



Holy War in the Middle Ages

EUH 4123/MEM 3931

Spring 2025

Instructor: Dr. Nina Caputo

Class time and place: MWF, period 6, Keene-Flint 119

Office Hours: M 2:00-4:00 or by appointment

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Course Description : According to one of the central tenets of Christianity, the faithful are expected to express their love for God by extending love and charity to all of their neighbors – friends as well as foes. Notions of Christian pacifism were necessarily transformed when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman empire: defense of the state became inextricably connected with defense of the faith. This class will examine the shifting terrain of historical and theological conceptions of war and holy war in the middle ages. The material is divided into four distinct sections: theological foundations, early medieval conceptions of war and community, the Crusades, and changes in the high and late middle ages. How did leaders and theologians talk about and mitigate war in the name of Christianity? When and under what circumstances was it deemed right or just to fight?

Course Requirements

a) **Reading:** I strongly recommend that that you at least skim the readings at the beginning of the week so you will be ready to discuss the themes and substance of the assignments and read them thoroughly by the end of the week. Lectures and discussions will be more engaging and productive for you if you have a formal point of reference. Please bring all assigned primary source readings to class on the day for which the reading has been assigned (i.e., internet sources and handouts, etc.). We will not always discuss all of the readings directly. However, these readings were selected to provide you with a foundation for the material and issues covered and you will be responsible for all readings. You are strongly encouraged to bring questions about the readings to class – if one of you had questions or difficulties, others certainly did as well

Books. The books listed below are required for this class. Those marked with an asterisk (*) are available as ebooks.

*[Christopher Tyerman *How to Plan a Crusade: Religious War in the Middle Ages* \(Pegasus Books, 2017\), ISBN 1681775241](#)

*[Paul Cobb, *A Race for Paradise: An Islamic History of the Crusades* \(Oxford, 2014\), ISBN 0199358117.](#)

Recommended:

[*Muslim and Christian Contact in the Middle Ages: A Reader* ed. Jarbel Rodriguez \(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015\)](#)

b) **Attendance:** In addition to the readings, you are responsible for all the material covered in lectures as well. It is expected that you will be present at all class sessions unless unavoidable circumstances make attendance impossible. If you must miss a class, please make arrangements with another student to get notes. But remember: if you miss a substantial number of classes, your participation grade will suffer proportionately. **You will be permitted three absences over the course of the term; every unexcused absence thereafter each unexcused absence will lower your grade by one third.** Guidelines for excused absences can be found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/1617/regulations/info/attendance.aspx#absences> ([Links to an external site.](#))[Links to an external site.](#)

Also, as a courtesy to the instructor and to your fellow students, please turn off your cell phones before class begins and refrain from checking them during class. Obsessive attention to cell phones distracts your instructor and your colleagues. If ringing cell phones and persistent texting become a problem, the owners of those phones will be asked to leave the class and the subsequent absence will count as unexcused.

c) **Written assignments:** Historical writing demands that you make your arguments in a clear and precise manner and that you back them up with historical evidence. Thus, written assignments will be graded on the basis of **style as well as content**. Completion of all written assignments is *absolutely required*. Late assignments will not be accepted without penalty. Please make every effort to apprise me of adverse circumstances that affect your ability to attend class or complete assignments on time.

Do not submit your work to via email – written work must be presented in hard-copy. Official documentation is required to excuse an absence and to schedule make-up assignments. In order to pass this class, you must complete all written assignments.

d) **Grade distribution:** i) Two exams, the first on **28 February**, worth 25% and the second on **30 April**, worth 35% of the final grade. ii) One paper, due on **11 April** (worth 30% of the final grade). I will be happy to read and comment on all written assignments prior to the due date; just be sure to give me enough time to read your work carefully and get it back to you in time for you to implement changes. iii) Participation in class discussions, worth 10%. By participation, I mean active and attentive engagement with the course material. Ideally, it also means contribution to in class discussion, including asking questions. Coming to class and sleeping through the lecture, for example, is not considered productive participation. [*Nota bene* the material we will be discussing in this class will frequently be challenging and emotionally charged. You will be expected to maintain a respectful and appropriately academic tone during our discussions.] Coming to class and sleeping through the lecture or focusing on instagram, for example, is not considered productive participation.

Week I

Fighting for God – Introduction to Biblical Foundations

Readings:

Michael Walzer, "The Idea of Holy War in Ancient Israel"

Oliver Leaman, "Peace and Judaism"

[Deuteronomy 1-9 and 20-21](#)

[Joshua 1-11, 16:10, 17:12-13](#)

[1 Kings 20:31-43](#)

Week II

Martyrdom in Late Antiquity and the Rise of Christianity

MONDAY IS MLK DAY - NO CLASS

Readings:

Maccabees II – skim the whole text, but read 2Macc 4-8 carefully.

[The Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 5-7](#)

[Luke 22](#)

Daniel Boyarin, "Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism"

Week III

Who is the Enemy and what should we do about him?

