



REL 3520

Saints, Witches, and Cathedrals

Section: RVC

Internet/Fully Online

Fall Term 2026

Course Time Zone: Eastern Time (ET). Course due dates and times are according to this time zone.

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

This course will survey the early centuries of the second millennium of Christianity through the threefold lens of saints, witches, and cathedrals.

Topics include saints, miracles and magic, pilgrimage, bureaucratic canonization, violence and mysticism.

Textbook and Course Materials

The Pillars of the Earth

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Ken Follett

Publisher: Penguin

Publication Date: 2007

Copyright Date: 2007

ISBN 10: 0451222138

ISBN 13: 978-0451222138

Chapters/Pages: 1008 pages

The Name of the Rose

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Umberto Eco

Publisher: HarperVia

Publication Date: 2003

Copyright Date: 2003

ISBN 10: 0063279636

ISBN 13: 978-0063279636

Chapters/Pages: 608 pages

Panther Book Pack

Get all required course materials for \$22 per undergrad credit hour through Panther Book Pack. You'll be charged automatically unless you opt out within 3 days after the add/drop deadline.

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Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

Describe the religious, political, and social structures of medieval and early modern Christianity.

Explain the significance of cathedrals, pilgrimage, relics, saints, miracles, witchcraft, and mysticism in medieval Christian life.

Analyze how church authorities defined, regulated, and contested sainthood, heresy, witchcraft, magic, and religious reform.

Identify major theological debates from the medieval period through the Reformation, especially concerning sacraments, miracles, authority, and holiness.

Interpret primary, secondary, and literary sources on medieval and early modern Christianity using evidence-based historical analysis.

Expectations of this Course

This is an online course, which means most (if not all) of the course work will be conducted online. Expectations for performance in an online course are the same as a traditional course. In fact, online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

Students are expected to:

- **review the getting started** page located in the course modules;
- **introduce yourself to the class** during the first week by posting a self-introduction in the appropriate discussion;
- **take the practice quiz** to ensure that your computer is compatible with the learning management system, Canvas;
- **interact** online with instructor and peers;
- **review** and follow the course calendar and weekly outlines;
- **log in** to the course **X times** per week;

- **respond** to discussions by the due date specified. **No late work will be accepted;**
- **respond** to **emails** within **X days**;
- **submit** assignments by the corresponding deadline.

The instructor will:

- log in to the course **X times** per week;
- respond to **emails** within **24 hours**;
- grade assignments and/or provide feedback within **X days** of the assignment deadline.

Assignments & Assessments

Exams: Midterm and Final — 50% of final grade

Students will complete two exams: a midterm and a final. Each exam is worth 25% of the final grade. The exams assess comprehension of lectures, readings, and major course themes. Each exam is non-cumulative and covers only the material from its respective half of the course.

Each exam will include two parts: an objective section and an essay section. The objective section may include multiple choice, matching, and true/false questions, many of which will be drawn from the quiz question banks. The essay section will require students to develop evidence-based responses to broader interpretive questions. A list of possible essay questions will be distributed at least one week before each exam.

Students have one attempt on each exam. Exams will be available for a one week period, from 12:00 a.m. on the opening date until 11:59 p.m. on the closing date. Failure to complete an exam during the availability period will result in a zero except in cases of serious documented emergency.

Quizzes — 25% of final grade

There will be 11 quizzes over the course of the semester. Quizzes are designed

to assess regular engagement with the readings, lectures, and PowerPoints. Each quiz will be available for one week.

Students will have two attempts on each quiz. Each quiz is worth 11 points, with 10 points counting as 100%. Because quiz questions are drawn from larger question banks, the second attempt may include different questions from the first.

Students are responsible for ensuring that their computer and internet connection are compatible with the learning management system before taking graded quizzes or exams. Students should complete the online practice quiz during the first week of class from any computer they plan to use for course assessments.

Final Paper — 25% of final grade

Students will submit a 4-5 page research paper on a topic related to the course. Papers must make a clear argument, engage relevant course themes, and cite sources using a recognized citation style. Students should use the chosen citation style consistently throughout the paper.

Students may write on one of the following topics:

1. How did medieval cathedrals function as religious, political, social, and symbolic centers?
2. What was the religious significance of pilgrimage in medieval Christianity?
3. How did relics shape medieval understandings of holiness, sacred space, and divine power?
4. How did the medieval Church define and regulate sainthood?
5. What role did miracles play in medieval Christian belief and practice?
6. How did medieval Christians distinguish between miracle, magic, heresy, and witchcraft?
7. What social and theological factors contributed to witchcraft persecution?
8. What were the major theological issues at stake in Reformation debates over the Eucharist?
9. How did medieval mysticism challenge, deepen, or complicate institutional religion?

10. How did the Counter-Reformation respond to Protestant critiques of Catholic belief and practice?

Students may propose an alternative topic with instructor approval.

Grading

GRADING TABLE

Course Grades Distribution Table

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points for Each	Total Points Available	Weight
Midterm Exam	1	250	250	25%
Final Exam	1	250	250	25%
Quizzes	11	22.73	250	25%
Final Paper	1	250	250	25%
Total	14	—	1,000	100%

Letter Grade Distribution Table

Letter Grade	Sample Range %
A	95 to 100
A-	90 to 94
B+	87 to 89
B	83 to 86
B-	80 to 82
C+	77 to 79
C	70 to 76
D	60 to 69
F	0 to 59

Schedule of Topics

Week 1 | Introduction to the Medieval World: The Role of Cathedrals

Week 2 | Pilgrimage

Week 3 | Schism

Week 4 | Crusades

Week 5 | Theology I

Week 6 | Theology II

Week 7 | Sermons in Stone

Week 8 | Sainthood and Relics

Week 9 | Inquisition

Week 10 | Witchcraft

Week 11 | The Occult Tradition

Week 12 | Mysticism

Week 13 | The Reformation

Week 14 | The Counter-Reformation

Week 15 | Finals Week