HIST21252:

Revolutionary Cities:
The Urban world of the Middle Ages

The 'Ladder of Paradise' rising from a city
[Rylands Collection, © University of Manchester Library,
Italian MS 4, f. 2r]

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This course explores a series of interconnecting developments which placed cities at the centre of power and innovation in the medieval world in the period c.1000 to c.1500. So transformative was this process that we might conceptualise these cities as revolutionary. We will explore how power and society was constructed within cities. In addition we will examine competing concepts of the city as an embodiment of sin or of holiness. Alongside this will we question how wealth was generated within cities and how some of the consequences of a profit economy and rising population were managed through welfare provision and charitable activity. Central to the module is the importance of landscape, and how monuments, topography, and rural hinterlands shaped urban socio-religious and political communities. Finally, we will assess how learning (especially the rise of universities) and history-writing enabled cities to position themselves as centres of knowledge, memory and identities.

Indicative topics:

- Demography and diversity
- Power and 'capital' cities
- Liberty and city-states
- Sinful cities
- Holy cities
- Wealth: commerce and revenues
- The Welfare city: health, poverty and charity
- Urban landscapes: monuments and topographies
- The boundaries of the urban world: cities and hinterlands
- Centres of Knowledge: Schools and Universities
- Centres of Memory: urban histories and panegyric

Teaching Methods:

1 x 1 hour lecture, 1 x 2 hour seminar per week.

Assessment:

1) Source Analysis	1, 000 words	30%
2) Research Essay	3, 000 words	70%

Indicative Reading

- Beňes, Carrie. E., *Urban Legends. Civic Identity and the Classical Past in Northern Italy, 1250-1350* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011)
- Brasher, Sally Mayall, *Hospitals and Charity: Religious culture and civic life in medieval northern Italy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017)
- Bruzelius, Caroline, *Preaching, building, and burying: friars in the Medieval city* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2014)
- Clark, Peter (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Cities in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)
- Goodson, Caroline, Lester, Anne E. and Symes, Carol (eds), *Cities, Texts and Social Networks, 400-1500. Experiences and Perceptions of Medieval Urban Space* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010)
- Lapidus, Ira Marvin, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984)
- Lilley, Keith D., *City and Cosmos. The Medieval World in Urban Form* (London: Reaktion, 2009)
- Oldfield, Paul, *Urban Panegyric and the Transformation of the Medieval City, 1100-1300* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019)
- Phipps, Teresa, *Medieval Women and Urban Justice: commerce, crime and community in England, 1300–1500* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).
- Rawcliffe, Carole, *Urban Bodies. Communal health in Late Medieval English towns and cities* (Woodbridge : Boydell & Brewer, 2013)

Zoom consultation hour: Wednesday 14th June at 10.00-11.00
https://zoom.us/j/95314474505
Meeting ID: 953 1447 4505
Passcode: 168624