

**Humanities 214: Medieval and Renaissance Worlds**  
**Spring 2009**

Instructor: Dr. Harriette Grissom  
Class meets Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6 - 7:45

**Core Texts**

- (Fiero 2, 3, and 4) Volumes 2, 3, 4 of Gloria Fiero, *The Humanistic Tradition*, 5th ed. Vol 2 was also used in Hum 124. Vol. 4 will be used in Hum. 324, so students should keep it.
- (AR) The Asheville Reader, *The Medieval and Renaissance World*, 2nd. Ed., ed. Ho, McClain, Sawin, and Spellman.
- *Othello*, Folger Shakespeare Library edition
- Sundiata* (Niane ed., 7th or 8th edition) from the campus bookstore.

*Tentative Syllabus*

**Week 1-**The Ancient Roots of the Medieval World

**Assignment:** Review Fiero, Chap. 8; begin Fiero Chap. 9;

Jan. 15: Introduction to the course;

**Week 2-** Early Christianity: Rome and the Byzantine World

**Assignment:** AR: Procopius (16-27); Ibn Khaldun (140-7); On electronic reserve: Excerpt from Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah*

Jan. 20: Early Christianity: Rome and the Byzantine World

*From Jesus to Christ*

Jan. 22: Possible discussion: *Making history—who defines history and why?*

Lecture on the Byzantine world

**Week 3-** Community and Authority in the Medieval West

**Assignment:** Fiero V.2, ch 11; AR: Benedict (2-15); Einhard (28-36); selected analects of Confucius (on hand out); excerpt from the *Book of Kings* (electronic reserves)

Jan. 27: Lecture by Professor Gillum (recorded)

Discussion: Monasticism and Spiritual Authority

Excerpt from *Into Great Silence*

Jan. 29: Kingship and Secular Authority

Possible discussion: *What makes a person qualified a person to rule? What do we look for in leaders today?*

**Week 4-** Islam and The Muslim World

**Assignment:** Fiero V.2, ch. 10; "Conflict between Faith and Science in the Middle Ages" (electronic reserves)

Feb. 3: Understanding Islam

Possible discussion: *What is the relationship between religion and the state?*

Feb. 5: Medieval Europe and Muslim Civilization

Possible discussion: *How does a person (or a society) resolve the tension between rationality and science and religious faith?*

**Week 5-** Science, Religion and the Rise of the University

**Assignment:** Fiero V.2, ch. 12; AR: Aquinas (107-13); Clare of Assisi (66-71); The Medieval Church (72-79); special attention to Augustine's *Confessions*, Fiero, 20 and Hildegard's *Know the Ways*, Fiero, 94-95.

Feb. 10: Lecture by Professor Wilson (recorded)

Possible discussion based on reading: *How do we know what we know?*

Feb. 12: Intro to Dante

**Assignment:** Read Dante selections in Fiero, pp.106-110;

**FOCUS PAPER # 1 DUE**

**Week 6-** Peace and War for the Glory of God: Cathedrals and Crusades

**Assignment:** Fiero V.2, ch. 13; assorted Crusades readings (electronic reserve) *Selection*

Feb. 17: Discussion of Dante continued (*Distribute info on special projects*)

The Impact of the Crusades

Feb. 19: The Impact of the Crusades, continued

*Generate debate topic*

**Cultural Event #1 Due**

**Week 7-** From Xi'an to Kyoto: the Cultural Heritage of Asia

**Assignment:** Fiero V. 2, ch. 14, pp 152-170; AR: Sei Shonagon (172-183); Assorted poetry by Du Fu and Li Bo (electronic texts or handouts)

Feb. 24: Marco . . . (Polo!) and the Silk Road

**Special Project Topic Due**

Feb. 26: Art, Religion and Power in the Tang and Heian Courts; Tang Dynasty poetry

