

“Game of Thrones”

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Online

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DETAILS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Description

This course will focus on the popular HBO series *Game of Thrones*, considering the show (a) as a work of fiction, (b) as inspired by a popular (though problematic) image of the Middle Ages, and (c) as a cultural phenomenon in the US and Europe. As such, we'll watch selected episodes of the show, read some scholarship on the modern creation of the idea of the “medieval,” and explore some of George RR Martin's ideas related to power, government, sex, feminism, and friendship (among other ideas). Note that the book series will **NOT** be the focus of this course and the “lore” of Westeros will only be touched on as it directly impacts moments in the TV show. Course requirements will include watching episodes, participating in online discussion, brief reaction papers, a library assignment, and a final project.

If you have a university-sanctioned condition that requires my special attention, please email me ASAP.

AMA/ “Office Hours”

Since the course is entirely online, I'll have no in-person office hours but will be available each Wednesday from 2-3:30pm to answer questions in an AMA format. Find me in the Scholar Forum.

Course Etiquette: Email

Email is an essential component of this course and one of the primary means by which I'll communicate with you during the semester. Email, however, is not IM, not Last.FM, nor is it Facebook. It's a more formal communication that you will undoubtedly use in your professional life throughout the rest of our time at VT and in your future workplace. Until the end of the semester, I'm not your Dad. I'm not your friend. I'm not your boyfriend. I'm your boss. To that end, be sure the message you're composing is appropriate to the person receiving it. If you have any questions, please ask me or take a look at [Shipley & Schwalbe's *Send: The Essential Guide to Email for Office and Home*](#) or the briefer [review from Salon](#).

VT Honor System and Academic Research

Academic dishonesty (defined as cheating, plagiarism, and falsification) is taken very seriously in this class. Please refer to [the Honor Code](#), as well as the Undergraduate Honor System Constitution. Also, consult this [online web test for plagiarism](#).

You may, of course, study together. But everything you turn in should be a product of **your own** understanding and analysis of the material. Be aware that certain sources of information (such as non-academic websites – like SparkNotes.com – and encyclopedias – like Wikipedia) are **inappropriate** to use for academic research. Also, material you get from other sources **must be cited/ referenced properly**, using MLA style.

- Joseph Gibaldi, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (New York, 2003)
 - o basics also at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/> and <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/MLAstyle.pdf>

If you ever have any questions about any of this, please **ASK ME**. I bite only rarely.

Grading/ Requirements

First, [a note on grading](#). Consider a car's speedometer. It is a tool that performs two interrelated functions: (1) It measures speed, and (2) it communicates that information to the driver. In a somewhat similar way, grading is a tool that also performs two interrelated functions: (1) It assesses academic performance, and (2) it communicates that information to the student. When driving, you glance at the speedometer to determine the speed of the vehicle—if it is what you want, you try to maintain it; if not, you make appropriate adjustments. . . It's perfectly normal to desire good grades since they serve as evidence that a student has demonstrated competence in a particular area. But problems arise when students assume that their primary goal in college is to earn good grades so they can achieve or maintain a certain GPA. That is like believing that the primary goal of driving a car is not to reach a particular destination but to achieve or maintain a certain speed.

The grading breakdown is as follows: participating in online discussion on the forums (15%), brief reaction papers (3 x 20%), and an annotated bibliography (25%). **Everything must be proofread and properly-formatted.**

