This course is centered on questions of identity in the ‘long Middle Ages’ and considers the role of aesthetic objects as markers of culture that were understood across deep geographic, religious, ethnic, and linguistic divides. We will trace a chronological arc from ca. 300 to 1300 CE, and discussions will include close consideration of specific medieval objects. This approach will be combined with broader investigations of the ways in which modern publications and museum exhibitions have shaped consciousness of our topic among scholars and other audiences.

While the class is centered on the European Middle Ages, the critical and theoretical concepts we explore are intended to be broadly applicable across the history of art and visual culture. Topics will include but are not limited to: the shared legacy of ancient Rome across the Mediterranean, the ancient and medieval Romanization of the North, trade routes that brought luxury materials from Africa and Asia to Europe, the Crusader states as quasi-colonial spaces, and the production and consumption of Jewish and Muslim art in a predominantly Christian era of European history.

The Final Grade will be assessed using the following criteria:

Class participation (20%): This includes not only showing up, but also taking an active role in discussion every week. Every week you will be asked to prepare a short statement reflecting on the readings; these comments (no more than 250 words, written in advance and printed out, to be handed in at the end of class) will count for your participation grade.

Readings and Journal (20%): This is a reading-heavy class, and each week there will be several assigned essays posted on Courseweb. You are expected to look at every essay, but you are not expected to give each essay equal time when you read. Instead, you should choose the essays that you find most compelling and focus on them; the rest can be skimmed. Reading journals should have an entry for every essay on the syllabus; each entry should include the following, written in your own words (not quoted from the essay!): summary of main argument, list of key examples (works of art or written sources), notes on methods/insights, and notes from class discussion. Entries will be graded on quality not quantity, and it is expected that the entries for the essays you read will be more polished than the entries for the essays you choose to skim.

Final Paper Proposal (10%): This should be a one-page summary of your paper idea, structured with one paragraph to introduce your topic (usually a specific example of a work of art that you wish to explore within the framework of the class) and one paragraph to suggest your idea (one specific question or methodological intervention that you plan to apply to your case study). The proposal is due in class on Wednesday, September 25; everyone should meet in person with Fozi to have their Final Paper topic and bibliography approved before Thanksgiving.

Final Paper (50%): A hard copy of your paper is due in SF’s office by 2pm on December 9.
September 4: Race and Medieval Studies

Medieval Studies has been going through a crisis over the past few years – the readings below are drawn from contemporary authors grappling with the ethical problems of the field.

Readings:
Perry, David M. “What to do when Nazis are obsessed with your field: How medieval historians can counter white supremacy.” Pacific Standard, 6 September 2017.

September 11: Race and the History of Art

These are primarily theoretical readings from twentieth-century thinkers who have been influential in defining questions about race, culture, and nationalism. Note that the two contemporary authors, Chris Wood and Robert Nelson, are writing historiographically.

Readings:
Schapiro, Meyer. “Race, Nationality, and Art.” (1936)

September 18: NO CLASS

Use this time to come up with a Final Paper topic – proposals will be due September 24.
September 25: Dura Europos and “Romanitas”

**Questions:** What is at stake in identifying “Jewish” art in the late Roman Empire? What methods are available towards assessing the wall paintings of the Dura Europos Synagogue?

**Readings:**

[October 2: *Medieval Monsters: Terrors, Wonders, Aliens* (Cleveland Museum of Art)]

*Exhibition closes Sunday, October 6.*

October 9: Visit with Chris Wood

**Readings TBA:** We will read an unpublished essay by Wood, along with some added material for context, and will meet with him in class to discuss the “adventurer” in early modern Germany.

[October 16: *The Colmar Treasure: A Medieval Jewish Legacy* (The Met Cloisters)]

*Exhibition closes in January.*

[Sometime in November: *Caravans of Gold: Medieval Saharan Africa* (Aga Khan Museum)]

*Exhibition closes in February. Field trip co-sponsored by Identity & Mob/Ex Constellations.*
Remaining Classes, TBA

October 23
October 30
November 6
November 13
November 20

November 27: Thanksgiving – NO CLASS
December 4: Final Presentations

TOPIC: The “Multicultural” Treasury

Question: What is the difference between collecting luxury and collecting culture?

Reading:
TOPIC: The “Multicultural” Mediterranean

Question: What is at stake in seeing “diversity” in the medieval Mediterranean?

Readings:
Dodds, Jerrilynn, María Roa Menocal, and Abigail Krasner Balbale. The Arts of Intimacy: Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Making of Castilian Culture (Yale, 2008).

TOPIC: Encountering Islam

Dodds, Jerrilyn. “Artistic Ambivalence in the Age of Iberian Crusades.” In Crusading on the Edge (Brepols, 2016), pp. 299-332.
Hunt, Lucy-Anne. “Ceiling and Casket at the Cappella Palatina and Christian Arab Art between Sicily and Egypt in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries.” In Siculo-Arabic Ivories and Islamic Painting (Hirmer, 2011), 169-98.
TOPIC: Encountering Judaism


Lipton, Sara. “The Temple is my body: Gender, Carnality, and Synagoga in the Bible Moralisée,” in: Imagining the Self, Imagining the Other (2002), 129-163.


Especially influential studies to consider:


