

HIST31621: Christ's Knights Hospitallers and Templars in the Latin East and Beyond

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Temple Church, London

*built in the later twelfth century on the model of the supposed
Temple in Jerusalem (but actually the Dome on the Rock)*

The idea that monks – men who fought the metaphorical battle against the Devil's temptations through prayer and contemplation – should take up the sword and fight in literal battle against the supposed enemies of the faith was a shocking innovation of the twelfth century. The study of the military religious orders, the fighting monks, is the study of a set of paradoxes: care for the sick and slaughter of the infidel; centres of action on the periphery of Europe; Christian lordship of Islamic populations – not to mention the central paradox of the 'fighting monk' himself. We will interrogate these oppositions to grasp what the military religious

orders can tell the historian about the nature of medieval society. How could these apparent contradictions be negotiated and reconciled? What did the Hospitallers and the Templars think they were? What did others think they were? Why were the Templars brutally suppressed, but the Hospitallers still survive?

Outline Content

1. Introduction. 2+3. Genesis: The Formation of the Military Religious Orders in the Twelfth-Century Latin East. 4+5. Identity and Controversy: (a) The Construction of Collective Identity; (b) Controversy and Support in the Latin West. 6+7. Lordship, Society, and Warfare: (a) Lordship and Power in the Latin East; (b) Rule in a cultural contact zone. 8+9. Coping with Crisis: The Trial of the Templars (and the Hospitaller Survival). 10+11. The Hospitallers and the Teutonic Knights in the Later Middle Ages: (a) Territorial Lordship and State Formation on Rhodes and in Prussia; (b) The Burden of History: the purpose of the Orders in a changed world

Assessment: *formative* source analysis in pairs, with peer-review; *summative* source analysis, individual, 1500 words (40%) and source-based essay, individual, 2500 words (60%). The course will be taught by eleven three-hour workshops, involving short (20-30 minute) lecture-style presentations, group discussion, and student-led seminar sessions.

The course should include a full-day excursion to London, dependent on the pandemic situation (date to be arranged), with tour and study (a) of the Temple Church and (b) of the Museum of the Order of St John at Clerkenwell, with its collection of medieval manuscripts and artefacts. These sites were the medieval headquarters of the two main military religious orders in England.

Undergraduate Theses (HIST30970/-80) can be linked to this course. I will consider most sensible proposals. This course provides a sound base for working on projects relating to other religious orders, to conceptions of identity, to rule and lordship, to cross-cultural contact and life in the Latin East, and to manuscript and material culture in the central and later Middle Ages. Issues in which you have gained expertise as a modern historian can easily be studied in relation to the Middle Ages: there is no shortage of primary material in translation.