In this course we will focus on the composition of historical texts and saints’ lives in the early Middle Ages and identify some of the objectives of the rare medieval authors who took on the task of studying and recording the events in their own time and the centuries preceding. Some of the primary questions that will concern us include: Why was there a concern with describing the past, especially the Christian past? How did the attitudes of clerics who wrote history shape the identity of literate and illiterate Christian populations in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages? How did their perceived audiences affect the way in which they composed such texts? How did the content and propaganda of such texts vary when written about women or for female audiences? Moreover, how are modern historians to use such records of the past which by our standards are far from “objective”? Should miracles and dreams, which form a part of the historical evidence used in these texts, be applied to our interpretation of early medieval society? Finally, these texts may be applied to asking larger questions regarding the early Middle Ages, particularly with respect to the meaning of Christian conversion.

Readings for the course are mandatory and should be completed prior to class sessions; on the whole, there will be roughly 80-250 pages of reading for each meeting. The purpose of these readings is to acquaint students with the themes of particular period, and the contents of these texts are to be read critically for broad content (rather than for every detail). As it is a seminar, the course will consist of a mixture of introductory lectures as well as group discussions; reading assignments will aid participation in the discussions, and will thus contribute both directly (participation grade) and indirectly (ability to assess the information provided in class) to the grade for the course.

9 January

Introduction: Historiographical Dilemmas in Describing the Transformation of the Roman West

16 January  
** DISTRIBUTION OF FIRST ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS **
Hagiographical Accounts of Christian Communities in the Late Antique West


23 January  
Manuscripts and Missionary Work: Christian Conversion of the Barbarian West

# Geary, *Before France and Germany*, pp. 77-149.

30 January  
Writing Universal History in a Time of Barbarians

Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, Book III (Google Books).
A. H. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 35-64. (electronic reserve)

6 February  
** FIRST ESSAY ASSIGNMENT DUE **
** DISTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH ESSAY ASSIGNMENT **
Writing Barbarian Histories

READING: # Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, translated by Lewis

13 February
**Writing about Women as Christian Leaders and Saints**

20 February
**RESEARCH ESSAY PROPOSAL DUE**
**Building Myths of the Anglo-Saxon Past**

27 February
**RESEARCH ESSAY BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**
**Monastic Rules and Penitentials as Historical Sources**
The *Rule of St Benedict* prologue, chaps. 1-8; 20-60. [http://www.osb.org/rb/text/toc.html#toc](http://www.osb.org/rb/text/toc.html#toc)

6 March
**Spring Break (No Class)**
13 March  **RESEARCH ESSAY OUTLINE DUE**

**Literacy as Power**

READING: # Jo Ann McNamara and John E. Halborg, ed. and trans., “Radegund, Queen of the Franks and Abbess of Poitiers (ca. 525-587)” and “Balthild, Queen of Neustria (d. ca. 680),” in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, pp. 60-105; 264-278.


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20 March  **Revising the Merovingian Past**

READING: The Dying Art of Poetry and Epigraphy


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27 March  **FIRST DRAFT OF RESEARCH ESSAY DUE**

**Revising History**


Felice Lifshitz, *The Norman Conquest of Pious Neustria*: 4

3 April No Class (Meet with Peer Critique Partner and Begin Revisions)

10 April ** RETURN OF FIRST DRAFT AND PEER REVIEWS **
The Heroic Past and Oral Culture

17 April Anglo-Saxon Missionaries and Manuscript Production

24 April ** SECOND DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPER DUE **
New Ways of Thinking about Early Medieval History
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

FIRST ESSAY
On 16 January, an assignment for a short essay (five pages) will be distributed; the essay will involve the assessment and analysis of a primary document. This assignment will be due on 6 February, and is worth 20% of the course grade. Any essay found to contain plagiarized material will receive an automatic 0 and will be dealt with in accordance with university policy. Late essays will only be accepted without penalty with prior permission of the instructor; otherwise, 1/3 of a letter grade will be deducted each day (including weekends) that the essay is late.

RESEARCH ESSAY
Each student will select a topic in early medieval history reflective of his or her own interest; the paper will assess a primary source (or sources) from the period 300-1000 CE. S/he will implement the core concepts discussed in class in an original research paper of 15-20 pages (two drafts required). This essay will constitute the main requirement of this course, and will count for 60% of the final grade. Each student will need to seek instructor approval after 6 February, when the assignment is distributed. The topic proposal (due 20 February), bibliography (due 27 February), and outline (due 13 March), although not graded, will be considered mandatory requirements for the research essay and no grade will be given until they are complete. The first draft of the essay, due 27 March, will be worth 20% of final grade, written critiques of a fellow student’s rough draft will be due 10 April (5% of grade), and the second draft, due 24 April, will be worth 35% of the grade. A formal note from a physician will be necessary for late essays; otherwise, 1/3 of a letter-grade will be subtracted for each day that the paper is late. Papers which demonstrate evidence of cheating or plagiarism from other sources (including your colleagues in the course) will not be tolerated, and will be handled in accordance with university policy.

PARTICIPATION
Class participation (20%) will be judged on the basis of consistent attendance and active contribution to the ongoing discussion of the material read for the course. Students will provide a response on a specified session of class during the semester. They will also be asked to give a brief presentation on their research paper as it progresses: this will consist of a synopsis and identification of the central problems they addressed in their research. Both of these assignments along with weekly participation in discussions will factor into the class participation grade. More than three absences in this course will constitute grounds for an automatic failure in this seminar.

GRADING SCALE
It is policy of the Department of History that students have only one opportunity to complete the History Research Seminar successfully (grade of C or better). Those who withdraw from or fail the course cannot register for another seminar.
Grade Values for Conversion May 11, 2009 and After

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<th>A</th>
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<th>B</th>
<th>B-</th>
<th>C+</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>C-</th>
<th>D+</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>D-</th>
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**COMMENTS**

I look forward to stimulating discussions, and encourage you to come to office hours with any questions or issues which come up during lecture, discussion or in the course of your readings.