

## FREN 622: Cultural Diversity in Medieval France

This course is **an introduction** to medieval French literature all the while focusing on French **interactions** with the Arab Islamic world from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. Because a discussion of interactions and hybridity requires first a solid grounding in each literary and cultural tradition, we will spend a great deal of time studying each tradition separately (with a much heavier emphasis on the French tradition because this is a French class after all). We will do two cross-cultural analyses at the end of the course so that you may gain an understanding of what it means to conduct cross-cultural research.

We will begin by addressing theoretical and critical issues essential to studying the medieval period in general and multiculturalism in the Middle Ages in particular. We will then turn our attention to a variety of literary genres (epic, romance, *lais*, lyric poetry) in order better to understand the complex dynamics of power and seduction between the East and the West, between Islam and Christianity, as well as the cultural and literary hybridity of medieval French textuality. At the end of the semester, as we analyze medieval French texts, we will juxtapose them to medieval Arabic cultural and literary material. This comparative, cross-cultural analysis will help you grasp the process of literary and cultural transmission from the Arab Islamic world to the West. All texts will be available in either modern French or English translation, and no previous knowledge of Old French or Arabic is required.

In summary, there are two main objectives in this class: One (as the title of the course indicates) is to read and analyze medieval texts in their inherently intertextual and multicultural context; second to develop both a methodology to read medieval literary texts and to learn about the tools of research available to study the Middle Ages from a cross-cultural perspective.