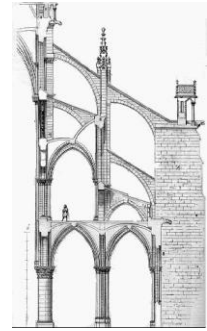


MDST 300.001 Fall 2013
Major Paper Assignment

Due: Monday Dec 2 in class in www.turnitin.com

Length: at least 7 pages exclusive of Works Cited Page (MLA documentation)

For this assignment, I would like you to revisit your thinking for your Hot Topics list and choose **one** of your assumptions or questions about the Middle Ages. In your research paper, you will critically examine that assumption or question, using our class Resources page as a starting point for finding **scholarly, peer-reviewed evidence** about your topic. (Googling alone won't do—and will penalize your score!) Then, in your conclusion, you will **reflect** on how your scholarly investigations have changed, deepened, broadened, reinforced, destroyed (whatever the result was) your preconception about that idea.



For instance, if one of your assumptions about the Middle Ages was that “in the Middle Ages, women were subservient to men,” how will your investigations affect that assumption? How does studying about Cecelia Penifader and Eleanor of Aquitaine affect your assumption? Was your initial picture right? Deep enough? Complex enough? If one of your questions was “How advanced were the weapons used in the Middle Ages?” what will your investigations tell you? And how does that change your view of the Middle Ages? You may need to narrow the assumption down; if your question was “What about the Crusades?” obviously you'll need to focus the paper more narrowly so it has a thesis and doesn't turn into a Wikipedia-style information dump. **Your paper must have an argumentative thesis; it can't be an info dump of “everything I can find out about the Vikings;” it must have some point to it.**

The goals of this paper, then, are two-fold—first, to get you to do **scholarly** research using **valid sources** and present the results in a solid paper, and secondly, to allow you to reflect on and build on an idea that's important to YOUR picture of the Middle Ages. So it's important that you choose an idea YOU are interested in and really want to write about. I will be happy to brainstorm ideas with you; stop by the office or bounce them off me in an e-mail. Several students in the past have successfully submitted their papers to Big SURS, NCUR, SEMA, and to the Longwood University Undergraduate Medieval Studies conference (see the “Assignments” page for links to some of these conferences as I get them), and I'd love to help you develop a paper that you can submit somewhere!

So that you have enough time to do a good job on this paper, I will require that you have a **topic proposal** approved by me no later than Wednesday, Nov. 13. This should be sent to me as an e-mail (and you can do it any time before then—don't drag your feet!). In it you should write a paragraph explaining the question or concept you are investigating, and identify **five** scholarly sources you will use as information for your investigation. (These should be listed in correct MLA Works Cited form.) I will review the e-mail and send you a response either approving the topic or suggesting revisions.

Of course you should feel free to bring outlines and rough drafts by my office as you're working on the paper; I'll be happy to discuss them with you. **The paper must be fully documented in MLA fashion; consult *The Correct Use of Borrowed Information* online or in your handbook if you have questions.**

Turn in your essay to www.turnitin.com by 5 PM on Monday December 2 and please bring a hard copy to class that day as well; it speeds up the grading process for me.

Our class ID # for www.turnitin.com is 6795162 and our class password is _____.