

MEDIEVAL STUDIES

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Founded by the Department of Classics in 1971, medieval studies is one of St. Olaf's oldest interdisciplinary programs. In scope it spans the more than ten centuries between the fall of the Roman Empire and the flowering of the Renaissance. Combining art, history, language, literature, philosophy, religion, and theater, it encourages students to take a broad look at medieval European culture, examining it from multiple perspectives.

The medieval studies program has no courses of its own; instead, it relies on courses offered by individual departments. Students who major in medieval studies choose electives from the various departmental courses that deal primarily or entirely with the Middle Ages. Many of these courses also carry OLE Core curriculum attributes. The required courses in Latin can simultaneously fulfill the college's world language requirement.

It is common for St. Olaf students to combine a medieval studies major with a B.A. major like art history, English, history, music, philosophy, or religion. Even mathematics or natural science majors often complete a second major in medieval studies. The major provides a useful background in the humanities for students interested in virtually any career.

Overview of the Major

The objectives of the major are competence in Latin at the intermediate level, familiarity with medieval European civilizations, and in-depth knowledge of one subject area within the major.

Any student interested in a medieval studies major should draw up a contract with the program's director. The contract may be changed at any time up to second semester of the senior year.

Intended Learning Outcomes for the Major

Distinction

See Academic Honors

To attain distinction in medieval studies, a student must demonstrate talent with Latin, skill in conducting research on a medieval topic, and broad knowledge of medieval European civilization. Specific guidelines are available from the director of medieval studies. Medieval studies majors who wish to pursue distinction should notify the director of the program no later than January 1 of their senior year.

Requirements

Requirements for the Major

Code	Title	Credits
	Fourth semester (or higher) of Latin	1.00
	One medieval history course	1.00
	One medieval literature course	1.00
	Four electives chosen from various departments	4.00

One independent research 1.00

Total Credits 8

**By completing this major, the student also satisfies the OLE Core Writing in the Major requirement.*

Courses

The following courses have been approved for the major (seminars and topics courses are acceptable only when they focus on the medieval world):

ARTS 240 Topics in the Fine Arts

ARTH 264 Race and Difference in Medieval Art

ARTH 268 Early Medieval Art and Identity

ARTH 275 Topics in Art History

ART 276 Topics: (when the title is: The Art of the Medieval Book)

ARTH 278 Topics:(when the topic is: Life and Art in 15th Century Florence)

ASIAN 200 Topics in Asian Studies (when the topic is: The Mongols)

ENGL 220 Topics in Literary History

ENGL 223 Old and Middle English Literature: The Weird and the Wonderful

ENGL 395 Chaucer from an Ethical Perspective

HIST 188 Topical Seminar

HIST 189 Topical Seminar

HIST 190 The Roots of Our Modern World: Middle East and Europe to 1500

HIST 210 Methods Seminar: European History

HIST 211 Vikings: Past and Present

HIST 289 Topics in History

HIST 299 Topics in History

LATIN 235 Medieval Latin (or any other Latin course beyond LATIN 231)

MUSIC 345 Advanced Study in Musicology

NORW 399 Seminar

PHIL 140 Myth, Reason, and the Death of the Gods

PHIL 374 Seminar in the History of Philosophy

QUEST 116 Warriors, Mystics, Reformers

REL 246 Islam -- Religion and Community

REL 302 History of Christian Thought I

REL 303 History of Christian Thought II

REL 392 Studies in Religion Seminar

THEAT 270 History of Theater up to 1700

MEDVL 298: Independent Study

MEDVL 398: Independent Research

January term courses such as:

ARTH 255 Italian Art in Context (study abroad)

HIST 299 Topics in History

NORW 224 Topics in Contemp Nordic Lit: Window on Society (Taught in English) (when taught as Nordic Folklore)

See also other courses offered occasionally or only once (including courses at Carleton College) that may also be used as electives. See the director for information on courses offered in a particular year.

Plan of Study
Medieval Studies Major - Plan of Study

This is a sample plan that meets the prescribed requirements for this major at St. Olaf.

The plan shown below is just one possible route that a student can follow. This tool is meant as a guide and does not replace working closely with the student's academic advisor.

Please click here for an up-to-date list with courses that can be used as electives for Ancient Studies and Medieval Studies.

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Course	Title	Credits
First Year		
Fall Semester		
FYS 120 or WRIT 120	First-Year Seminar (or Conversation Program) or Writing and Rhetoric	1.00
LATIN 111	Beginning Latin I	1.00
Credits		2
Spring Semester		
WRIT 120 or FYS 120	Writing and Rhetoric (or Conversation Program) or First-Year Seminar	1.00
LATIN 112	Beginning Latin II	1.00
Credits		2
Sophomore Year		
Fall Semester		
LATIN 231	Intermediate Latin	1.00
One Medieval History Course		1.00
Credits		2
Spring Semester		
One Medieval Literature Course		1.00
One Elective Course (from the list on the Medieval Studies Courses Tab)		1.00
Credits		2
Junior Year		
Fall Semester		
One Elective Course (from the list on the Medieval Studies Courses Tab)		1.00
Credits		1
Spring Semester		
One Elective Course (from the list on the Medieval Studies Courses Tab)		1.00
Credits		1

Senior Year	
Fall Semester	
One Independent Research Course (if not previously taken)	1.00
Credits	
1	
Spring Semester	
One Elective Course (from the list on the Medieval Studies Courses Tab)	1.00
Credits	
1	
Total Credits	
12	

Students must successfully complete the equivalent of 35 St. Olaf credits through a combination of full-credit and fractional-credit courses to earn the Bachelor of Arts.

Visit the Medieval Studies department webpage for more information.

Faculty

Director, 2025-2026

Anne H. Groton

Professor of Classics

Greek and Roman drama; classical languages and literature

A list of the Ancient and Medieval Studies Steering Committee members can be found here.