DEPARTMENT OF ART HISTORY & ART CONSERVATION

Winter Term 2019

ARTH 415/838/3.0
Topics in Medieval Art
Medievalism: the myth of the Middle Ages in Modernity, c. 1750-1950

INSTRUCTOR: Associate Professor Matthew M Reeve
TIME: TBA
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

“The Middle Ages” may be the dominant myth of Western modernity. Perpetually reimagined from the Renaissance onward as an other, a pre-industrial, pre-modern, even prelapsarian period, “the Middle Ages” has become a locus for modernity to project its anxieties about the present and to express its longing for a lost past. The Middle Ages suggested to modernity a figure to explore radical social formations: political utopias, religious and aesthetic structures, anti-industrial returns to nature, queer monastic structures, etc. Put differently, the Middle Ages was one of the most progressive tropes through which political and aesthetic change was imagined in modernity. This course will explore the revival of medieval forms in the eighteenth century and press forward to focus on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a particular focus on English, American and Canadian art. We will explore progenitors of medievalism in architecture, painting and interior design such as Horace Walpole and William Beckford, social reactionaries such as AWN Pugin, then consider the achievements of the Pre-Raphaelites, William Blake, William Burgess, C.R. Ashbee, Walter Crane, and North American iterations of medievalism in the work of Ralph Adams Cram, American neo-medieval buildings such as Hammond Castle and Toronto’s Casa Loma.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & FORMAT:
A detailed list of readings and requirements will be available during the first class. Each class will be structured as a seminar discussion. Regular and attentive attendance is expected. Assignments will include seminar presentations, brief weekly writing submissions, an annotated bibliography and research proposal, and a final research paper.