**Week 8-** Medieval India

**Assignment:** Fiero V.2, ch. 14, pp. 144-151; assorted readings on electronic reserve

Mar. 3: Power Point Presentation on Indian art and culture

Mar. 5: **Midterm exam**

**Week 9:** SPRING BREAK (Mar.9-13)

**Week 10-** Best-selling Authors, Cross-dressing Warriors, and Other Uppity Women of the Middle Ages

**Assignment:** Fiero, vol. 3, ch. 15. AR: Hildegard and Marie de France (38-57); Letters of Abelard and Heloise (84-98); Christine de Pisan (117-23); Nogarola (188-199); in Fiero, focus on excerpt from *Summa Theologica* (114-15) and Pope Innocent III "On the Misery of the Human Condition" (96-97);

Mar. 17: Women, the Body and Religion in the Middle Ages

Lecture by Cindy Ho (recorded)

Mar. 19: DEBATE

**Annotated Bibliography Due for Special Project**

**Week 11** European Humanism and Renaissance Art

**Assignment:** Fiero V.3, ch. 16 & 17

Mar. 24: Self-invention in Renaissance Europe

**Assignment:** Special attention to the following excerpts in Fiero V.3, ch. 16: Excerpt from Machiavelli; Alberti's "On the Family"; Pico's "Oration on the Dignity of Man"; Castiglione's "Book of the Courtier"; Marinella's "The Nobility and Excellence of Women and the Defects of Men";

**(Mar 25<sup>th</sup> is the last day to withdraw with a "W")**

Mar. 26: The artist as genius

**Assignment:** AR, Vasari (221-229) Possible topic for discussion: *How is the artist seen in contemporary society?*

PBS video on the Medici #1

### **Week 12-** Reformations

**Assignment:** Fiero V. 3, ch. 19; AR: Grumbach (217-20), Calvin (256-66)

Mar. 31: Background to the Reformation: PBS video on the Medici #2

Martin Luther and the restlessness of Northern Europe

### **FOCUS PAPER #2 DUE**

Apr. 2: Divergent concepts of "the individual": Italian Renaissance compared to Northern Renaissance

Possible topic for discussion: *Ways of understanding the individual*

### **Week 13-** Counter-Renaissance and *Othello*

**Assignment:** *Othello*, paperback.

Apr. 7: The film *O*

Apr. 9: Looking more closely at *Othello*: *How important is race in Othello?*

### **Week 14-** African Cultural Spheres

**Assignment:** Fiero, vol. 3, ch. 18 (African section, 85-103). AR: Al Omari, Pires, Affonso of Kongo (150-62). *Sundiata, an Epic of Old Mali*

Apr. 14: The History of West Africa: Why we know so little

Basil Davidson on African History (recording)

Apr. 16: Discussion of *Sundiata*; excerpts from *Keita: The Heritage of the Griot*

### **Week 15-** The Americas to the 1600s

**Assignment:** Fiero, vol. 3, ch. 18, pp. 103-120. AR: Columbus and Poma (350-71), Montaigne "Of Cannibals" (296-306).

Apr. 21: Colonization and "the Other" (focus on Montaigne);

### **FOCUS PAPER #3 DUE**

Apr. 23: The Americas prior to Columbus (slide lecture)

**Assignment:** AR: Hernando Desoto, "Appalachian Travels" (372-380)

### **Week 16-** Monday Apr. 27: Royal Absolutism and the Baroque (Sousa)

**Assignment:** Fiero vol. 4, ch. 21. AR: James VI and I (286-95), Mornay (278-85), and Elizabeth I (267-77)

Apr. 28: Discussion

**Cultural Event #3 Due**

April 30: Discussion

**Project Summary Due**

**Take-home final exam distributed (due during final exam period)**

**\*Note: To access HUM 214 electronic reserves, follow these steps:**

1. Go to Ramsey Library home page: <http://bullpup.lib.unca.edu/library/>
2. On the left-hand side of the web page, click “Course Reserves”
3. On the Course Reserves page, click on the “By Course” link
4. In the “Course Name or Number Search” box, type “Hum 214”
5. On the search results page, there will be a link entitled “UNCA Permanent.” Click on this link.
6. On the next page, click the “HUM 214 Electronic Reserves” link.
7. After clicking on the above link, you will see a list of all of the HUM 214 electronic reserves texts.
8. After clicking on the title you choose, you will be asked to enter your name and your student ID number. Then click the “Submit” button and you will then be able to access the text you choose.

