

## Global Medievalism

Medievalism, the study of the reception and re-creation of the Middle Ages, became a formal subject of study about fifty years ago. For several decades the field was dominated by British and American scholars and critics interested in anglophone medievalism, with occasional forays into continental European responses to the historical period from 500-1500 (or perhaps 1600). Theoretical paradigms and methodological approaches developed out of this tradition, and worked best when focused on it. Moreover, this medievalism constructs the Middle Ages very specifically through a nineteenth-century lens, bringing to bear a kind of double lens on the period through the initial discovery and editing of many texts by Romantic and Victorian aficionados of the period.

In recent years, however, both the Middle Ages and medievalism have gone both global and popular. Australia and New Zealand are suddenly attracting serious analysis, and the medievalism of France and Germany and Italy – always present but somewhat muted in voice – has stepped forward as well. Hispanic and Hispanoamerican medievalism is, in the present moment, gathering serious momentum with conferences in Brazil and Argentina, serious studies of the medievalism of Jorge Luis Borges, and several recent analyses laying out the different parameters of medievalism in the global context. Consideration of the medieval in the modern world also now involves more profound thinking about architecture, structures such as universities and other public institutions, and intellectual history (including, for example, analysis of the origins of white supremacist movements).

The shift to popular medievalism has given rise to more effervescent engagements with the medieval in modern media including television and film, graphic novels and videogames. Thinking about the medieval has become untethered to the “real” medieval in ways that are both fascinating and disturbing. Fantasy literature, for example, profoundly works from a medievalist paradigm, yet rarely acknowledges the debt.

This course will introduce the principal concepts of medievalism, using the oft-cited *Ivanhoe* by Sir Walter Scott as a starting point before turning to several more recent texts such as Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Buried Giant*, and Orhan Pamuk’s *My Name is Red*. The course will then turn to recent scholarship on global medievalism with consideration of Jorge Luis Borges and then of recent worldwide engagements with medievalism as a political tool. We will finish with more broad-based considerations of the medieval at work in the modern day.