

**Carleton University
Fall 2020**

**College of the Humanities:
Medieval and Early Modern Studies**

MEMS 2001: Discovering the Medieval and Early Modern Past

Prerequisites: None

**Location: *Online; Blended Course*
Mondays and Wednesdays, 10:05-11:25am**

**Professor: Dr. S. Bly Calkin
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Office Hours: TBD**

*Preliminary Course Description:
Please check back in September 2020 for full syllabus*

Course Description:

Are you interested in the medieval and early modern past, and how it is imagined today? Would you like to make a medieval quill and try writing with it? Do you want to discover how scholars study the world as it was between 500 and 1700 CE? Do you want to learn more about what was actually happening then and how those centuries infuse the world around us today? If so, then this is the course for you.

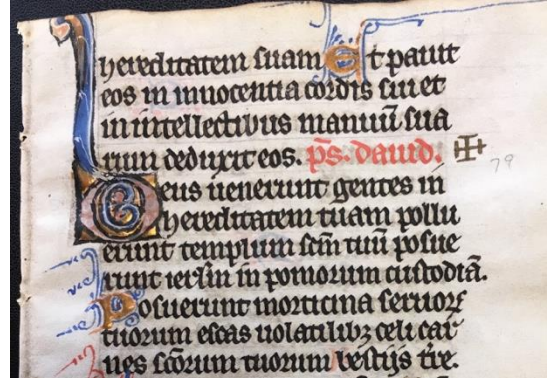
MEMS 2001 introduces students to the arcane world of the medieval and early modern past, preparing you for more advanced interdisciplinary research in the field. We focus initially



on popular representations of the medieval past, which reveal broad themes about modern understandings of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. But our larger goal is to question these images of the medieval and early modern world, to excavate some of that world's intellectual origins and global historical realities, and to learn how the rich tapestry of medieval and early-modern culture is studied today.

We will begin by reading and talking about what we think the medieval and early modern periods are, where they turn up in the contemporary world, and what pre-conceptions we have about these periods.

In late September we will move to a unit entitled Researching the Medieval and Early Modern Worlds I: People, Places, Things, and Events, and what Secondary Sources Can Tell You About Them. In this unit, students will learn through their own project work what a trustworthy scholarly source is, how to find and access such sources for the medieval and early modern periods, and what these sources say about some key events, people, places, and things from the period 500-1700 CE.



In November, we move to the final unit, entitled Touching the Past, or Researching the Medieval and Early Modern Worlds II: Primary Sources and How to Approach Them. In this unit, we will learn about manuscripts, early print texts, and other direct material records of the medieval and early modern past, and consider how people today use media and material culture from that past to learn about life back then. We will participate in some virtual workshops on quill-making and printing, work digitally with manuscript and early print holdings from the Library's Rare Books Department, and hear from professors in different disciplines about what they study and how. Topics presented by our guest lecturers will include Studying Disease in the Medieval and Early Modern Worlds, Medieval and Early Modern Music, and Encounters with Medieval and Early Modern Architecture.

Course Objectives:

This year, students in MEMS 2001 will:

- Explore how our contemporary popular culture creates persuasive representations of the Middle Ages and Early Modernity
- Reflect on how these representations are partial and often in disagreement with how scholars view the same time and culture
- Identify, find, and access scholarly studies about the peoples, places, events, and/or objects of the medieval and early modern worlds
- Research, design, and write brief scholarly introductions to their chosen person, group, place, event, or object from the medieval and early modern worlds
- Learn about some of the media and material culture dating from the medieval and early modern periods (manuscripts, quills, printing, music, narratives, images, buildings)
- Discover what questions scholars ask of such media and material culture, and how they go about answering them

Among other things we will consider:

- how medieval people and creatures we think we know (e.g. knights, Robin Hood, King Arthur, dragons) differ from their manifestations in the Middle Ages
- how multilingualism and multiculturalism were as much part of the medieval and early modern worlds as they are today

- how difficult it is to read and understand medieval writing, texts, and languages today
- how globally diffuse the medieval and early modern worlds were
- how we probably would not get along very well with a medieval or early modern person, were we to meet them
- how medieval and early modern people are racist, misogynist and nationalist in different ways than you would think, and why people today need to think about invocations of the past, their accuracy or inaccuracy, and the political and socio-political ends to which the medieval and early modern past are put today

Statement About Online Delivery in Fall 2020:

This course usually includes a great deal of small group work and active participation in class meetings even though most of the evaluations assess individual work. While the nature of interaction will change due to online delivery, students should be prepared for a class that blends some pre-recorded content with synchronous meetings online, likely via Big Blue Button, which is similar to Zoom but embedded into CULearn.

Synchronous meetings will occur during our set meeting time but will be recorded for students with scheduling and time zone challenges. Students will sometimes be asked to interact with each other in small groups either during our set virtual meeting times or at other times that they will mutually arrange with other classmates who cannot attend class while it is “live.”