*****I will not accept ANY late assignments without a written, university-recognized excuse.*****

- Forums (15%) -- Participation in the course discussion forums is a critical part of this class. It is in these discussions that you will get to express your own opinions about the sources we read, and engage in debate with your classmates. For each of the 4 modules, **the minimum requirement** is that you'll post at least 2 messages in the relevant forum; 1 of these will be an original post in response to the prompt in that forum, and the other post will be in response to something that someone else has posted. Feel free to have an actual discussion and post more than 2 times though!
 - Posts for each module are due by the dates noted in the course calendar below.
 - Please follow these guidelines in all your posts:
 - Do not use offensive language.
 - Be constructive in all of your comments.
 - Approach the material with serious thought and a sense of intellectual creativity.
 - Your posts do not have to be lengthy. Posting 2 or 3 well-thought out sentences is fine.
 - Posts will be graded on a 2-point scale. You'll receive 1 point for simply doing the post. The other 1 point will be awarded for the level of **thoughtful analysis** in your post. Feel free to ask questions in your posts for your classmates (or me) to answer but this isn't the place for clarification of details. Ask those separately and elsewhere.
 - **The 1st post of the week is due by 10pm on Wednesday.**
 - **The 2nd post of the week is due by 5pm on Friday.**
 - The exception to this is the 1st weekend of the course (12/27 - 12/28), when both posts are due by 10pm on Sunday 12/28. These, however, are introductory forum posts and so will just be you introducing yourself and saying hello to your fellow classmates.
- Reaction Papers (3 x 20% = total 60%) – You'll be required to complete a 300-500 word, double-spaced, typed, 1" margins reaction paper for each module. **These must be in as Microsoft Word-compatible format.** Each reaction paper should address your initial thoughts on the episode in question in relation to the theme of that module. *Plagiarism and academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.*
 - "Winter is Coming" → modern perceptions of "the medieval"
 - "Cripples, Bastards, & Broken Things" → politics/ women in the Middle Ages
 - "Fire and Blood" → modern fantasy set in the medieval
- Annotated Bibliography (25%) – You'll be required to construct an annotated bibliography related to the 3 themes elucidated in the modules. See the [file on Google Docs](#) for more information.

Required Materials

- You should also have viewed all of **Season 1 of HBO's *Game of Thrones*** before class begins. We'll focus, as you'll see below on 3 specific episodes but it's a good idea to have seen the entire first season.
- All of the **readings** for this course are available online, with links here and some PDFs available via [Scholar](#). The appropriate PDFs for each each module are in the "Resources" section, in folders named for each module of the course. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to ask.
 - Some of the readings require a VT sign-in. If you're working off campus, please visit <https://login.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/login?url=http://www.lib.vt.edu/> **BEFORE** you click the link below (or on Scholar) for each reading.
- You should all download and install the **Google Hangout** Plugin before Winter Session starts, as you'll be required to chat with me at least once per week. We'll divide into 3 "sections," each with different meeting times.
 - Every Thurs. 12-1pm
 - Every Thurs. 2-3pm
 - Every Thurs. 4-5pm
 - Permanent url = https://plus.google.com/hangouts/_/g46mmfbiwsbe7o3jzrj5ya4tjya

Course Calendar

We're trying to do a lot in just a little time, so this will require a goodly amount of initiative from each student in order to cover the material. The course (as you'll see below) is divided into 3 sections, which will all follow the same general pattern:

1. you'll watch a specific episode
2. write a reaction paper to that episode by linking that episode (**WITHOUT** deeper context/ extra readings) to the theme of that section
3. read some articles on those themes
4. post something on the Scholar forum that demonstrates a deeper analysis of the episode in light of the readings you've now done
5. "meet" with me via Google Hangout for an hour to talk about it
(https://plus.google.com/hangouts/_/g46mmfbiwsbe7o3jzrj5ya4tjya)
6. post a second time on the Scholar forum, responding to someone else's first post.

Please also be sure to see below and/ or refer to the calendar on **Scholar** for specific deadlines.

WARNING: Some/ much of the material in this course will be "adult-themed." There will be violence, sex, and bad language (but only in the readings and episodes of the TV show, I hope). If you become uncomfortable with something, contact me ASAP.

