Encountering the Other: the Middle East during the Crusading Period

Module Code: 15PHIH037  
Status: Module Not Running 2019/2020  
Credits: 15  
Year of study: Any  
Taught in: Term 1

During the Crusading period populations from Latin Europe and the Arabic Middle East experienced the closest interaction in the pre-modern period. Traditionally seen in terms of warfare and military conflict this course aims at offering a wider perspective on the two centuries between 1098 and 1291. Students will discuss a range of issues including diplomatic relations, perceptions of the Other, daily life and modern perceptions of the Crusading period. In order to get a more refined understanding of what forms the encounter took, students will consider primary sources beyond the standard chronicles, for instance travel literature, poetry, documentary sources and material culture. Throughout the course we will try to come to terms with the question how we can write a history of this period beyond binary notions such as Crusade vs. jihad and Franks vs Muslims.

Objectives and learning outcomes of the module

At the end of the course the students:

(1) Gained insights into medieval Middle Eastern history.

(2) Acquired a strong understanding of how medieval Middle Eastern societies reacted to the Crusading movement.

(3) Have knowledge of the pertinent sources.

(4) Are able to critically assess prevailing approaches to the subjects covered.

(5) Be able to write a competent well-structured essay making substantial use of primary materials.

Method of assessment

Essay of 3,000 words worth 80% of the final mark, Reaction paper/book review of 1,000 words worth 20% of the final mark

Suggested reading

- Holt, P.M.: The Crusader States and Their Neighbours, 1098-1291, Harlow 2004
Mourad, S./Lindsay, J.: The Intensification and Reorientation of Sunni jihad Ideology in the Crusader Period: Ibn ʿAsākir of Damascus (1105 - 1176) and his Age, Leiden 2013.

Selected Primary Sources in Translation


Disclaimer

Important notice regarding changes to programmes and modules
The Crusades were a series of medieval-era military expeditions sanctioned by the Catholic Church to "liberate conquer religiously significant territories in the Eastern Mediterranean. Yes, the followers of so-called "religions of peace" openly stated that they would kill millions for political power to keep the Holy Land in the hands of their religion. After all of that bullshit, the Crusades in the Middle East were a miserable failure. Although the First Crusade succeeded in capturing Jerusalem, the crusaders were unable to hold onto it through the subsequent military campaigns. Israel/Palestine has been held by non-Christians ever since. The crusades opened up trade and learning to Europe, which was a cesspool of ignorance and economic stagnation prior to the crusades. – The crusades expanded trade and expanded the flow of ideas, but they did not invent them overnight the way simple books will present it. That crusaders didn’t bathe, weren’t cultured, etc. – That one's so wrong I don't know where to begin. There's this prevalent idea that crusaders were crazy barbarians who couldn’t even count, and the Muslim were like desert themed neo-classical humanists who would have invented Jeffersonian democracy if the crusaders hadn't. The Crusades were a series of religious wars between Christians and Muslims started primarily to secure control of holy sites considered sacred by both groups. In all, eight major Crusade expeditions occurred between 1096 and 1291. The bloody, violent and often ruthless conflicts propelled the status of European Christians, making them major players in the fight for land in the Middle East. What Were the Crusades? By the end of the 11th century, Western Europe had emerged as a significant power in its own right, though it still lagged behind other Mediterranean civilizations, such as that of the...