audience in an easy, or colloquial style. (I am trying to describe the 'progress' toward something like the 'novel' of modern times.) We are, with Boccaccio's *Decameron* in the early 14th century, dealing with a group of tales organized into a narrative fictive whole, an early novel form. (It should be noted, by the way, that Asian novel-like works, such as the 11th century *Tale of Genji*, have already moved close to the modern sense of the novel, long before their counterparts in the West.) Boccaccio's *Decameron* devotes itself to one hundred tales told over a ten day period by a group of young sophisticates on the run from The Black Death. Their theme is love, and they manage to tell stories on every register, from the highly spiritual to the raw. The overarching point, for our reading, is that something like a continuous tale emerges from these partial tales.
Question	Q1. Do you feel you are reading a contemporary novel? How does the treatment of love here compare to that which you have seen, for example, in Sappho, Petronius, Capellanus?
Question Theme: Realism	Q2. What kind of behavior does Boccaccio observe during the 1348 plague in Florence? As in times of war, during plague, the codes of behavior change, and people tend to look to personal survival and gain. How does Boccaccio address the issue of mores and human behavior in a time when the social code of conduct totally collapses?
Question	Q3. In the story "Rustico and Alibech", what does the hermit Rustico experience

Theme: Temptation	under the temptation of a beautiful girl? How does he struggle with temptation? How do his ideas and behavior change as he yields to the temptation? Does he experience love or lust towards Alibech? Is everything, including deception, fair in love? What do you think of the saints' experience when they lead an ascetic life, and their constant struggle with temptation?
Question Theme: Awakening	Q4. How does the development of Alibech's sexuality progress? In this story, how does the natural development of sexuality take place in the absence of society's acculturation? How does Alibech's behavior change after she experiences sexuality and pleasure? Does this change in women influence who is the initiator and aggressor in sexuality of men and women?
Question Theme: Sexuality	Q5. What are Ghismonda's ideas about her own sexuality? How does Ghismonda explain the rationale for her decision to take a lover? What does she mean that she is "flesh and blood"? How does her father try to suppress her daughter's nature? How did her parents interfere with her decisions of marital status and the choice of marriage and sexual partner and what was the result of this interference?
	Chaucer (c 1340 – 1400) Canterbury Tales
Overview	Real People on Pilgrimage
Introduction	Many of our introductory notes on Boccaccio need repeating in an introduction to Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, which were written only shortly after the work of Boccaccio. Chaucer, too, frames a series of tales, but is more interested in the tales as framed pieces than in the flow of the narrative into a pre-novel form. As in Boccaccio, a wide range of tones pervade the Chaucerian tales—from bawdy to uplifting—though Chaucer writes more comfortably inside a theme of social realism than does Boccaccio. The most striking difference between the two authors is Chaucer's language, supple epic poetry. It is usually said that the Western novel, a so dominant form of our literary taste today, springs from the growth of prose in the vernacular forms of late Mediaeval European languages. The epic, by contrast, is tightly linked to poetry. (Do you see why that should be?
Question	Q1. Does Chaucer's work seem more like epic than does Boccaccio's, and less like novel fiction?)
Question Theme: Realism	Q2. According to the Wife of Bath, what is the one thing that the women want most from their partner in marriage? To what degree is she reliable? What are the chief elements of humor in her narrative?
Question Theme : Sexuality	Q3. Please discuss the Wife of Bath' views on marriage, virginity, and sexuality. How well do her ideas correspond with the "official" Christian views of medieval times? What is the one thing that the women want most from their partner in marriage? How does she manage gain complete control over her husbands? What are the comic turns of the situation and the chief elements of humor in her narrative?
Essay	E3. Compare and contrast the social norms and human nature as depicted by Chaucer and Boccaccio with the present-day social norms related to marriage and sexuality.
II	**Philosophy**
10-12	*Christian Philosophy: Scholasticism*
Overview	The Return of the Mystic: Desire Meets Dogma
Introduction	Scholasticism energized thinkers during the Middle Ages. The term refers to the philosophical systems and traces of ideas of various medieval Christian thinkers who meshed the religious beliefs and dogmas in order to address some of the general philosophical problems that preoccupied philosophers during the Classical period. In general, medieval philosophers examined faith and reason, will and intellect, Realism and nominalism, and the provability of the existence of God) from many perspectives. They reflected the influence of the mystical and intuitional tradition such thinkers of

Augustine, and then Aristotle.

Boethius

Theme:	What does Boethius say about Lady Philosophy and the fickle nature of fame and fortune? What does he say about predestination, free will, human nature, virtue, and justice.

St. Augustine
  The Confessions

Question Theme: Confession	Q1. Discuss the stages by which Augustine acquires a growing knowledge of himself. How does a particular experience or realization lead to self-awareness and change?

Scholasticism

Theme: Order of the Universe	Q1. What is the organization of the cosmos according to Scholastic thought? Where is God's position? Where is the earth, and mankind?

