

Medieval Studies Launch Speech:

Hello everyone. My name is Amanda Zafar and I would like to say a few words from a student's perspective regarding the new Medieval Studies minor. I'm in my second year intending to double major in Classical Studies and Comparative Literature, and this year, with a minor in Medieval Studies as well. My classmates and I have had the privilege of taking Professor Toswell's Introduction to Medieval Studies, which gave us a very good understanding of the various features of the medieval period from different scholarly perspectives. The interdisciplinary nature of this course and the field in general allows us to engage with the medieval period by looking at the material culture: through the archaeological finds, the art and architecture, as well as through the historical documents, the literature and the music. In fact, we have had the wonderful opportunity to examine some of these beautiful medieval manuscripts first hand, which we were *way* too excited about! I think studying the middle ages is valuable for any student of the humanities or social science when exploring how thought evolved from the ancient world and continued to change and develop leading into modern times, as well as identifying the distinct characteristics of the medieval period, that can sometimes shatter some of our preconceived notions of the era. I think it's wonderful how the medieval studies minor connects different threads from different departments and faculties, which gives many students the opportunity to broaden their educational horizons and challenge our way of thinking, whether we study philosophy, learn a medieval language, study the development of technology, or analyse the art and literature. Last semester I enjoyed reading the Nibelungenlied, Tristan, as well as some (always entertaining) medieval love poetry in Prof. Adamson's Literature and Culture of the Middle Ages. We also looked at

the daily life of the medieval individual, which opened up a dialogue about class structure and gender roles, as well as many other concerns still present today. In fact, I think one of my favourite parts about studying the middle ages this year was becoming aware of the myriad of ways the medieval period is still relevant, with institutions surviving today such as the university, aspects of our legal system, and literary works that we still cherish and connect with. Cathedrals are still very much in use today, as well as popular pilgrimage routes such as the Santiago de Compostella, all of which are monuments of the medieval period we are still engaging with. Including Medieval Studies in my degree has definitely opened up the prospect of further graduate study for me in this field, and I'm sure it would inspire many others as the medieval studies module continues to develop. I am very fortunate that all my efforts in my undergraduate degree has been fulfilling in my educational interests which happily coincide with my personal interests, and studying the middle ages has really been a valuable part of that. Thank you.