Saint-Omer, BASO 609 (s. XV), fol. 17r: Historiated Hierarchy of Being
This course is not intended for specialists in the middle ages or medieval science. Nor will it by itself turn you into a specialist, if you even had the intention of becoming one. Rather, its goal is to expose you to some of the (hopefully significant) literature in the field, both so that in the short term you can begin to prepare for Masters comprehensive examinations or Ph.D. qualifying examinations, and in the long term you can begin to see some characteristics of medieval science that are either different from or similar to whatever field becomes your special focus. And if, by chance, your eventual interest becomes the middle ages, you will have some foundation on which to build.

The topics and the readings I have selected for this course may appear to be somewhat broadly conceived. This choice springs from my belief that it is difficult in any period, but perhaps especially so in premodern ones, to grasp the nature of science without understanding the culture in which it developed. And so we will have occasion to explore topics in the social structure of the middle ages, the evolution of legal and political entities, medieval presuppositions and ideals of nature, man and society, and several other topics while we examine their relationship to medieval developments in the sciences.

Books for the Course


Schedule of Topics

August 26

Introduction to the Course

September 2

Science in the Patristic Period; Medieval Society


September 9

Medieval Technology.


September 16

Renaissance of the Twelfth Century.


September 23

Universities in the Middle Ages.


September 30

Curriculum of Science; Books, Scriptoria and Libraries.


Saint-Omer, BASO 595, fol. 1ra
Metaphysica Aristotelis

October 7

Condemnations of 1277.


Articuli reprobati parisius sub magistro Odone de Castro Radulfi (1241)
Saint-Omer, BASO 128, fol. 167vb

October 14

God and Mammon: the Interface of Economics and Analysis of Nature


October 21

Analytical Languages, Nominalism, Novelties in Late-Medieval Science.

October 28  

Mathematics and Optics.

Ibn al-Haytham, *Tractatus de visu et visione*  
*[Opticae thesaurus]*  
Saint-Omer, BASO 605, fol. 3ra


November 4  

Medicine and Natural History.


November 11  

Cosmology and Astronomy.

November 18

*Motion in the Middle Ages.*


December 2

December 9

*The End of the Middle Ages.*


Special Note

Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact me personally as soon as possible so that we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and facilitate your educational opportunities.

Requirements

1. The most important requirement is, of course, the completion of the readings as assigned. Because the course will not be a traditional lecture, but rather discussion punctuated by and occasional brief presentation by one of us, it is imperative that everyone be able to contribute.

2. Each student will prepare a substantial historiographical review focused on a topic chosen by mutual agreement, to be submitted on December 9.

3. On December 9, I will distribute an essay topic structured around issues within the course. Completed essays will be due December 16.