Readings:

The Martyrdoms of Perpetua and Felicitas

James Childress, "Moral Discourse about War in the Early Church"

Reuven Firestone, "Conceptions of Holy War in Biblical and Qur'anic Tradition" 99-107 (we will return to this article in a couple of weeks)

Edict of Diocletian

Week IV

Christian Warfare – Church Fathers

Readings:

Tyerman, *Planning a Crusade*, Chapter 1

Augustine City of God [Book XV, ch. 5](#) and [Book XIX](#)

Jean Elstain, "The Just War Tradition and Natural Law"

Lenihan, "The Just War Theory in the Work of Augustine"

Week V

Medieval Christendom and the Rise of Islam

Readings:

Cobb, Intro and chapter 1.

Tyerman, *Planning a Crusade*, Chapter 2

Yitzhak Hen "Charlemagne's Jihad" in *Viator* 37 (2006): 33-51

Charlemagne, Capitulary for Saxony, 775-790

[Einhard's Life of Charlemagne, chapters 7-15](#)

[Pope Leo IV, Forgiveness of Sin for Those Who Die in Battle](#)

[Pope John VIII, Indulgence for Fighting the Heathen, 878](#)

Reuven Firestone, "Conceptions of Holy War," 107-118

Week VI

"Enemies of Christ" – Internal and External

Readings:

[Ralph Glaber: On the First Millennium](#)

[Pope Gregory VII: Call for a 'Crusade,' 1074](#)

[Truce of God](#)

Cobb, Chapter 2-3.

Tyerman, *Planning a Crusade*, Chapter 3

Week VII

The Council of Clermont

Readings:

Tyerman, *Planning a Crusade*, Chapter 4

[Pope Urban II Sermon at Clermont Documents – Gesta Francorum, Fulcher of Chartres, and Balderic of Dol](#)

Throop, Chapter 2.

[Ekkehard of Aurach, On the Opening of the First Crusade](#)

Week VIII

The First Wave - Encounters Along the Way

Friday - First Midterm

Readings:

Tyerman, *Planning a Crusade*, Chapter 5-6

[Agobard of Lyon, on the Insolence of the Jews](#)

[The Speyer Charter, 1084](#)

[Albert of Aix and Ekkehard of Aura: Emico and the Slaughter of the Rhineland Jews](#)

[Robert Chazan, "The First Crusade as Reflected in the Earliest Hebrew Narrative"](#)

Week IX

The Second Wave – The Long Road to Jerusalem

Fighting for Jerusalem

Readings:

Cobb, Chapter 4 and 5.

Tyerman, *Planning a Crusade*, Chapter 7

Anna Comnena – The Alexiad

Revelation 20

The Capture of Jerusalem, chronicles

Week X

NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK

Week XI

Making Sense of Victory ... and then Defeat

Readings:

Cobb, Chapter 6.

Tyerman, *Planning a Crusade*, Chapter 8-9

Bernard of Clairvaux, In Praise of the New Knighthood

Week XII

The Third Crusade

Readings:

Tyerman, *Planning a Crusade*, Chapter 20

Cobb, Chapter 7.

Richard II and Saladin

Gregory VIII - Audita

Week XIII

Changing Fronts in the 13th Century

Readings:

Lateran IV

Stories of the Fourth Crusade

Summa Theologica, 'Of War- Four Articles' 2-2.40.1-4

RECOMMENDED Summa Theologica, 'Of the Different Kinds of Religious Life: Whether A Religious Order Can Be Directed to Soldiering' 2-2.188.3

Tyerman, *Planning a Crusade*, Chapter 11

Ioannis Stouraitis, "'Just War' and 'Holy War' in the Middle Ages" in *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 62. Band / 2012, 227–264

Week XIV

The Reconquista

Readings:

Treaty of Caloza

Reconquista texts

Cobb, Chapter 8

Tyreman, Chapter 20.

Week XV

Towards Modernity – Just and Unjust Wars

Readings:

Philippe Buc "Some Thoughts on the Christian Theology of Violence, Medieval and Modern, from the Middle Ages to the French Revolution"

Cobb, Chapter 9.

Tyerman, *Planning a Crusade*, Chapter 12

Grade Distribution and Grading Scale

First paper – 20 points	A = 100 – 94	C = 76 – 74
Second paper – 25 points	A- = 93 – 90	C- = 73 – 70
First midterm – 20 points	B+ = 89 – 87	D+ = 69 – 67

Second midterm – 25 points

B = 86 – 84

D = 66 – 64

Participation – 10 points

B- = 83 – 80

D- = 64 – 61

C+ = 80 – 77

F = below 61

Note: A grade of C- is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, Gen Ed, or College Basic distribution credit. For further information on UF's Grading Policy, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx-hgrades> <http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html>.

Academic Honesty: According to the UF Academic Honesty Guidelines, “an academic honesty offense is defined as the act of lying, cheating, or stealing academic information so that one gains academic advantage. As a University of Florida student, one is expected to neither commit nor assist another in committing an academic honesty violation. Additionally, it is the student’s duty to report observed academic honesty violations.” All students are will be expected to follow the UF Honor Code: <https://policy.ufl.edu/regulation/4-040/>. **All academic honesty offenses will result in a failing grade in this class.**

More information on grades and grading policies can be found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx> -

Students with disabilities requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://disability.ufl.edu> . The DCR will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Online Course Evaluation Process: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.