

EUH-3323: Medieval Eastern Europe



Time and Location

Tuesdays 1:55-2:45

Thursdays 1:55-3:50

Flint 111

Description

The medieval history of Eastern Europe is poorly represented in today's scholarly work published in English. Scholarly interest in Eastern Europe focuses especially on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the period of nationalism. The medieval history of the area is given comparatively less attention, which often amounts to slightly more than total neglect. For most students in medieval studies, Eastern Europe is marginal and East European topics simply *exotica*. One reason for this reticence to engage in serious research in that area may be the uneasiness to treat its medieval history as (Western) European history. When peoples of Eastern Europe come up in works on the medieval history of Europe, they are usually the marginalized, the victims, or the stubborn pagans. To many historians, they appear only as the object of the conquest and colonization that shaped medieval Europe and their role is restricted to that of victims of the "occidentation," the shift towards the ways and norms of Romano-Germanic civilization. The conceptual division of Europe leaves Slavs, Magyars, and Romanians out of the main "core" of European history, though not too far from its advancing frontiers of "progress" and "civilization." Who were those peoples? What made them so difficult to represent by the traditional means of Western historiography? What historical circumstances separate the Western

from the Eastern half of the European continent? What social structures and political institutions were responsible for the specific developments in the medieval history of the area? How were ethnicities formed in that region and under what circumstances did the ethnic groups come into being? Above all, this course aims to answer some of these questions. Since it is impossible to get more than a taste of the subject in a semester, we will concentrate on major problems, such as the search for political, economic and religious stability/power, the interaction of secular and religious forces, the influence of the Byzantine, Carolingian, and Ottonian empires in Eastern Europe, the role of the region in the medieval history of the Continent. Following a chronological order, we will look, each week, at the questions and problems raised by the study of this region, and at some of the primary sources from which historians draw their analysis.

Textbooks

- Florin Curta, *Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 500-1300*. Brill's Companions to European History, 19 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019)[hereafter *Curta*]; ISBN 9789004342576; on two-hour reserve in [Library West](#); also available as e-book through [Library West](#)

All other readings—primary sources and occasional articles—are available in pdf format on Canvas (elearning.ufl.edu/). You are required to check the course page on Canvas regularly for updates.

Assignments and grading policies

There is no attendance policy, but you are responsible for attending all lectures and reading the required texts. Class participation may be taken into account to determine the overall grade. The basis for evaluation of performance will be a reading journal and five in-class assignments. Below is a detailed description of these assignments and the corresponding percentages of your final grade. Extra-credit work will be accepted only for students with active participation in class discussions. If necessary, I will explain the format of the extra-credit option during regular office hours. You are otherwise encouraged to keep in touch with me by e-mail, if you have any questions: I check my mailbox regularly, and promise to answer quickly.

Reading journal. A quick glimpse at the list of weekly topics (see below) will no doubt convince you that this is a course with serious readings. You will be expected to digest a substantial amount of information in a fairly short period of time. The best way to do this is to keep a journal. Before every class meeting, you will post an e-mail message on my address (on top of this syllabus), in which you will discuss briefly the readings for the coming meeting, ask questions and/or make comments, raise issues that need clarification, etc. All e-mails should arrive at least 12 hours before class meetings. Be sure to keep your postings to a reasonable length (175 to 250 words long). I do not want you to spend too much time on them, but I expect you to give an articulate presentation of your thoughts. Needless to say, I also expect you to check on correct grammar and spelling before clicking on "Send." Because the journal is designed to demonstrate your efforts towards an initial understanding of the readings, I must have *in time* one report for each class meeting, every week. The reading journal represents seventy percent of your final grade, 2.4% for each entry. I will send written feed-back (via e-mail) on weekly entries midway through the term. Reading reports *cannot* be made up; you

simply *need* to have a journal entry for every class meeting. Be aware that missed reports may result in a substantially lower grade.

In-class assignments. The remaining thirty percent of your final grade will be based on five short assignments in class. All five will consist of multiple-choice, map, matching, short-essay questions, or a combination thereof. Besides material covered in class lectures, the in-class assignments will focus primarily on problems raised in the readings. A careful study of these texts is necessary for a good performance at the test. Because in-class assignments are announced, I do not intend to grant any make-ups, except for emergencies (e.g., illness), in which case I may ask for official justification.

The following scale will be used in determining your final grade.

<i>Points</i>	<i>Grade</i>
97-100	A
93-96	A-
88-92	B+
81-87	B
75-80	B-
68-74	C+
61-67	C
55-60	C-
48-54	D+
41-47	D
35-40	D-
under 30	E

Weekly topics

Week 1 (January 11-15): What is Eastern Europe? Medieval history and modern approaches [*Curta* 1-30]

- A question of terminology: Central, Eastern, Southeastern, and East Central Europe; see maps of [East Central](#), [Southeastern](#) and [Eastern Europe](#)
- Written and archaeological sources; see examples of [a 12th-century Rus' seal](#), a [birch-bark letter](#) from Novgorod, a [Bulgar inscription](#) on a column, and a [Runic inscription](#) found in Staraia Ladoga

Week 2 (January 18-22): East European Dark Ages [*Curta* 31-64]

- The last century of Roman power in the Balkans; see a map of the [Roman Empire](#) and another of [East Central Europe ca. 400 A.D.](#); see a view of [Philippi](#) (Greece) and the [plan](#) of Caričin Grad (Serbia, possibly Iustiniana Prima); see the plan of the [sixth-century Roman fort at Iatrus \(Krivina, Bulgaria\)](#) and an example of a [copper coin issued for Emperor Justinian](#)
- Slavs and Avars [*Procopius (of Caesarea)*; *Theophylact (Simocatta)*]; see the ideal [reconstruction](#) of a sunken-floored building with clay oven, see map of [Europe around 600](#) and another of the [Carpathian Basin at the time of the Avar migration](#)

Week 3 (January 25-29): Early medieval Balkans [*Curta* 65-100]

- Croats and Serbs [(*Constantine*) *Porphyrogenitus*]
- Bulgars and early medieval Bulgaria [*Theophanes (Confessor)*; (*Thirty-Year*) *Peace*]; see a gold medallion of [Omurtag](#); visit [Pliska](#) and the site of the [Madara Horseman](#)

Week 4 (February 1-5): The West in the East, ca. 800-900 [*Curta* 101-127]

- Avars and Franks [*Notker*; *Conversion (of the Baiuvarians and Carantanians)*]
- In-class assignment #1. Early medieval Moravia [*Annals (of Fulda)*]; see a map of the [most important sites](#) and a bird-view reconstruction of the ninth-century hillfort at [Pohansko](#)

Week 5 (February 8-12): “Steppe empires” [*Curta* 128-178]

- The Khazars and their conversion to Judaism [(*the reply of King*) *Joseph (to Hasdai ibn Shaprut)*]; see a map of [Khazaria](#) and a brief presentation of [Sarkel](#); [see a few examples of Khazar weapons \(including slightly curved sabers\)](#)
- Volga Bulgars, Pechenegs, Cumans, and Oghuz [(*Ahmad ibn*) *Fadlan, (John) Skylitzes*]; see [a map of Volga Bulgaria](#) and a brief presentation of [Bolgar](#)

Week 6 (February 15-19): Conversion to Christianity [Curta 179-213]

- The mission of Cyril and Methodius to Moravia [*Life of Constantine*, aka *St.* Cyril]; see a [brief presentation](#), a [facsimile](#) (sample copy), and an [acoustic reconstruction](#) of the Freising Manuscripts; see also an introduction to the [Glagolitic script](#)
- Prince Boris and the conversion of Bulgaria [*Responsa (of Pope Nicholas I to the Questions of the Bulgars)*]; (*St.*) *Clement (of Ohrid on St. Cyril)*]; see an icon of [St. Clement of Ohrid](#); visit [the church of St. Panteleimon \(St. Clement's monastery\)](#) and the [monastery of St. Naum](#) in Ohrid

Week 7 (February 22-26): The “iron century” [Curta 214-273]

- Bulgaria under kings Symeon and Peter [*John the Exarch; (Life of St. John of Rila)*]; see a [brief presentation](#) of the site and the [ramparts of Preslav](#) (see also the [plan](#) of the city); see a biography of [St. John of Rila](#) and a brief presentation of the [Rila Monastery](#)
- In-class assignment #2. Emperor Samuel and his war with Basil II [*Skyl(itzes) Cont(inuatus; Echo)*]; see a [map](#) of the military operations in the Balkans; visit the ruins of the [Church of St. Achilles](#) in Prespa (with a [plan](#) of the fortified power seat on the island) and [Samuel's Fortress](#) in Ohrid
- Magyars and Vikings [*Ibn Rusta; Wulfstan*]; see a [map](#) of the presumed migration of the Magyars and a [map](#) of the Magyar and Viking raids

Week 8 (March 1-5): The rise of Rus' [Curta 274-305]

- Vikings in Russia and the Normannist controversy [*Russian Primary Chronicle; trade(treaty of 944)*]; see Scandinavian [tortoise brooches](#), Viking-age [swords](#), and a [hoard of dirhams](#); see a map of the [most important sites](#) and a [shaded relief map of Russia](#)
- Kievan Rus' [*Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus on the Rus'; (Ruskaia) Pravda*]; visit the [St. Sophia Church](#) and the [Monastery of the Caves](#) in Kiev

