

HY25820/HY35820

European Society and the Medieval Mind

1200-1500



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Department of History and Welsh History

European Society and the Medieval Mind 1200-1500

Module outline

How did the people of the Middle Ages see the world around them? Can we learn about the worldview of a different period? This module will study the medieval understanding of the world, how they interpreted the world and their curiosity to discover more. By considering topics such as imagined ideas about the world, science, the treatment of outsiders and attempts to discover the world beyond Europe we will catch a glimpse at the 'medieval mind' and the impact of these ideas on society. The difference between the understanding of the educated and the rest of society will be discussed, as well as the possibility to challenge accepted wisdom. Various sources will be used, including visual material. By the end of the module you should have a better understanding of the people of the Middle Ages and appreciate the way that people in different periods have different ways of thinking about the world around them.



LECTURES

This module consists of 18 lectures, most of which will be pre-recorded and released twice a week, **on Mondays and Wednesdays at 10am** on the dates noted below. Some of the lectures will be held live over Teams, including the first lecture which will be held at **10.10am on Tuesday 26th January**.

Lectures will include short recordings and some brief activities for you. The lecture powerpoint and a handout with important terms and dates will also be provided. You are expected to watch all lectures, but **don't spend hours watching a lecture. The purpose of a lecture is to give you the main ideas and concepts, direct you towards relevant examples and serve as a basis for further research of your own. You should not be copying lectures word for word.** Lecture folders will sometimes include further resources as well but you are not expected to look at all of them; pick and choose which of these additional resources are most useful for you.

Lecture list:

1. Introduction: recognising medieval Europe (10.10am Tuesday 26th January)

Interpreting the world

2. Popular religion (27th January)
3. Structure of society (1st February)
4. Mapping the world (3rd February)
5. History (8th February)
6. Gender and sexuality (10th February)
7. The supernatural (15th February)

Membership of society

8. Identity (LIVE LECTURE, 9.10am Wednesday 17th February)
9. Persecuting the 'other' (22nd February)
10. Relationship with Islam (24th February)

Curiosity and discovery

11. Education (LIVE LECTURE, 9.10am Tuesday 9th March)
12. Universities (10th March)
13. Science and astronomy (15th March)
14. Medicine and the body (17th March)
15. Travelling beyond Europe (12th April)
16. Reading and the printing press (14th April)
17. The Age of Discovery (19th April)
18. Conclusion: understanding the 'medieval mind'? (LIVE LECTURE, 9.10am Wednesday 21st April)

SEMINARS

There will be **four seminars** of **one and a half hours each**. The details for each seminar can be found below. They will be **held over Teams** until in-person teaching resumes. Your attendance at seminars is compulsory and your participation essential, therefore it is very important that you **read the primary sources and make further research before every seminar**. Think about the context of the sources and consider differing opinions among historians in the field.

Seminars will be held in weeks 2 and 4 of teaching, the second week after reading week and the second week after the Easter holiday.

The **primary sources can be found on Blackboard**. The module bibliography, on *TalisAspire*, includes a list for each seminar topic. **All key texts for the seminars have been digitised.**

Seminar list:

1. Approaching the 'medieval mind'
2. Interpreting the world: knowledge and the imagination
3. Society: membership and the 'other'
4. Understanding the natural and supernatural world

Seminar 1: Approaching the Medieval Mind

The purpose of this seminar is to discuss how medieval Europeans thought about the world, consider their ideas and develop preliminary conclusions about the differences between medieval and modern perceptions of the world. This should form the basis for the discussions in following seminars. Key questions:

- What was the medieval worldview?
- What were the key factors that influenced how they understood the world?
- What was important to them?
- To what extent did their ideas about the world depend on their place within society?

Primary sources:

Mappa Mundi

Gerald of Wales, 'The Journey through Wales', book 1, chapter 1

Seminar 2: Interpreting the World: Knowledge and the Imagination

This seminar will consider how medieval Europeans interpreted the world (its history and geography) and society (hierarchy and gender). We will explore the basis of their

understanding and question to what extent it was based on knowledge, experience and discovery. The difference between reality and imagination will also be assessed. By using 'The Travels of Sir John Mandeville' we can consider the way in which different sources shaped the medieval interpretation of their world. Key questions:

- How important was the supernatural in the medieval mind?
- What sources and methods did they have to help them interpret the world?
- To what extent was the medieval understanding of the world based on a mixture of facts, myths and imagination?
- Does the medieval European perception of the world outside Europe highlight their understanding or their lack of understanding of the world?