Aquinas

Theme:	Q1. What does Aquinas believe is the goal of human life?
Essay	E4: Trace the development of philosophical ideas during Medieval times and compare and contrast mystical views with those of the religious rationalists, the Scholasticists.

III	Art

13-15	*Christian Art*
Overview	Art and Architecture: Metaphysics Meets the Medieval Mind
Introduction	Art during the Middle Ages represented a break from the realistic style that dominated the art of Ancient Greece and Rome. Mysticism and a pragmatic political philosophy infused the prevailing ethos with a unique combination of the earthy and the divine. Further, in a society where the majority of the population was unable to read or write, art served an important function by telling the religious, historical, and moral stories. Art and architecture were things to be lived with and in – the gothic cathedral, the mosque, and tapestries are just a few examples of how art and architecture were and are deeply functional, material, and yet transcendent.
Theme: Religion	Q1. Describe how art and architecture were used in medieval times in order to relate religious narratives in a time when the average person could not read or write. Describe the various meanings of the architectural elements and structures in Romanesque churches and the Gothic cathedral. How did stained glass function in a metaphysical sense to symbolize transformation, vision, rebirth and regeneration, as well as to depict stories of the Bible?
Essay	E5: Compare and contrast works of art and architecture from different periods within the Medieval era, and discuss how they reflect differing ideas about the role of the human being, the individual's relationships with the divine, and the nature of existence.

IV	Finals

16	Review, Annotated Bibliography, Research Paper
Final Essay Question	Please choose one question from the selections below for your final essay.
	FE1. In Horace's Epistle on the Art of Poetry, he says that "Poets aim at giving either profit or delight, or at combining the giving of pleasure with some useful precepts for life." Discuss the balance between these two from early to late medieval literature. Does the balance shift over the centuries? Illustrate your discussion by examples of the quality of the voice (tone, vocabulary, formal/informality of language) and

elements of conscious moral/didactic instruction or pleasurable elements.

FE2. What does it mean to be a hero in Medieval times? Discuss heroes as depicted in philosophy, literature, and art during the Medieval era.

FE3. Trace the evolution of the idea of love in philosophy, literature and art. Compare and contrast secular and religious love during the Middle Ages.

FE4. Discuss themes of spiritual journey in Medieval literature and contrast them with the kinds of journeys you might read about in contemporary times. Are some of the ideas from Medieval times still relevant today?

Syllabus

Learning Outcomes:

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

1.   Discuss the meanings and manifestations of culture found in the subject of the course.
2.   Identify unique theoretical underpinnings and influential thinkers in the course topic.
3.   Analyze the relationship between the various aspects of cultural texts and the particular social, cultural, and biographical contexts of their production.
4.   Research and critically evaluate cultural productions.
5.   Use secondary sources and close reading skills to produce a substantive critical essay relating one or more specific cultural productions to the economic, social, cultural, or biographical contexts of its production.
6.   Demonstrate a balanced perspective and a deepened understanding of the cultures, times, people, and situations that produce these works.
7.   Write coherent historical arguments that explore the relationships of various concepts and texts, and which provide a clear synthesis.

Course Goals:

1.   To provide students with a broad perspective of approaches to world culture and an understanding of the various ways in which they manifest themselves and to assess students' ability to express their perspectives through exams and essays.
2.   To provide students with a deeper understanding of diverse cultural and interdisciplinary traditions the course focus and to express this deepened understanding in written tests and a critical essay.
3.   To provide an overview of cultural analysis and interpretation methods and help students apply these skills in writing essay examinations and a critical essay.
4.   To read widely and critically in a variety of cultural texts in order to explore potential meanings and to demonstrate the depth and breadth of this reading in essay examinations and a critical essay.
5.   To do library research on a particular trend, event, concept, an individual theorist, or an issue in the area of comparative culture and to write a critical essay which incorporates this research.

Course Content:

1.   Cultural developments and texts that have been designated as being produced within

the category of the course topic.
2. Discussion of the theoretical, social, philosophical and biographical contexts in which those works were produced.
3. Historical movements in various periods.
4. Discussion of the cultural issues and questions related to theoretical, social, philosophical, and biographical approaches to the study of the course topic.
5. Key ideas about how to evaluate and interpret cultural events, texts, and approaches.
6. Criticism and reflection upon political and economic systems as reflected in culture.
7. Discussion of the relevance of course readings to the understanding of contemporary cultural issues.
8. Critical analysis and interpretation of culture.
9. Conducting scholarly research on and off-line.

Course Outline:

For the detailed course outline, please see the study guide.

Course Readings:

The course readings for this course will be available through the Online Library, which will provide students access to selected journal articles, book chapters, and reference materials.

Course Preparedness:

This course is a history course which requires analysis, research, and writing. It assumes the mastery of prerequisite college-level skills in spelling, grammar, punctuation, paragraphing, and essay writing. It also assumes the ability to read and analyze literary texts. This course provides instruction in history and does not address remedial writing issues at the sentence, paragraph, or essay level. The California Department of Education "English-Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools" offers context for understanding the standard for writing at the college level. Students who do not meet the standards outlined in the "English-Language Arts Content Standards" will not pass this course.

