

# MEDIEVAL STUDIES

## Overview and Contact Information

Medieval studies focuses on a seminal period in Western, Mediterranean, and Middle Eastern civilizations. Through the study of art, history, languages, literature, music, and religion, the program leads students to explore the character and creative contributions of the period, to investigate the dynamic interactions of its diverse Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and pagan cultures, and to assess the impact of the Middle Ages on the formation of the New World and the shaping of modern societies.

The Medieval Studies Program offers a variety of courses at all levels of the curriculum. Prospective majors and minors should try to take as many of the 100- and 200-level courses offered by the program as possible.

## Contact Information

Wesley Yu, Chair

317 Shattuck  
413-538-2825  
<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/medieval>

## Faculty

**This area of study is administered by the Medieval Studies Committee:**

Michael Davis, Professor of Art History

Nieves Romero-Díaz, Professor of Spanish

Wesley Yu, Associate Professor of English

Robert Eisenstein, Director, Five College Early Music Program; Five College Senior Lecturer in Music

## Requirements for the Major

A minimum of 40 credits:

Three courses in different disciplines at the 100 or 200 level	12
Five courses (20 credits) must be at the 300 level in at least two disciplines, of which:	20
8 credits at the 300 level in at least one discipline.	
Majors are encouraged strongly to take the following as one of the courses at the 300 level:	
MEDST-300 Seminar in Medieval Studies	
8 additional credits in Medieval Studies courses at any level	8
<b>Total Credits</b>	<b>40</b>

## Additional Specifications

- Majors should study medieval language or literature in English, French, Italian, Latin, or Spanish in a program worked out with the program chair or academic advisor. Students are also advised to acquire proficiency in a modern foreign language sufficient to use foreign language sources in advanced courses.
- Medieval studies is an interdisciplinary major. Students who pursue an interdisciplinary major automatically fulfill the College's "outside the major" requirement.

## Requirements for the Minor

A minimum of 16 credits:

An introductory medieval studies course as a foundation for study	4
Two courses in medieval studies at the 200 or 300 level <sup>1</sup>	8
At least one additional course in medieval studies at the 300 level <sup>1</sup>	4
<b>Total Credits</b>	<b>16</b>

<sup>1</sup> Courses must be selected from at least two disciplines beyond the 100 level

## Course Offerings

### MEDST-215 Chaucer's Literary World

Spring. Credits: 4

Who and what did Chaucer read? How did Chaucer's literary environment move him to explore love, human will, differences of perspective, and ideas of closure (the efficacy of complaint, poetic endings, and the poet's accomplishments). These topics will be studied in light of the ranging literary influences from the medieval world, especially Chaucer's adaptation of classical poetry, French and Italian vernacular verse, romance, saints' lives, allegory, and beast fables. All readings are in Middle English, concentrating on a selection of Chaucer's short poems and his major works prior to *The Canterbury Tales*.

Crosslisted as: ENGL-215

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities

Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive  
W. Yu

Prereq: ENGL-199.

Advisory: ENGL 213 or 214 strongly recommended

### MEDST-217 Special Topics in Medieval Studies

#### MEDST-217CC Special Topics in Medieval History: 'Conquered and Colonized Christianities: 150-1650 CE'

Spring. Credits: 4

This course offers an introduction to a constellation of Christianities that were eventually conquered or colonized, broadly construed. As such, we will cover writings from the early, medieval, and early modern periods originally written in a vast spectrum of languages, including, but not limited to, Greek, Coptic, Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopic, Old Slavonic, and western European vernaculars. These readings will be supplemented with theoretical literature drawn from postcolonial and poststructuralist thinkers.

Crosslisted as: RELIG-225CC, HIST-232CC

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives  
L. Salés

### MEDST-295 Independent Study

Fall and Spring. Credits: 1 - 4

The department

Instructor permission required.

**MEDST-300 Seminar in Medieval Studies****MEDST-300HE Seminar in Medieval Studies: 'Heroes & Infidels: Masculine Identity and The Birth of Europe in Medieval Romance Classics'***Spring. Credits: 4*

In this course we will read the canonical works that have shaped the national identity of European Romance countries such as Spain, France, Italy, Portugal, and Romania: from the medieval Chanson the Roland and Cantar del mio Cid to the early modern Don Quixote, Os Lusíadas, Orlando Furioso, and Mesterul Manole. We will discuss the performed masculinity of heroes, enemies, and mediators at the threshold between worlds. We will employ a decolonial critical approach to the Medieval, to question past and present wars against the infidel and their roles in the shaping of a modern European identity.

*Crosslisted as: SPAN-360HE, ITAL-361HE, FREN-321HE, ROMLG-375HE**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities**Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive**M. Lovato**Advisory: For Language Majors: two courses in culture and literature at the 200 level. Also open to non-language majors with no prerequisite.**Notes: Note: Students wishing to obtain 300-level credit in French, Italian, or Spanish must read texts and write papers in the Romance language for which they wish to receive credit.***MEDST-300MC Seminar in Medieval Studies: 'Premodern Christian-Muslim Encounters'***Spring. Credits: 4*

This course explores the multidimensional nature of Christian-Muslim social, religious, economic, and political relations before, during, and briefly after the Crusades in the modern-day territories of Palestine, Israel, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, the Balkans, North Africa, and the Iberian Peninsula. Most of the readings in this course were originally penned in Syriac, Greek, Arabic, and Castilian, though we will read them in English translation. We will also investigate the impact of the Crusades on Middle Eastern society in the past and will assess their relevance for the present by applying the critical resources of postcolonial and feminist theories.

*Crosslisted as: RELIG-337MC, HIST-301MC**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives**L. Salés**Restrictions: Course limited to sophomores, juniors and seniors***MEDST-395 Independent Study***Fall and Spring. Credits: 1 - 8**The department**Instructor permission required.*

## Related Courses

**Art History**

ARTH-222	Age of the Cathedrals: Gothic Art in Europe, 1100-1500	4
ARTH-271	Arts of Islam: Book, Mosque, and Palace	4

**English**

ENGL-213	The Literature of the Later Middle Ages	4
ENGL-214CM	Topics in Medieval Studies: 'The Curious Middle Ages'	4
ENGL-214LR	Topics in Medieval Studies: 'Love and Reason in Medieval Romance'	4
ENGL-215	Chaucer's Literary World	4
ENGL-311CT	Chaucer: 'The Canterbury Tales'	4

**History**

HIST-301MC	Colloquium: 'Premodern Christian-Muslim Encounters'	4
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**Medieval Studies**

MEDST-215	Chaucer's Literary World	4
MEDST-300MC	Seminar in Medieval Studies: 'Premodern Christian-Muslim Encounters'	4

**Music**

MUSIC-281	History of Western Music I	4
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**Politics**

POLIT-211	Classical Political Thought	4
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**Religion**

RELIG-337MC	Topics in the Study of Christianity: 'Premodern Christian-Muslim Encounters'	4
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