Primary source:

'The Travels of Sir John Mandeville', chapters 31-4

Seminar 3: Society: Membership and the 'Other'

This seminar will explore what it meant to be a member of medieval society and to be excluded from that society. Medieval concepts of identity will be considered as well as the factors that affected identity. In order to understand membership of society we will also identify the 'others' which helped to define Christendom and assess the ways that Christians saw and treated those 'others'. Key questions:

- What did it mean to be a 'member' of medieval society?
- How did people see/define themselves?
- Who were at the margins of society or were excluded from society?
- Was Europe in the Middle Ages a persecuting society?
- What did Christians think of those who weren't part of Christendom?

Primary sources:

Selection of sources concerning Jews and heretics

Seminar 4: Understanding the Natural and Supernatural World

The aim of the seminar is to discuss the desire of medieval Europeans to seek a better understanding of the world around them. This was a period when new educational institutions were established, scientific enquiry was pursued and travellers ventured to previously unfamiliar parts of the world. They sought to understand the natural world, through science and medicine, and the supernatural, through theological studies at university. Key questions:

- Was curiosity an obvious feature of society?
- How did they try to develop their understanding of the world?
- What were the consequences of the development of educational institutions?

- To what extent were the years 1200 to 1500 a period of scientific and medical developments in Europe?
- To what extent did these developments have an impact on those who weren't educated?
- How original were medieval ideas? Did they mainly depend on the work of Classical writers?

Primary sources:

- Content of theological and medical courses at Paris
- Roger Bacon 'On Experimental Science'
- Selection of sources on medicine and the planets



Blackboard and *TalisAspire*

Remember to have a look regularly at the module's Blackboard page – lectures, primary sources and other materials can be found there as well as links to online resources and TV and radio programmes.

The module's bibliography can be found on *TalisAspire*. It is not expected that you look at every item listed here; however, it is more than likely that you will come across material which is not included here. Many resources are available online.

There are a number of useful TV programmes on the subject as well which can be seen by going to the 'TV and Radio Programmes' folder on Blackboard. The *Inside the Medieval Mind* programme, presented by Robert Bartlett, is especially good.

ASSIGNMENTS

The assignments on this module are similar for second-year and third-year students, but the assignments have different lengths.

HY25820: second-year students	HY35820: third-year students
<p>You are required to write one essay of 2,000 words, worth 50% of the final module mark.</p>	<p>You are required to write one essay of 2,500 words each, worth 50% of the final module mark.</p>
<p>The essay should be submitted on Turnitin by 12 midday on the following day:</p>	<p>The essay should be submitted on Turnitin by 12 midday on the following day:</p>
<p>Essay: Tuesday 20th April</p>	<p>Essay: Tuesday 20th April</p>
<p>At the end of the semester you are required to sit an open (or 'take-away') exam of 2,000 words. You will receive 4 days (96 hours) to answer one question. The exam mark will constitute 50% of the final mark of this module.</p>	<p>At the end of the semester you are required to sit an open (or 'take-away') exam of 2,500 words. You will receive 4 days (96 hours) to answer one question. The exam mark will constitute 50% of the final mark of this module.</p>

Submission of Essays

Essays are submitted electronically, via Blackboard and Turnitin. Please make yourself familiar with the procedure for electronic submission well before your first assignment deadline. Please note that you may revise and update your electronic submission right up to the deadline.

Essays should conform to the recommended word limit, and should be laid out and referenced in accordance with the Department of History and Welsh History style sheet, which is available in hard copy and in the department's Blackboard folder. Each piece of assessed work submitted in the department has a designated word length and these will vary according to the type of module and the nature of the assessment. These different word lengths are chosen carefully to develop and assess particular skills that you will require as historians and in the other activities you will undertake after leaving university. Shorter pieces of work will develop and test your ability to write incisively and concisely, while longer pieces of writing will allow you to demonstrate a breadth of scholarship and your ability to articulate a fuller argument. All assessments require that you make judgements about the relative importance of any aspect of the topics under consideration and devote as much space to them as their importance warrants and the word length allows.

For these reasons, the department operates a policy in which pieces of written work that are **10% below or above the designated word length** will incur a **penalty of 10%** of the awarded mark. The word length will be determined by the text of the piece of work itself and any footnotes, but will not include bibliographies.

Essay marks and written feedback are returned electronically no later than three weeks after the essay submission deadline. You will also be given the opportunity to discuss your essay individually with your module convenor in a scheduled personal essay tutorial. You are **very strongly advised** to make use of this opportunity for personal feedback.

Essay marks are provisional in the first instance, and are then moderated both internally and by the external examiner to the degree scheme. You will be notified if, after moderation, your essay mark is changed.

Late Submission

Please note that any work submitted after the deadline will be awarded a zero, in line with the University's policy on late submission. The only exceptions to this will be work which has been awarded an extension.