### **About the Course**

**Overview:** This course examines the ideas, values, and world views of the Medieval and Renaissance periods, beginning with the fall of Rome and ending with the rise of European political absolutism. The Middle Ages are often relegated to the basement of the Western historical narrative, characterized in popular literature and film as either a fairy tale or a benighted time of superstition, backwardness, wretched living conditions, and intellectual stagnation—the “shadow” of Modernity. In this course we will see that this is far from true. The unique combination of influences that shaped the Middle Ages also sparked the European Renaissance and led to the rise of the West as a defining global force. Many of the conceptual questions and political challenges that perplexed medieval thinkers are still with us. In our explorations we will also consider the artistic, economic and intellectual connections among Europe, Africa, and Asia, beginning with the pivotal interactions between Christianity and Islam.

### **Course Objectives:**

- Understand some of the key ideas, events, accomplishments, and historical figures of the Western Middle Ages and Renaissance
- Gain an awareness of the cultures of Africa and Asia at this time and of their economic and intellectual significance for Europe
- Recognize and evaluate differing worldviews and values, both past and present
- Develop critical abilities in reading, writing, thinking, and discussion
- Become acquainted with divergent ethical values and refine your ability to make reasoned judgments about ethical problems and issues
- Refine your ability to discuss controversial and sensitive intellectual topics thoughtfully and with respect for divergent views
- Develop the ability to see connections between different disciplines and methods of analysis

### **Course Requirements:**

\* **Attendance** at lectures and class discussions is crucial. The material of the lectures will be central to our class discussions, and much of the learning of the course will come through our work as group.

\* **Read the assigned material** and be prepared to discuss it.

\* **Class participation:** Each student will generate one or two questions in response to each week's lecture and/or reading, *due as you leave the Monday lecture*. We will decide as a class which of these questions we want to pursue and consider approaches to answering them. Occasionally we may have an *in-class writing assignment* as a prelude to a discussion. *It is critical to bring your texts to class* since we will be referring to them regularly.

\* **Written assignments:** Students will submit three four-page focus papers during the semester. Possible topics and approaches will be generated as we go along, depending on the direction our class takes.

\* **Special project:** You will have several options for fulfilling this requirement, including participating in a debate on a controversial topic related to this time period. The special project will give you a chance to learn more about some aspect of the course that hasn't been covered very well and share what you've learned with your classmates.

\* **Mid-term and Final Exams:** These exams are designed to help students consolidate and internalize some of the information and ideas of the course.

\* **Attend three cultural events** during the semester and submit a one-page description of your experience.

**Grades** will be based on the following:

- Each essay, **13** points each (**39** points total)
- Special project, **13** points
- Mid-term, **13** points
- Final, **13** points
- Questions for class discussions, other in-class assignments: **7** points
- Papers on cultural events, **5** points each (**15** points total)
- Good contributions to class discussions, excellent attendance, and evidence of conscientious effort can improve your grade significantly, as much as one letter grade
- *Poor attendance (missing more than five classes/lectures), a negative attitude or inattention in class, tardiness, failure to submit assignments on time can all jeopardize your grade*
- *Late papers will be graded down. I reserve the right not to accept any paper more than one week late.*
- *Please do not submit papers electronically.*

**Policies:**

- *No make-up exams except in the event of a documentable emergency or by prior arrangement.*
- *Plagiarism is a serious offense. See the UNCA policy on plagiarism. If you plagiarize in this class, you will fail automatically.*
- *If you have a recognized disability, please see me at the beginning of the course to arrange accommodations.*

**Instructor's responsibilities:** In addition to preparing to lead each class and returning your work in a timely manner, I hope to assist you in any way possible to help you get the most from this class. If you need help with understanding the material, writing, classroom dynamics, time management or any other aspect of the course, please make an appointment or stop to speak to me either before or after class. If you would like to make an appointment at another time or if you need to speak me about class matters, e-mail [harriettegrissom@bellsouth.net](mailto:harriettegrissom@bellsouth.net) or call 404-642-5491 (cell) or 828-251-1202. I will also check my UNCA e-mail address.