Critical to an understanding of the Germanic kingdoms within and beyond the borders of the Roman Empire from the fifth century onward is the economic structures upon which they were based and how these changed over the course of the following centuries. Indeed, for the last century, these developments have been understood to explain the transition from what we consider the classical world from that of the European Middle Ages. In the 1920s and 1930s, scholars focused their attention primarily upon numismatic evidence to make this argument, since they believed that the minting of coinage was key to the economic vitality of these kingdoms. Most famously, the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne used coins, as well as trade in papyrus, silk, and spices, to argue that trade continued for centuries after the official collapse of Roman authority and that the Germanic kingdoms long remained active economic units. He instead attributed the breakdown of century-old trade networks in the Mediterranean basin to the arrival of Islam; in his Mahomet et Charlemagne, published posthumously in 1937, he proposed that the growing insecurity of the Mediterranean in the seventh century resulted from Muslim victories on its eastern and southern shores. These developments caused a fundamental shift of the balance of power from the Mediterranean to the former backwater of northwestern Europe where the powerful Carolingian dynasty emerged in the eighth century.

In the past six decades, numerous studies have been conducted that demonstrate some of the weaknesses of this incredibly influential explanation for the dominance of northwestern Europe over the Mediterranean heartland of the former Roman Empire that characterized the Carolingian era. In part, changes in the understanding of this period have stemmed from changed political circumstances in which archaeologists and historians are currently working; Europeans are no longer divided amongst themselves by the rise of the Nazi power and their research imperatives are not dictated to the same extent (with some exceptions) by extreme nationalist concerns. More importantly, however, are advances in archaeological methodology and historical approaches, and the accumulation of an incredible volume of new data that was not available in the 1920s and 1930s. Most successful among the challenges to the Pirenne thesis have been those mounted by historians and archaeologists who have expanded the categories that might be used to measure economic vitality in the early Middle Ages including study of more modest indicators of exchange such as ceramics and glass beads and European settlement and agrarian patterns. Whereas Pirenne focused on numismatic evidence, contemporary scholars have shown the importance of other sorts of transactions such as barter, gift-exchange, and plunder that did not necessarily involve the use of coins. A burgeoning slave trade in the eighth and ninth centuries, moreover, is a crucial aspect of exchanges between East and West.

In this seminar, students will use the Pirenne thesis and the writings of the Austrian historian Alfons
Dopsch as a starting point and then work with responses to the hypothesis. In the second half of the course, students will look at more specific topics and address the primary sources, both written and archaeological, by which they will be able to ask for themselves how economies, power relations, and surplus wealth changed in the post-Roman period and whether the framework of the Pirenne thesis is still useful. Some of the topics for discussion in the seminar will include adaptations made by late antique cities to shrinking populations and increasingly dangerous domestic conditions, changes in agricultural technology and land distribution in northwestern Europe, and the emergence in the eighth and ninth centuries of ports, *emporía*, and the roots essential to the rebirth of cities crucial to artisanal production and the conduct of trade in the central Middle Ages.

Readings for the course are mandatory and should be completed prior to class; on the whole, there will be roughly 150-300 pages of reading for each meeting and books and articles will be available through library reserve, some electronically. The purpose of these readings is to acquaint students with various themes for discussion, and the contents of these texts are to be read critically for important points (rather than for every detail). As it is a seminar, the course will consist mainly of 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.

7 January  
**SIGN-UPS FOR COURSE SYNPOSSES AND RESPONSES**

**Introduction: Pirenne’s Legacy**

READING:  

14 January  
**HANDOUT FIRST ESSAY ASSIGNMENT**

**Pirenne’s Thesis (1937) and its Reception**

READING:  

21 January  
**The Germanist Counter-Narrative to Pirenne and Debates on Arab Gold**

READING:  
Philip Grierson, “Carolingian Europe and the Arabs: The Myth of the Mancus,”

**FIRST ESSAY ASSIGNMENT DUE**

**HANDOUT OF SECOND ESSAY ASSIGNMENT**

Archaeological Reassessments of the Pirenne Thesis


**SECOND ESSAY ASSIGNMENT DUE**

**HANDOUT OF RESEARCH ESSAY ASSIGNMENT**

Redefining Trade in the Late Antique and Early Medieval Mediterranean


Banaji, *Agrarian Change in Late Antiquity*, pp. 23-88.

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**

End of the Ancient City?