Extensions can only be granted where there are **clear medical/personal circumstances** that have affected your ability to submit coursework on time. If an extension is granted, it will be for **up to two weeks only**. If this will not be sufficient you are advised to follow the Special Circumstances procedure.

You should submit a Coursework Deadline Extension Request form (available on the department's Blackboard folder) to Dr Eryn White (erw@aber.ac.uk), the Part Two Tutor.

If your situation isn't covered by the description above or if the situation arises in the three days before the deadline, you are advised to follow the Special Circumstances procedure.

Advice on Essay Writing

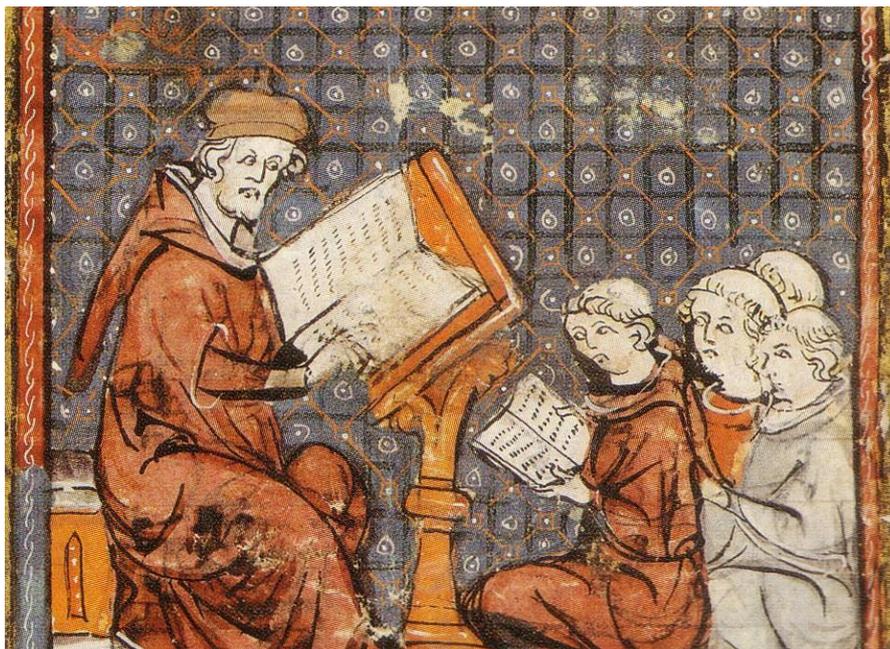
Remember the following when preparing and writing your essays:

- Answer the question (obvious but it can be easy to lose focus).
- Ensure that your essay has a clear structure.
- Keep to relevant matters, and analyse rather than providing a narrative.
- Conduct your own research and read a variety of sources.
- Use primary sources, and in a meaningful way.
- Engage with the historiography.
- Are there two opposing views to consider?
- Think for yourself – what is your opinion?

- Read over your work carefully.
- Look back at feedback from previous essays and pay attention to the comments.

Essay Questions

1. How 'Christian' was the population of Europe in the period 1200 to 1500?
2. To what extent did medieval Europeans feel able to oppose royal authority?
3. What does the Mappa Mundi reveal about thirteenth-century Europe's knowledge about the world outside Europe?
4. What were the reasons for writing history during the Middle Ages?
5. Were the lives of medieval women defined more by gender or status?
6. How important was belief in the supernatural for Europe's medieval population?
7. Is Southern correct to say that the medieval Church was a 'compulsory society'?
8. What were the most important factors in the medieval process of Europeanisation?
9. To what extent did the treatment of minorities vary in different parts of Europe?
10. Which factors were responsible for shaping Christians' views of Islam?
11. To what extent did all sections of medieval society have access to education?
12. What were the consequences of the development of universities?
13. Did the period 1200 to 1500 witness important developments in scientific understanding?
14. How widespread was literacy by the fifteenth century?
15. Was the European worldview transformed by the experiences of travellers to the east?
16. To what extent did the medieval worldview lead to the conquest of the New World from the fifteenth century onwards?



