

QUEENS COLLEGE – DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
COLLOQUIUM – FALL 2019

392W (01) 48807

VIOLENCE IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

Professor T. Billado

Thursdays 1:40-4:30pm

The online Urban Dictionary defines “get medieval” as: “To physically torture or injure someone by means of archaic methods, usually involving tools frequently used for blacksmithing or traditional feudal era torture.” This definition, of course, derives from the famous scene in Quentin Tarantino’s *Pulp Fiction*, in which the character Marsellus Wallace threatens, “I’m gonna get medieval on your ass!” This popular conception of the medieval period as a particularly brutal and violent one is supported not only by movies like *Pulp Fiction* or *Braveheart* (which the MPAA rated R, “for brutal medieval warfare”), but also by the writings of European historians. In their scholarship, the Middle Ages have long been known as the most violent period in European history. Most of these writers, however, have ignored theoretical questions about violence. As medievalist William Ian Miller argues, “We are used to thinking about violence as a problem, yet we only rarely think of it as a problematic analytical category.” This course will explore such theoretical questions about violence, including: What, exactly, is violence? Are certain acts violent? Or only when performed by certain actors? Can non-physical acts, for example speech-acts, be termed “violent”? Can we compare violence within and across societies? Is “violence” even a useful category of historical analysis? In order to answer these questions, we will read and analyze a selection of medieval primary sources (including epics, law codes, sagas, chronicles, poetry, and saints’ lives) alongside theoretical works on violence, and recent historiography on homicide, feuding and vengeance, lordship, serfdom, ceremonial executions, ordeals, torture, cursing, crusading, and tax collection.

392W (04) 48811

A PIVOTAL DECADE: THE 1970S AND AMERICA

Professor P. Vellon

Tuesdays 1:40-4:30pm

The 1970s is often perceived as the forgotten decade between the “transformative” and “radical” 1960s and the Reagan “revolution” that ushered in “morning in America” in the 1980s. However, the 1970s was much more than a ten-year interval connecting two critical decades. By examining the impact of profound shifts in economic, political, and cultural power, this course will explore the far-reaching impact of the 1970s. Some of the many themes explored will include: the economic impact of an emerging post-industrial society; the rise of the Sunbelt; urban “decay”; the feminist movement; civil rights; the rise of ethnic identity; political corruption and realignment; environmentalism; religious fundamentalism; cultural production, and more. We will place these themes within a broader historical context and strive to illustrate how many of these themes are interrelated. Further, we’ll examine the impact of these changes and their continued influence on American society today.

392W (02) 48809

AMERICA IN THE 1960s

Professor C. Giardina

Wednesdays 3:10-6:00pm

How did the socially conscious, uproarious, irreverent “Sixties” evolve from the quietism of the 1950s? What has been the impact of this period of deep and rapid change? From the signature social movements to hallmark legislation, from the counterculture to the political murders and assassination of leader after leader, the course will explore the highs and lows of this tumultuous decade. The course will include the role of Queens College activists on campus and nationally.

392W (03) 48810

ROMAN RELIGION

Professor M. McDonnell

Tuesdays 4:30-7:20pm

The religions of the ancient Romans is a complex subject for a variety of reasons. One is that under the republican form of government (c. 509-44 BC), the state religion, and to a lesser degree private religions, were essentially Italic. But after Rome had conquered the entire Mediterranean basin and beyond, the idea of what it meant to be Roman greatly expanded, and along with it the religions of the Romans diversified. This course will concentrate of the religions of the Roman republican period, and will treat the religions of the Roman empire principally by examining the relations between Rome and the Jews, and Rome and Christianity. Topics covered will be ritual and sacrifice, time and space, the development of the state religion under the Republic, prophecy and augury, persons religion, the Augustan religious renewal, religious diversity under the Caesars, religion and magic, Judaism and Rome, Christianity.