What did medieval people do for a living, and where did they do it? What did they eat and wear, in what sort of homes did they live? What sort of family lives did they have? How were their communities organised, and what was the place of those who didn’t fit within those communities: the criminals and rebels, the poor, the old, the sick, and the dead? The purpose of this course is to survey the ways in which historians have tried to address these kinds of questions, in brief, to understand: how did ordinary medieval people live? The focus will be on the lives of the medieval 90%. One of the problems such a focus poses is that of the sources, since the bulk of our source material concerns the lives of the medieval 10%, and among our topics of discussion throughout will be the potentials and problems of the various kinds of sources that have been used to understand everyday life in the middle ages. A further question to be raised concerns the nature of ‘history from below’: is it simply the history of the ‘lower classes’, or is it also a means of understanding the extent to which historical change takes place from the bottom up?

Through this course, students will gain an introduction to some of the landmarks of scholarship and major debates in a number of fields of social and cultural history that fall within the broad umbrella of the history of everyday life. These include the history of the family, the history of sexuality, women’s history, popular religion, the history of the poor and marginalised, and the history of crime. No prior knowledge of any of these subjects is required.

All students will be required to read some of the major contributions to the main debates on medieval social history and the history of everyday life. Although the course is not based around prescribed primary source readings, students are encouraged to read some suggested primary sources in translation to allow them to gain some familiarity with the nature of the sources available for the history of everyday life.

Assessment

50% Final essay (due on May 1).

The final essay (~10,000 words) may be either a historiographic review, or a research paper based on primary sources. Students should submit a one-page outline along with a preliminary bibliography no later than the class in week 11 (March 26) and will receive feedback by the last class (April 2); students are encouraged to discuss essay topics as early as possible.

30% Seminar presentations

Three or four critical summaries (the exact number will depend on enrolment) of a selection of articles or a book chosen from a particular week’s readings, to be circulated by email in advance; students will be expected to be prepared to answer questions regarding the readings. These should include the following: geographical and temporal scope; theoretical or methodological approach; detailed summary and critique of the argument. These assignments should be in the range of 2,000–3,000 words.

20% Participation

Discussion based on a close reading of required texts, some familiarity with additional readings, and engagement with handouts and presentations.
Week 1: Introduction (January 8)

Suggested readings:

Suggested primary sources
S. Cohn (ed. and trans.), *Popular Protest in Late-Medieval Europe* (2004). [VIC STL]
T. Dean (ed. and trans.), *The Towns of Italy in the Later Middle Ages* (2000). [VIC STL]
M. Goodich (ed. and trans.), *The Other Middle Ages: Witnesses at the Margins of Medieval Society* (1998).

Week 2: Making a living in the middle ages (January 15)

Required reading:

Additional reading:
- “Organizing Specialized Production: Gender in the Medieval Flemish Wool Cloth Industry (c.1250–1384),” *Urban History* 45 (2018), 382–403.


W. Rösener, Peasants in the Middle Ages (1992), chapters 2, 7–8, 10, 12.


**Week 3: Material culture and standards of living (January 22)**

**Required readings:**

C. Dyer, Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages (1998), chapters 5–7, 10; [VIC STL]

OR

W. Rösener, Peasants in the Middle Ages (1992), chapters 3–6. [VIC STL]

PIMS/ROBA/DOWNSVIEW

**Additional readings:**


R. C. Hoffmann, An Environmental History of Medieval Europe (2014), chapters 1, 2, 4, 8–10.


- Commerce before Capitalism (2010), chapter 4.


J. Laughton, Life in a Medieval City: Chester 1275–1520 (2008), chapters 3 and 4.


Week 4: Family life (January 29)

Required reading:
B. Hanawalt, The Ties that Bound: Peasant Families in Medieval England (1986); [VIC STL]
OR
D. Herlihy and C. Klapisch-Zuber, Tuscans and Their Families: A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427 (1985); [PIMS/ROBA/SMC/TRIN/CRRS/ONLINE]
OR

Additional reading:
M. Howell, Commerce before Capitalism (2010), chapter 2.
C. Klapisch-Zuber, Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy (1985), chapters 1, 2, 4, 5.
S. McSheffrey, Marriage, Sex, and Civic Culture in Late Medieval London (2006)
W. Rösener, Peasants in the Middle Ages (1992), chapter 10.
S. Shahar, Childhood in the Middle Ages (1990).

*Week 5: Love and sex (February 5)*

**Required reading:**


OR


**Additional reading:**


*Week 6: Women in the middle ages (February 12)*

**Required reading:**

J. M. Bennett, *Women in the Medieval English Countryside: Gender and Household in Brigstock before the Plague* (1987); [PIMS/ROBA/SMC/VIC/ONLINE]

OR


**Additional reading:**


M. Howell, Women, Production and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities (1986).

READING WEEK

Week 7: Neighbours and community (February 26)

Required readings:
OR

Readings:


**Week 8: Popular religion (March 5)**

**Required readings:**


OR


**Additional readings:**


C. Burgess, ‘“By Quick and by Dead”: Wills and Pious Provision in Late Medieval Bristol’, *English Historical Review* 102 (1987), 837–58.


Week 9: The lives of the poor (March 12)
Required reading:
M. Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages* (1986). [VIC STL]
Additional readings:

Week 10: Liminal lives: religious minorities (March 19)
Required readings:
OR
[PIMS/ROBA/SMC/ONLINE]
Additional readings:

Week 11: Criminals and rebels (March 26)
Required readings:

OR
Bronislaw Geremek, *The Margins of Society in Late Medieval Paris* (1987); [PIMS/ROBA/SMC]

OR

Additional readings:


P. Lantschner, ‘Revolts and the Political Order of Cities in the Late Middle Ages’, *Past and Present* 225 (2014), 3–46.


- ‘“Social Struggles” or the Price of Power? German Urban Uprisings in the Late Middle Ages’, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 76 (1985), 64–95.


**Week 12: The end of life: old age and death (April 2)**

Required reading

OR
S. Shahar, *Growing Old in the Middle Ages* (2004); [ROBA/CRRS/ONLINE]

Additional reading
A. Classen (ed.), *Old Age in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (2007).


T. S. R. Boase, Death in the Middle Ages (1972).

C. Burgess, “By Quick and by Dead”: Wills and Pious Provision in Late Medieval Bristol’, English Historical Review, 102 (1987), 837–58.


E. Gertsman, The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages (2010).


C. A. Stanford, Commemorating the Dead in Late Medieval Strasbourg (2011).