I have chosen this blended model of online delivery because it best allows me to re-create virtually some of the elements students identified as very enjoyable components of the course in the past:

- small group discussions;
- live lectures with the chance to ask questions, engage the professor directly, and discuss some of the key ideas presented
- encounters with some of the products and technology of the pre-modern period.

If you have any questions, please contact me (Professor Calkin) at siobhain.calkin@carleton.ca.

Required Text:

- Marcus Bull. *Thinking Medieval: An Introduction to the Study of the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave, 2005). ISBN: 978-1403912954 (paperback) or ISBN 978-0-230-50157-7 (e-book)

Other required readings and/or viewing will be available from online sources or ARES (the library’s electronic reserves system).

Please note:

I will place an order for our paperback text through the student-run Haven Books near campus (43 Seneca Street), which sells used and new books. During Covid-19 Haven has moved to an online model of selling books in which they offer shipping across North America and free curbside pickup (tel: 613-730-9888 /e-mail: havenbooks@cusaonline.ca; www.havenbooks.ca). You may also order the book directly from the publisher (www.palgrave.com) or seek a copy from your preferred online booksellers.

****Please make sure to obtain your book in late August so that you have received it and can start the readings promptly in September when classes start****

Evaluation:

Unit 1 Critical Reflection: How We Think About the Middle Ages and Renaissance 5%

(500-word written reflection on what brought you to the course, what your ideas of the medieval and/or early modern were, and how they intersect with trends identified in class and by scholars in your readings. Use MLA or Chicago style to cite readings in your bibliography. NOTE: bibliography is not part of word count).

Unit 2: Research Project

50%

(A multi-part research assignment designed to introduce students to: a) the process of identifying, locating and accessing scholarly knowledge of the medieval and early modern periods, and b) some of the key places, people, things and events from 500-1700CE. Students will choose their own unique topics from a list circulated in class. The professor will guide students through each discrete task and more detailed descriptions of each component/requirement will be distributed during the term.)

Breakdown of 50%:

Part 1: Annotated Bibliography 5%

(A bibliography containing both the bibliographic entries and a 3-4 sentence annotation of each entry for 3 scholarly sources and 1 medieval image related to your specific topic.)

Part 2: Preliminary Draft Report 5%

(A 250-500 word + image/media (if desired) draft of your report on your research topic. Due on CUPortfolio; will be posted to class)

Part 3: Communication of Research to Class via Group Timeline Presentation 10%

(A presentation of basic information about your medieval/early modern topic as part of a small group timeline presentation. You will be responsible for the portion of the presentation showcasing your topic and will be assessed both on that individual portion and on the overall clarity, cohesiveness and effectiveness of the group's presentation)

Part 4: Feedback on other group members' Draft Reports 5%

(100-200 word long comment on each draft report by the other members of your small group. Will be assessed on civility, constructiveness and thoughtfulness of post as well as on timely completion.)

Part 5: Personal Reflection on Feedback 5%

(100-250 word reflection upon feedback your draft report received and what you plan to do to revise your report for final submission based on that feedback and your own thoughts after your oral presentations.)

Part 6: Final Polished Research Report 20%

*(1000-1250 words +media polished final version of report on your assigned topic. **Due on CUPortfolio; will be shared with class as resource for final exam revision. All sources must be cited in a bibliography at the bottom of your report/page using either MLA or Chicago style format. NOTE: Bibliography does not count towards word count).***

Unit 3: Primary Sources Work

5%

(Transcription of assigned manuscript page portion.)

Final Examination

30%

(will be scheduled during final examination period; will likely include short answer questions, essay question(s) and some sort of timeline construction)

Class Participation

10%

- *You are expected to participate in small group work and small group discussions. You will be able to participate in these either synchronously in break-out chatrooms during our Big Blue Button meetings or, if you cannot attend those meetings, in asynchronous discussion forums on CULearn*
- *You are expected to complete any assigned worksheets on class meetings*
- *You are expected to meet your presentation and group work commitments (barring illness, bereavement etc.).*
- *You are expected to complete all assignments*
- *You are expected to complete occasional small individual participation assignments such as this one: e-mail me a photo of your favourite medieval or early modern thing before the second class meeting*

*****Why am I Making You Use CUPortfolio?**

CUPortfolio allows students to use media of different sorts to communicate their scholarly research in whatever ways they find compelling. In other words, CUPortfolio allows you to be more creative than a Word document would and to do things such as include images or maps. CUPortfolio also allows us to share research. Your projects will be the items we plot on our timeline of the medieval and early modern periods. Sharing research on CUPortfolio allows us to create a shared textbook for our timeline—and will help you when reviewing the materials of

Unit 2 for the final examination. Be aware that some questions on the exam will require you to deploy your own and some of your colleagues' research; access to the CUPortfolio reports will allow you to flesh out and correct your notes from the various presentations as you prepare for the final exam.

N.B. Training in the use of CUPortfolio will be provided as part of the course.