Gisela Ripoll and Josep M. Gurt, eds., *Sedes regiae (ann. 400-800)* (Barcelona: Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres, 2000), pp. 9–30; 63–82.


Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 591-692.

Banaji, *Agrarian Change in Late Antiquity*, pp. 89-170.

**DRAFT OUTLINE DUE**
Towns and Rural Estates in the Early Middle Ages


Banaji, *Agrarian Change in Late Antiquity*, pp. 171-221.


4 March  
Spring Break (no class)

11 March  
No Class (work on rough draft)

18 March  
**FIRST DRAFT DUE IN TWO COPIES**

Revisiting Numismatics, Amber, Ceramics, and Glass


25 March ** RETURN OF DRAFTS AND PEER REVIEWS **
Land and Sea Travel

1 April Caliph, Kings, and the Church as Economic Players
Hansen and Wickham, eds., *The Long Eighth Century*, pp.121-166.
Ripoll and Gurt, eds., *Sedes regiae (ann. 400-800)*, pp. 163-218.

8 April Agricultural Technology and the Slave Trade

15 April Local Economies, Emporia and Merchants in the Carolingian Empire

22 April ** FINAL DRAFT DUE (INCLUDING ROUGH DRAFTS) **
The Return of Cities? Pirenne’s Thesis Revisited

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**DISCUSSION LEADERSHIP, RESPONSES, AND PARTICIPATION**

On 7 January, a sign-up sheet will go around allowing each student to sign up for two opportunities to act as the weekly discussion leader and two opportunities to provide a written response to the week’s readings (four pages) during the semester. The latter will be circulated to the seminar by Monday afternoon (5pm) before the weekly seminar, so that the discussion leader and other students may be prepared to discuss the issues raised. These activities will contribute along with general class participation (on the basis of active contribution to the ongoing discussion of the material read for the course and consistent attendance) to 20% of the course grade. Unexcused absences from a significant number of course meetings (three or more) will be grounds for automatic failure in the course.

**FIRST ESSAY**

On 14 January, an assignment of a short essay (3-5 pages) will be handed out on a variety of themes related to a comparison of the work of Alfons Dopsch and Henri Pirenne. This assignment will be due on 28 January, and is worth 15% of the course grade. Any essay found to contain plagiarized material (whether from a printed source, another person, or the internet) 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.

**SECOND ESSAY**

On 28 January, an assignment for a short essay (3-5 pages) will be handed out; it will deal with modern contributions to the debate over economic change in late antique and early medieval Europe. Like the first essay, this one will involve the assessment and analysis of secondary research. This assignment will be due on 11 February, and is worth 15% of the course grade. The same penalties for plagiarism and late papers apply as for first essay.

**RESEARCH ESSAY**

On 11 February, you will begin a research essay (15-20 pages) on a case study, excavation report, or primary source related to the period and topic we have addressed in this course but one not read for class. You may also begin this assignment earlier in the course, but the choice of topics must be approved in advance by the instructor. In this essay, you will analyze a primary document in
conjunction with secondary research and related to the themes you explored in the last two assignments. This paper will count as 50% of the course grade and is due in several steps. 1. A research proposal and initial exploratory bibliography will be due on 18 February. 2. A draft outline will be due on 25 February. 3. The first draft of this essay will be due on 18 March (same rules apply as for first essay). Students will hand in one copy for the instructor and exchange one with their peers in the course to critique. This first draft will be worth 20% of the course grade. 4. On 25 March, students will return their peer critiques (worth 5% of course grade) and receive back their own from the other student as well as the instructor. 5. Both will aid in the formulation of a second draft which students will hand in no later than 7:00PM on 22 April together with both of the critiques of the first draft. The second draft will be worth 25% of the course grade.

**GRADING**

Grades will be awarded according to individual achievement and not in response to a set "curve." Thus, high grades by one student will not lower those of any other student. The instructor reserves the right to exercise her professional judgment and discretion in adjusting marks according to circumstances leading to a mark, such as in the case of improving or deteriorating performance, and consistent class participation or a high proportion of absences and lack of preparedness for class.

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**UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

**COURSE EVALUATIONS**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/.

**EMERGENCY INFORMATION**

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx, or telephone 392-1575. The University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.
COMMENTS
I look forward to a stimulating seminar, and encourage students to come to office hours with any questions or issues that arise during lectures, discussions or in the course of your readings.