Week 9 (March 8-12): Byzantium in the Balkans [Curta 306-340]

- Byzantine Greece [*Anna (Comnena); Cadaster (of Thebes)*]
- Byzantine and post-Byzantine Dalmatia [*Thomas (the Archdeacon)*]; see a map of the [most important sites](#) and a shaded relief map of [Croatia](#)

Week 10 (March 15-19): New powers, I [Curta 341-362, 656-670]

- Early medieval Poland and the Piasts [*Gallus (Anonymus); Thietmar (of Merseburg)*]; see brief presentations of [Ostrów Lednicki](#), visit [Ostrów Tumski](#), Duke Mieszko I's palace in Poznań, and [Giecz](#); see a reconstruction of the tenth-century stronghold at [Grzybowo](#); see two scenes representing the [martyrdom of St. Adalbert](#) and the [transfer of his remains from Prussia to Gniezno](#) (twelfth-century panels on the bronze doors of the cathedral in Gniezno); see a [genealogy of the Piasts](#)

- Medieval Serbia and the Nemanjids [(*charter of Stephen*) *Nemanja*; (*St. Sava on the abdication of Stephen Nemanja*)]; visit the [Žiĉa royal monastery](#)

Week 11 (March 22-26): New powers, II [*Curta* 363-408]

- Hungary after the conversion to Christianity [(*laws of King Coloman*)]; see a brief presentation of the [Spiš Castle \(Slovakia\)](#) and an outline of the history of the [Saxons in Transylvania](#)
- In-class assignment #3. Přemyslid Bohemia [(*Decrees of Břetislav*)]; see a map of the present-day [Czech Republic](#); visit the [St. Clement church in Levý Hradec](#), the chapel of Sts. Peter and Paul in [Budeĉ](#), the [basilica of St. George in the Prague Castle](#) (see also a [reconstruction](#) of the tenth-century castle), the initial [St. Vitus Cathedral \(Rotunda\) in Prague](#), the [Sázava monastery](#), and the [Znojmo Rotunda](#) (with a fresco in the [interior](#)); see the [statue](#) of St. Wenceslas in Prague and his medieval [portrait](#); see also a brief presentation of [Āeský Krumlov](#)

Week 12 (March 29-April 2): Economy and society [*Curta* 409-469]

- Agriculture, rural economy and cities [*slaves (of the Abbey of St. Peter in the Village)*; (*charter of John*) *Asen (II)*]
- Feudalism in Eastern Europe [(*Golden*) *Bull*; (*Book of Henryków*)]; see a genealogical tree of the [Elefánthy](#) family

Week 13 (April 5-8): Catholicism and Orthodoxy: the rift in Eastern Europe [*Curta* 470-534]

- Royal saints and monasticism in Bohemia, Hungary, and Poland [(*Legenda Christiani*); *Hartvic*]; see pictures of the abbey churches of [Sv. Krševan \(Zadar\)](#) and [Św. Jakub \(Sandomierz\)](#)
- In-class assignment #4. Orthodoxy in Rus', Orthodoxy and religious dissent in the Balkans [(*Passion of Boris and*) *Gleb*; *George (the Bulgarian and the Magyars)*; (*the Bogomil(s)*)]

Week 14 (April 12-16): Crusades in Eastern Europe [*Curta* 534-575]

- Seven crusades and Eastern Europe [*Albert (of Aachen)*; (*Geoffrey of Villehardouin on the conquest of Zara*)]
- The Baltic Crusade [*Henry (of Livonia)*]; see a [brief history](#) of the German Order of St. Mary (Teutonic Knights); see pictures of [Üxküll \(Ikškile\)](#), [Toruń](#), [Riga](#) and Marienburg ([outside](#) and [inside](#))

Week 15 (April 19-21): The Balkans and the Mongols [*Curta* 671-717]

- In-class assignment #5. The Second Bulgarian Empire [(*Niketas Choniates*); (*letter of Johannitsa Kaloyan*); (*John Asen boasts of his victory at Klokotnica*)]; visit [Tárnovo](#), the

capital of the Second Bulgarian Empire (see, especially, the [plan](#) of the city and the [St. Demetrius Church](#))

- The Mongol invasion [*Roger(of Torre Maggiore)*; *William (of Rubruck)*]; see a series of [maps of the Mongol Empire](#); see a [dirham](#) minted for the Golden Horde Khan Uzbek, and a brief presentation of [Golden Horde art](#); see the [Annals of Jan Dlugosz](#) on the battle of Legnica