HIST 437, Winter 2015

Medieval Spain

The Reconquista

Course Description

The history of Medieval Spain is one of a complex interaction between Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula spanning nearly eight centuries, during which time the various kingdoms of Christian Iberia formed and pressed southward sporadically in what we now refer to as the \textit{Reconquista}. Indeed, it is quite impossible to understand Medieval Spain without understanding the \textit{Reconquista}, and one of the primary goals of this class will be to discuss the complex historical issues surrounding this “reconquest”. Over the course of the term we will consider the phenomenon known as the \textit{convivencia}, the effect of the reconquest on the formation of a “frontier society”, and the complex political relationships between Christian and Muslim political power on the peninsula during the period from 711 to 1492.

This will not be a pure lecture survey of Medieval Spanish history. Rather, this course will require engaging the reading actively in weekly discussions, which each student will be required to lead at some point. Rather than examinations, you will write synthetic essays demonstrating your understanding and consideration of the material. Thus, attendance and reading will be critical to your success in the course.

Course Objectives

Students taking this course will:

- Learn about the various historical debates concerning the Medieval Iberian Reconquest
- Demonstrate the ability to read primary sources critically and secondary sources analytically
- Develop and write effective, supported essays, as well as practice making persuasive oral arguments regarding course themes
- Engage in comparative thinking designed to stimulate an understanding of the complexity of the Iberian Reconquest and the various roles of economy, religion, and politics in its development

Required Reading

The following titles are available at the Duckstore.


Additional readings indicate by an asterisk (*) are available online via Blackboard or as noted.
Assignments and Grading:

Your course grade will consist of four elements.

1) One Primary Source Analysis (4 – 5 pgs) based on the readings and discussions from the first half of the term, worth 30% of your final grade.

2) One Final Essay (6 – 7 pgs), worth 40% of your final grade.

3) Attendance and participation in any reading discussions, worth 30% of your final grade.

More details regarding topics and procedures for the papers will follow as the course progresses.

A Word about Plagiarism: Regrettably, I must make a statement regarding the offense of plagiarism. Any violation of the University of Oregon’s academic policy on plagiarism will result in my taking all necessary administrative action to report the conduct. I take the offense of plagiarism seriously, on an academic and personal level. Serious consequences up to and including failure of the course may result from the offense.

Policy Regarding Late Assignments or Make-up Examinations

All assignments are due by the end of class on the scheduled date unless I have granted an extension. Late assignments will not receive an evaluation. There will be no exceptions to this policy.

You must make all requests for extensions in advance. Naturally, I will consider emergencies on a case-by-case basis, but be advised that only verifiable emergencies will be acceptable.

Special Needs Note: If you are a student registered with the Accessible Ed Center as eligible for extra time on exams or for other specific needs associated with the class, please let me know immediately. Remember that it is your responsibility to make any arrangements necessary with the Accessible Education Center for exams or other accommodations.

In Case of Inclement Weather

Please consider signing up for UO ALERT if you have not already done so. To participate in UO Alert! follow the instructions below.

1. Log into DuckWeb (http://duckweb.uoregon.edu)
2. Select the “Personal Information” menu
3. Select the “Enter/Update Emergency Alert Phone” link
4. Enter your text-enabled cell phone number, including area code and then hit “Submit”

In the event of a closure or delay, you will receive a text notification from the University via this system. However, I may need to cancel classes because I cannot reach campus even though the University may remain open. Thus, you should plan to check your email for messages from me (via Blackboard) regarding any cancellations if the UO remains open.

If the University remains open and you do not receive an email message from me cancelling the class, we will meet on that day.

If the University delays the start of classes until 2:00 PM, we will not meet.
Student Conduct:

General: Please refrain from reading materials unrelated to our course during class. Please keep your voice down in the event you need to clarify a note with a neighbor, etc, and please keep any side conversations to a minimum. Never hesitate to ask a question if you need to do so.

Electronics: Please put cell phones into silent mode before class begins; no texting or viewing messages during class. Please confine your use of laptops or other devices to note taking, as activities unrelated to the course are distracting to me as well as to others and thus unacceptable (even if you sit in the back row). I reserve the right to prohibit the use of all electronics in class at any time.

Discussion: I would like to have relatively informal discussions, but please exercise appropriate courtesy in listening and speaking with your colleagues.

Schedule of Meetings

Week One

Monday, January 5
Introduction to the Course

Wednesday, January 7
The Spain the Muslims Conquered
Read: Reilly, 1-39.

Week Two

Monday, January 12
Al Andalus
Read: Reilly, 51-79

Wednesday, January 14
The Taifa Kingdoms
Read: Constable, #24, The Political Dilemma of a Granadan Ruler

Week Three

Monday, January 19
Martin Luther King Day, No Class

Wednesday, January 21
The Origin of Reconquest
Read: Constable, #13 The Kings of Asturias; Reilly, 90 – 121.

Week Four

Monday, January 26
The Cost of Defeat
Read: Constable, #22, The Conquest of Toledo

Wednesday, January 28
The Lure of the Frontier
Read: The Poem of the Cid

Week Five

Monday, February 2
“A Society Organized for War”
Read: James Powers, Ch. 4 (all) and Ch. 5, 6, 7, or 8 (groups)

Wednesday, February 4
Women and the Reconquest
Read: Heath Dillard, Daughters of the Reconquest Ch. 6 & 7 (all) and Ch. 3, 4, 5, or 8 (groups)

Week Six

Monday, February 9
“Convivencia”
Read: Las Siete Partidas*, Excerpts and Group Assignments; Maria Rosa Menocal, Ornament of the World (Excerpt)

Wednesday, February 11
The Disputation
Read: Constable, #57 Barcelona Disputation of 1263, #68 On Preaching and Conversion, #33, Two Arguments in Support of Christian Faith

Week Seven

Monday, February 16
Reconquest as Crusade?
Read: Joseph O’Callaghan, Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (Excerpt)

Wednesday, February 18
The Siege of Lisbon
Read: Constable, #31 The Siege of Lisbon

Week Eight

Monday, February 23
Midterm Essay Due
Maritime Expansion in Aragon

Wednesday, February 25
The Aggrandizement of Castile-Leon
Read: Reilly, 144-153

Week Nine

Monday, March 2
The Invasion of Abu Al-Hasan
Read: TBA

Wednesday, March 4
The War of the Two Pedros
Week Ten

Monday, March 9

The Conquest of Granada


Wednesday, March 11

The Legacy of the Reconquest

Read: John Edwards, A Conquistador Society? The Spain Columbus Left*

Final Papers due in my email inbox by Wednesday, March 18, at 5:00 PM.

Early papers very welcome. 😊