

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO  
FACULTY OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES

**Medieval Studies 1022**

M.J. Toswell  
University College 2418  
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2026-2027

Mondays 5:30-8:30 p.m.

Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:30 - 5:30 in person or on zoom

**Academic Calendar Description**

This foundation course will over the year introduce civilization and thought in Europe and the Mediterranean between 400 and 1500, with emphasis on the medieval roots of many modern institutions and attitudes, including philosophy, technology, law, governance, courtly love and attitudes to women, warfare, art and archaeology, Christianity and Islam, literature, music and coinage. 3 hours, 1.0 course



\$27.70

**Course Description**

This course introduces the Middle Ages, looking at the major developments of technology and ideas, of religion and the development of countries and nations.

The course this year will investigate five elements of the medieval world in some detail: the obsession with spices, especially from the East, in the European Middle Ages for many purposes; the so-called “last duel” in France in the late fourteenth century; a gender-bending and swash-buckling French romance of the thirteenth century; medieval bodies including the health and welfare of individual body parts; and the role of the university in the high Middle Ages—addressing in particular the lives and choices of students.

**Required Textbooks:**

Paul Freedman, *Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008). \$36.37.

Jack Hartnell, *Medieval Bodies: Life, Death and Art in the Middle Ages* (London: Wellcome Collection, 2019).

Eric Jager, *The Last Duel* (New York: Broadway Books 2005). \$16.77.

Sarah Roche-Mahdi, tr. *Silence: A Thirteenth-Century French Romance* (Ann Arbor: Michigan State UP, 1999). \$19.98.

Miri Rubin, *The Middle Ages: A Very Short Introduction*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2014). \$14.00.

*Optional Texts:*

Hunt Janin, *The University in Medieval Life, 1179-1499* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009). \$45.55.

M.J. Toswell, *Today's Medieval University* (London: ARC Humanities Press, 2017). *Note I will be providing this text on the course website for you to download or print; it seems to me quite unethical to charge you for a book I've written myself so you will have the last set of proofs for our purposes. However, the Bookstore is bringing in some copies in case you want them.* \$21.95.

*Further on textbooks:* I do not have a preference for paper or ebooks. These books, however, are not especially easy to track down so if you can buy from the campus bookstore, please do so. If you do buy an ebook for one or more of these texts, please remember that you will not have access to it during the in-class writing assignments (unless you print out the pages that you want).

**Course Evaluation:**

The final grade will be calculated as follows:

Christmas exam	25%
Final Examination	35%
In-class written assignments, best 3 @ 10%	30%
Quizzes best 5 @ 1%	5%
Participation	5%

**Christmas and Final Examinations:** The December and April examinations will have short-answer and identification questions amounting to about 25% of the total, and short and long essay questions whose value will be about 75% of the total. Sample midterms and final examinations will be posted as study aids. Both exams will be scheduled by the Registrar's office.

**In-class Written Assignments:** These in-class writing assignments will occur six times during the year, of which the best three will be counted in the final grade. You can bring and use paper notes, texts, and other written materials, but no electronic devices. We will discuss these assignments in the class beforehand and determine what topics you are most interested in. To make sure you do your own original writing, I will tweak the questions and give you two options to write about for an hour during class. The questions will be relevant to the material studied in class in recent weeks, but you can certainly prepare for them with extra research and reading. We will count the best three of these at 10% each.

**Quizzes:** These will be random quizzes in class at various points through the year, mostly so that I can figure out if you are following the course materials. There will be at least seven of these, of which the best five will count at 1% each.

**Participation:** These marks will be for attendance at the whole class, evidence of having completed the class preparation, and for good contributions to class discussions. Good contributions need not be lengthy or frequent; they should however be respectful of the class environment, engaged with the material, investigative in nature, and relevant to the issue currently under discussion. 5%

## **My contact information:**

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*Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:30-5:30 p.m. in person or on zoom*

I am in the office at other times so do feel free to drop by, **but** avoid my office in the hour before I am teaching. That is prep and panic time. I do tend to have a lot of meetings on campus, and a lot of zoom meetings as well, so I am around a lot. If I'm available, the door will be open.

I use email as my principal mode of contact, so use that first to check in with me, please. Bear in mind the following points, though: the answer to your query might be in the course outline, the course outline is the final authority, you should use your UWO email as I do not want to know that you have an email address called "fluffypajamas," you should start an email with a proper salutation, I answer quickly if an answer is needed, and you probably only get one email answered so all your points and issues should be in that email.

## **Course Syllabus (draft):**

- Sept 14 Introduction. Beginnings and endings  
    Introduction to manuscripts  
    Introduction to universities  
21 Chartres Riot 1210, timeline of the Middle Ages  
    Charles Homer Haskins, *The Rise of the Medieval University*  
28 Haskins  
    Toswell, *Today's Medieval University*
- Oct 5 Universities segment concluded  
    In-class essay 1  
19 Miri Rubin, *The Middle Ages*  
26 Rubin
- Nov 2 Rubin  
    In-class essay 2  
9 Hartnell, *Medieval Bodies*  
16 Hartnell  
23 Hartnell  
30 Hartnell  
    In-class essay 3
- Dec 7 Medieval manuscripts
- Jan 4 Medieval manuscripts  
11 Visit to Weldon Library (if possible)  
18 *Silence*, ed. and trans. Sarah Roche-Mahdi  
25 *Silence*  
    In-class essay 4
- Feb 1 Eric Jager, *The Last Duel*  
8 Jager  
    In-class essay 5  
22 Paul Freedman, *Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination*

Mar 1 Freedman

8 Freedman

15 Freedman

22 Freedman

In-class essay 6

29 Christianity and Islam, Battles and Celebrations, Kings and Queens, Martyrs, Patriarchs, Hermits.

Apr 5 Review and discussion

Final examination as scheduled by registrar's office

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