INTRODUCTION

Saturday 12/27 - Sunday 12/28

Readings

- Module 1 on Scholar
- Links
 - [Helen Young, "Approaches to Medievalism," *Parergon*, 27 \(2010\): 163-79.](#)

Important Dates

Sun. 12/28

Sign up for a Class Meeting Time ("Section Info" in Scholar) by 10pm
1st 2 Forum Posts due by 10pm

PART 1: WINTER IS COMING

(Modern Perceptions of "the Medieval")

Sunday 12/28 - Friday 1/2

Readings

- Module 2 on Scholar
- Links/ PDFs (also on Scholar)
 - John Arnold, *What is Medieval History?* (Polity Press, 2008), 1-22. PDF on Scholar.
 - [Tom Holland, "Game of Thrones is More Brutally Realistic than Most Historical Novels," *The Guardian*, 3/24/13](#)
 - [Benjamin Breen, "Why Game of Thrones Isn't Medieval-and Why that Matters," psmag.com, 6/12/14](#)
 - Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality*, trans. William Weaver (Harcourt Brace, 1986), 61-72. PDF on Scholar.
 - [Daniel Lukes, "Comparative Neomedievalisms: A Little Bit Medieval," *Postmedieval* 5 \(2014\): 1-9.](#)

Important Dates

Mon. 12/29

Reaction Paper 1 due by 11pm

Wed. 12/31

1st Forum Post due by 10pm

AMA on Scholar

Thurs. 1/1

Discussion Groups

Fri. 1/2

2nd Forum Post due by 5pm

PART 2: CRIPPLES, BASTARDS, & BROKEN THINGS

(Love, Women, and Politics in the Middle Ages)

Sunday 1/4 -- Friday 1/9

Readings

- Module 3 on Scholar
- Links/ PDFs (also on Scholar)
 - [Daniel Mendelsohn, "The Women and the Thrones," *New York Review of Books*, November 7, 2013.](#)
 - Gerd Althoff, "Amicitiae [Friendships] as Relationships between States and People," in *Debating the Middle Ages*, ed. Little & Rosenzweig (Blackwell, 1998), 191-210. PDF on Scholar.
 - Janet Nelson, "Women at the Court of Charlemagne: A Case of Monstrous Regiment?" in *The Frankish World, 750-900* (Hambledon Press, 1996), 223-42. PDF on Scholar.
 - Joan Kelly, "Did Women have a Renaissance?" in *Becoming Visible*, ed. Bridenthal & Koonz (Houghton Mifflin, 1977), 138-64. PDF on Scholar.

Important Dates

Mon. 1/5	<u>Reaction Paper 2 due by 11pm</u>
Wed. 1/7	<u>1st Forum Post due by 10pm</u>
	<u>AMA on Scholar</u>
Thurs. 1/8	<u>Discussion Groups</u>
Fri. 1/9	<u>2nd Forum Post due by 5pm</u>

PART 3: FIRE & BLOOD

(Fantasy set in the "Dark Ages")

Sunday 1/11 - Saturday 1/17

Readings

- Module 4 on Scholar
- Links/ PDFs (also on Scholar)
 - JRR Tolkien, "The Shadow of the Past," in *The Lord of the Rings* (HarperCollins, 1995), 41-63. PDF on Scholar.
 - [Michael Droot, "The Problem of Transformation: The Use of Medieval Sources in Fantasy Literature," *Literature Compass*, 1 \(2004\): 1-22.](#) Also as PDF on Scholar.
 - [Dragon Age Wiki: Timeline](#)
 - [Kirk Hamilton, "A Beginner's Guide to Dragon Age," *Kotaku.com*, 11/13/14](#)

Important Dates

Mon. 1/12	<u>Reaction Paper 3 due by 11pm</u>
Wed. 1/14	<u>1st Forum Post due by 10pm</u>
	<u>AMA on Scholar</u>
Thurs. 1/15	<u>Discussion Groups</u>
Fri. 1/16	<u>3rd 2 Forum Posts due by 5pm</u>
Sat. 1/17	<u>Annotated Bibliography Due by 12pm (noon)</u>