

ENGL 209: Literature and History
Final Exam Essay
(40%)

As a Liberal Studies course, our class has focused on “examining critically various cultures through historical and contemporary contexts at the local, national, and/or global levels.” (LS SLO 7). For us, that has meant examining the cultures of medieval Europe (and to some extent the medieval Islamic world), especially as presented in the literature of the period.

For your final exam essay, you are required to write an essay in which you discuss and analyze a specific aspect of medieval culture we have addressed in the class. In particular, you should focus your essay around a position (thesis) concerning something you learned about that issue that disrupted your expectations or preconceptions coming into the course. In other words, what did you learn about that aspect of medieval culture that surprised you the most or changed your mind the most about the Middle Ages.

In your essay

- **THESIS:** Identify the specific aspect of medieval culture you are addressing and state what you learned that was most surprising.
- **SUPPORT & ANALYSIS:** Discuss that issue as it appears in at least three works (you can do more). Try to be specific. Refer to specific passages and discuss how they support your analysis.
- **RELATE TO NOW/US/YOU:** Compare the medieval handling of that issue with how we deal with it today. That is, what can we learn from medieval culture that can relate to or inform our modern world?

Topics – organize your essay around ONE of the following cultural issues:

- A. The role of religion (especially religious tolerance or intolerance) in medieval (and our) culture.
- B. The role of sexual activity (promiscuity, adultery, premarital sex, sexual humor, sexual violence, etc.) in medieval (and our) culture.
- C. Gender in medieval (and our) culture (agency, gender norms, lgbtq+ issues, etc.).
- D. The role of class stratification (wealth, power, poverty, class difference, duty to lord/state/ruler [chivalric/feudal], etc.) in medieval (and our) culture.

Submit your essay as an attached MSWord document or txt file.