

Past and Present in the Middle Ages

A Post-graduate course – Call for Papers

Bergen, August 2010

One of the most persistent links between past and present is the way in which every age invents histories to suit conceptions of itself. As Brian Stock influentially observed:

"the Renaissance invented the Middle Ages in order to define itself; the Enlightenment perpetuated them in order to admire itself; and the Romantics revived them in order to escape from themselves. In their widest ramifications 'the Middle Ages' thus constitute one of the most prevalent cultural myths of the modern world."

Yet, much as we perpetuate myths of the Middle Ages, medieval societies constructed conceptions of themselves in relation to their pasts. As Jürgen Habermas notes, people "considered themselves as 'modern' in the age of Charlemagne, in the twelfth century, and in the Enlightenment – in short whenever the consciousness of a new era developed in Europe through a renewed relationship to classical antiquity."

In light of these observations, the Nordic Centre for Medieval Studies (NCMS) invites doctoral students from all fields related to medieval studies to participate in an interdisciplinary summer school course in Bergen (9-13 August 2010). The course will give participating students the opportunity to present their on-going research to an audience of peers and established scholars. Confirmed speakers, who will also serve as instructors, include Professor Patrick J. Geary (UCLA), Professor Emeritus John Gillingham (London School of Economics), Professor Marianne Kalinke (U of Illinois-Urbana Champagne), Professor Emeritus Lars Lönnroth (Göteborg Universitet) and Professor Lars Boje Mortensen (Syddansk Universitet). In addition, Professor Sverre Bagge and Professor Else Mundal (both UiB) will participate in the majority of the sessions.

Broadly speaking, the theme explores the following questions. To what extent are the Middle Ages a myth of modernity used to distinguish the present from an anterior past? How do regional differences throughout the period disrupt or support our understanding of the medieval world as a discrete historical and cultural system? If viewed as a historical system, are the institutional frameworks and constraints of the Middle Ages limited to Europe, 500-1500, or does this system find parallels in other periods and geographies? How did the medieval world define its present circumstances, distinguish itself from the past and/ or incorporate the past into contemporary self-definitions?

We also welcome submissions from other areas of inquiry as part of our effort to bring together doctoral students from different fields and perspectives.

To apply, please send a one-page abstract no later than **1 April 2010** to the course co-ordinator, Sigbjørn Sønnesyn (sigbjorn.sonnesyn@cms.uib.no). Successful applicants will be notified by the end of April 2010. For further details, please see the following attachment.



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Further details:

Participants, the number of which will be limited, will receive a bursary covering the course fee, accommodation and activities. In addition, a limited number of travel bursaries will be made available upon application. Interested applicants should contact

Accepted participants will present their research (approximately 15 pages) and will receive comments from instructors and peers during the course of the programme. Participants will also be expected to engage and comment on the work of their peers.

Upon successful completion of the course, participants will be awarded 5 ECTS points.

This course is hosted by CMS, Bergen and organized within the Nordic Centre for Medieval Studies comprising medievalists from the Universities of Gothenberg, Helsinki, Southern Denmark and the Finnish Literature Society.

More information can be found at uib.no/cms/rs or by contacting Sigbjørn Sønnesyn (sigbjorn.sonnesyn@cms.uib.no)