In short, this course assumes that students already "write with a command of standard English conventions, write coherent and focused texts that convey a well-defined perspective and tightly reasoned argument, and use clear research questions and creative and critical research strategies" (California Standards, Grades Nine and Ten). This course focuses on texts and analysis and requires college-level writing skills that exceed those required at the secondary level.

Course Workload:

In accordance with accreditation standards, requires approximately two hours of outside work for every contact hour. For a 3-hour course, there are 48 contact hours, plus a minimum of 96 hours outside work. For a sixteen-week course, students can expect to devote a minimum of 6 hours of independent study per week in order to complete the coursework.

Grading Factors:

Discussion Board   (20%)

The Discussion Board provides the learner a place to respond to questions on the topic and to exchange ideas, reactions and analyses of the texts. Discussion questions concentrate on ideas, themes, and characters in literary works. There will be one question per week. Discussion Board questions will be responded to by all learners in the course and will be evaluated by the instructor.   The Discussion Board is not available for OCW courses.

Journal   (20%)

Your journal consists of your responses to questions in the Study Guide. These questions require you to reflect on the material and to write a one to two-paragraph response. At the end of the course, you will gather together all of your Study Guide responses and will turn them in as a final portfolio.

Essay   (20%)

You will write an essay on one of the topics provided to you by your instructor in which you apply a critical paradigm from theorists or issues raised by the Study Guide questions.   You should start your paper with a succinct thesis statement, describe the critical paradigm and the text(s) being analyzed. Be sure to cite critical passages to demonstrate support for your argument.

Length: 1,000—1,500 words. Essay topics will be assigned by the instructor and will reflect material covered in the Study Guide and the readings.

Exam   (40%)

Students must complete the assignments, submit them, and take the proctored exam.

Definition of Grades:

   Graduate Courses
   A   Outstanding Achievement
   B   Commendable Achievement
   C   Marginal Achievement
   D   Unsatisfactory *
   F   Failing *

* Students receiving this grade in a course that is required for his/her degree program must repeat the course.

   I   **Incomplete** A grade given at the discretion of the instructor when a student who has completed **at least two-thirds of the course class sessions** and is unable to complete the requirements of the course because of uncontrollable and unforeseen circumstances. The student must convey these circumstances (preferably in writing) to the instructor prior to the final day of the course. If an instructor decides that an "Incomplete" is warranted, the instructor must convey the conditions for removal of the "Incomplete" to the student in writing. A copy must also be placed on file with the Office of the Registrar until the "Incomplete" is removed or the time limit for removal has passed. An "Incomplete" is not

assigned when the only way the student could make up the work would be to attend a major portion of the class when next offered.

An "I" that is not removed within the stipulated time becomes an "F." No grade points are assigned. The "F" is calculated in the grade point average.

W **Withdrawal** Signifies that a student has withdrawn from a course after beginning the third class session. **Students who wish to withdraw must notify their admissions advisor before the beginning of the sixth class session in the case of graduate courses, or before the seventh class session in the case of undergraduate courses.** Instructors are not authorized to issue a "W" grade.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's ideas or work as one's own. Students must give credit for any information that is not either the result of original research or common knowledge. If a student borrows ideas or information from another author, he/she must acknowledge the author in the body of the text and on the reference page. Students found plagiarizing are subject to the penalties outlined in the Policies and Procedures section of the   Catalog, which may include a failing grade for the work in question or for the entire course. The following is one of many websites that provide helpful information concerning plagiarism for both students and faculty:
http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml

Ethics:

Ethical behavior in the classroom is required of every student. The course will identify ethical policies and practices relevant to course topics.

Technology:

Students are expected to be competent in using current technology appropriate for this discipline. Such technology may include word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation software. Use of the internet and e-mail may also be required.

Diversity:

Learning to work with and value diversity is essential in every class. Students are expected to exhibit an appreciation for multinational and gender diversity in the classroom.

Civility:

As a diverse community of learners, students must strive to work together in a setting of civility, tolerance, and respect for each other and for the instructor. Rules of classroom behavior (which apply to online as well as onsite courses) include but are not limited to the following:

- Conflicting opinions among members of a class are to be respected and responded to in a professional manner.
- Side conversations or other distracting behaviors are not to be engaged in during lectures, class discussions or presentations
- There are to be no offensive comments, language, or gestures

Students with Disabilities:

Students seeking special accommodations due to a disability must submit an application with supporting documentation, as explained under this subject heading in the General Catalog. Instructors are required to provide such accommodations if they receive written notification from the University.

Writing Across the Curriculum:

Students are expected to demonstrate writing skills in describing, analyzing and evaluating ideas and experiences. Written reports and research papers must follow specific standards regarding citations of an author's work within the text and references at the end of the paper. Students are encouraged to use the services of the University's Writing Center when preparing materials.
The following website provides information on APA, MLA, and other writing and citation styles that may be required for term papers.

Online Library:

Our Online Library supports academic rigor and student academic success by providing access to scholarly books and journals electronically.