MARKING SCHEME: Year 2 & 3
Marking scheme for essays

Class	Mark range	Descriptive equivalent for essays
First Class Honours - I	80 and above An outstanding first	Intellectually mature, rigorous in argument and sophisticated in exposition, with independence and originality of interpretation. Thoroughly grounded in the literature and alert to wider (e.g. comparative, interdisciplinary, methodological) perspectives. A very discerning historiographical awareness, and sophisticated organisation of material. Clear evidence of the potential to undertake advanced research.
	75-79 A solid first	Demonstrates a high level of critical engagement with historical literature. Clear signs of originality of thought and sophistication in presenting an argument. Firm grasp of historiographical issues, and awareness of wider (e.g. comparative, interdisciplinary, methodological) perspectives. A perceptive and analytical approach sustained across the whole essay. Clearly and elegantly written and presented.
	70-74 A first which is borderline or just above	Identifies the key issues and analyses them critically, with a discerning historiographical awareness. Intelligent structure and persuasive argument. Elements of originality and high quality, but not sustained throughout. Identifies the key issues and analyses them critically, with some awareness of historiographical issues. A clearly structured argument, written readably, clearly and precisely. Some independent ideas expressed, and relevant supporting evidence presented. Draws on a wide range of reading, beyond the course reading lists where necessary, and uses such literature judiciously.
Upper Second Class Honours (II.i)	60-69	Intelligent awareness and cogent discussion of the issues. Clearly focussed, thoroughly and thoughtfully prepared. Judicious and well balanced in its synthesis of conflicting views. Methodical and businesslike in approach.
Lower Second Class Honours (II.ii)	50-59	Broadly relevant and competent, but uninspired in approach and pedestrian in structure and argument. May be uneven in its coverage due to limited range of reading. Some obvious derivations, omissions or misconceptions through either hurried or inadequate preparation. Tendency towards over-simplification.
Third Class Honours (III)	40-49	A shallow or misguided response based on little appropriate reading. Thinly expressed and argued little analytical awareness. Lacking in structure and direction. Some elements of unacceptable academic practice.
Borderline Fail	35-39	Some ideas on the period but few on the topic. Failure of understanding resulting in superficiality and frequent confusion. Poorly presented and/or organised. Elements of unacceptable academic practice.
Fail	20-34	Negligible or wholly irrelevant content. Failure to answer the question. Elements of unacceptable academic practice. Short measure
	11-19	Wholly irrelevant content. Very short measure. Failure to address the question. Significant unacceptable academic practice.
	1-10	Wholly irrelevant content. Extremely short measure. Substantial unacceptable academic practice
	0	No essay submitted. Extensive unacceptable academic practice.

Marking scheme for open examination

Class	Mark range	Description for take-away examination essays
First Class Honours - I	80 and above An outstanding first	Exceptional insight, sophistication and originality in incisive analytical discussion of salient issues. Addresses theoretical issues intelligently, and handles abstract concepts with facility. Stylishly written, persuasively argued, mature work, clearly indicating an ability to undertake advanced research.
	75 - 79 A solid first	A high level of critical engagement with the issues under consideration. Shows signs of originality and strong evidence of a capacity to pursue independent lines of enquiry, and to conduct perceptive and scholarly research.
	70 - 74 A first which is borderline or just above	Displays considerable powers of synthesis. Demonstrates ability to discuss salient issues analytically and incisively. May hint at originality. Evidence of sophistication predominates, but is not sustained throughout. May be marred by omission of evidence or argument of material significance.
Upper Second Class Honours (II.i)	60 - 69	Cogently argued, clearly focussed and well-organised. Illustrates broad trends within historiography by drawing on appropriate examples. Displays evidence of wide reading. May be marred by lack of balance, patchy treatment of salient points, or lack of penetration in analysis.
Lower Second Class Honours (II.ii)	50 - 59	Over-reliant either on non-specialist secondary literature or on one or two secondary works. Consequently tends either to convey the broad outlines of an argument without adequate illustrative material, or to become mired in detail at the expense of addressing broad trends and over-arching themes. Broadly relevant to the questions addressed, but may suffer from: elements of poor organisation; a tendency to drift away from the point or to oversimplify or neglect central issues; limited powers of expression.
Third Class Honours (III)	40 - 49	Some understanding of issues under consideration, but also frequently irrelevant or tangential. Affords inadequate evidence of familiarity with specific issues under consideration. May be insufficiently informed, or erroneous, in some matters of fact and interpretation. Poorly organised and/or expressed.
Borderline Fail	35 - 39	Signs of some things learned at a fairly elementary level, but for the most part confused and very poorly organised. Suffers from at least one of the following: poor preparation; inability to address the question; short measure; frequent syntactical collapse. Elements of unacceptable academic practice.
Fail	20 - 34	May show some basic knowledge, but unstructured and intellectually confused. Patently unprepared. Fails to answer the question. May suffer also from short measure and/or frequent syntactical collapse. Elements of unacceptable academic practice.
	11-19	Fails to address the question and/or intellectually undeveloped. Short measure. Poor standard of literacy. Significant unacceptable academic practice.
	1 - 10	Extremely short measure. Wholly irrelevant. Very poor standard of literacy. Substantial unacceptable academic practice.
	0	No answer submitted. Extensive unacceptable academic practice.

