

## History 097: Charlemagne and his Empire Brown University, Fall Term, 2002

### Information

Tuesdays, P Hour (4:00-6:20 pm)  
Smith-Buonanno G18

OH: Tuesdays, 10:30 – 12:00, & by appt.

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### Course Objectives

This seminar will explore the first great medieval empire, centered around the career of one man, Charlemagne, ‘the father of Europe’. We will use primary sources from the Carolingian era to investigate daily life, religion, trade, warfare, culture, and the rise and fall of Charlemagne’s dynasty. We will approach Charlemagne’s persona through medieval and modern biographies and the medieval epic fiction of the *chansons de geste*.

Why focus on such a remote figure, and on a transitory empire? Charlemagne’s political experiment was the first to rise out of the ashes of the Roman Empire. By looking closely at the Carolingians, we can get an intimate and focused introduction to many of the great questions of medieval history, including the nature of power and the evolution of government in the West; the historical role of the Catholic Church; the preindustrial economy; and the early culture of ‘feudalism’.

We can extrapolate from our study: how and why did this ‘empire’—or any empire—succeed? How and why did it disintegrate? What was the legacy of the Roman Empire in the early Middle Ages? What is the legacy of Charlemagne himself as a legendary hero?

Methodologically, we will employ critical analysis of primary sources to explore the period; we will also focus on the study of a single person (essentially indulging in biography) and assessment of his/her role in the events of the era, through comparison and interpolation from diverse sources.

### Texts Available for Purchase:

- Roger Collins, *Charlemagne* (Toronto, 1998). *The current standard biography of Charlemagne.*
- Pierre Riché, *Daily Life in the World of Charlemagne*, trans. J. A. McNamara (Penn., 1988). *Older work, but richly documents many aspects of Charlemagne’s era.*
- Carolingian Chronicles*, trans. Bernhard W. Scholz (Michigan, 1972). *Full and well-annotated text of the ‘Royal Frankish Annals’ and Nithard’s ‘Histories’.* *Nithard is in Dutton but the Annals are not.*
- Einhard and Notker the Stammerer, *Two Lives of Charlemagne*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Penguin, 1969). *The standard edition of Einhard’s and Notker’s biographies.* *Einhard’s biography is in Dutton; Notker’s is not.*
- Carolingian Civilization: a Reader*, ed. Paul Edward Dutton (Broadview, 1993). *A fairly comprehensive selection of primary sources either excerpted or in full.*
- The Song of Roland*, trans. Glyn Burgess (Penguin, 1990). *The most famous medieval epic poem, featuring a fictionalized Charlemagne in a fictionalized war.*

Additional group and individual readings will only be available on **reserve** at Rockefeller Library. A few primary sources in translation are available on the

Internet, especially at Paul Halsall's *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, which has a section on the Carolingians: <[www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook1h.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook1h.html)>.

### *Student Requirements*

Each week we will all read one or more essential primary and secondary sources; the primary sources will be the main focus of discussion and response. In addition to the common readings, each week one or two students will individually read and report on related texts; these presentations, critiqued by the other students, will comprise one of the basic coursework components.

A further technical point: everyone must have an e-mail account and monitor it: discussion as well as announcements may well continue outside 'P-hour'. In addition to regular brief written responses (submitted by e-mail), and the infrequent presentation of extra reading in the class, there will be one or two short formally graded essays, and a project on a topic of your own choosing at the end of term, which will involve a formal paper and a class presentation of work-in-progress. Participation comprises timely reading of the assignment material, submission of thoughtful, on-topic responses **and** active engagement in discussions.

### *Grade components (tentative)*

Overall participation / responses	25%
Presentations & short essays	35%
Term Paper Project	40%

Please be aware that failure to complete all assignments and course components will result in a failing grade for the course. Late work is penalized on a strict scale.

## **Weekly topics & readings**

### **1 (Sep 3). Introduction: Charlemagne**

[Einhard, *Life of Charlemagne*, preface; *Song of Roland*, first stanza; Riché, part I (pp. 3-56); Collins, ch. 1. }

### **2 (Sep 10). The coming of the Carolingians**

Einhard, *Life*, c. 1-3.

*Royal Frankish Annals* (in Scholz), years 741-768.

'Clausula de unctioe Pippini', Dutton, no. 4

Collins, chaps. 1-2.

for broader background, you may want to read: C. Warren Hollister, *Medieval Europe: a Short History*, 8th ed. (McGraw Hill, 1998), chaps. 2, 4, 6.

presentations: *Liber Historiae Francorum* (on reserve); possible secondary sources, incl. Patrick Geary, *Before France and Germany*; Walter Ullmann, *Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages*.

### **3 (Sep 17). A War-leader**

*Royal Frankish Annals*: 768 - 793.

Einhard, *Life of Charlemagne*, book 2, chaps. 4-17.

Capitulary for the Saxons (Dutton, no. 13.1).

Riché, part II (pp. 59-130).

presentations: Bernard Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare: prelude to Empire*.

### **4 (Sep 24). Franks, the Popes and the outside world**

Einhard, *Life*, chaps 18-29.

Documents on the Papacy (Dutton, etc. — handouts)

*The 'Pilgrimage' of Charlemagne* (excerpt; handout)

Henri Pirenne, *Mohammed & Charlemagne* (excerpt; handout);

Hodges and Whitehouse, *Mohammed, Charlemagne and the Origins of Europe* (excerpt; reserve).

presentation: *The Pirenne Thesis: Analysis, Criticism, and Revision* (ed. A. F. Havighurst; 1958).

### **5 (Oct 1). Living on the land**

Riché, part III (pp. 133-177).

Polyptichs (Dutton, no. 30—do his data charts); additional Polyptich handout;

19th-century U.S. Census returns (handout / website);

capitulary *De villis* (Dutton, no. 13.5-13.6, pp. 75-78; fuller text in handout)

Adalhard of Corbie, statutes for Corbie (Dutton, 32);

presentations: Georges Duby, *Early Growth of the European Economy*; and / or Duby, *Rural Economy and Country Life in the Medieval West*

**6 (Oct 8). Administration: laws and documents of a realm**

capitularies (Dutton, 13; specifics will be highlighted); additional texts in ed. Loyn & Perceval: selection tba  
charters: various (handout).

presentations: *Lex salica* (trans. Katherine Fisher Drew);  
Ganshof, *Frankish Institutions under Charlemagne* (part 1).

**7 (Oct 15). Carolingian Renaissance 1: the Church in the Empire**

Life of Benedict of Aniane (Dutton, no. 26);  
Lorna Price, *Plan of Saint-Gall in Brief*.  
Penitential of Halitgar (Dutton, 36);  
Charlemagne and Leo III (Dutton 11, 12);  
Theodulf of Orléans: precepts for priests (Dutton, 18).

presentations: Horn and Born, *Plan of Saint-Gall* (Berkeley, 3 vols.).

**8 (Oct 22). Carolingian Renaissance 2: arts & letters**

Theodulf and Alcuin: poems and letters (Dutton, nos. 17, 19-21)  
Riché, part IV (pp. 181-244)  
Dhuoda of Septimania: *Manual for my son* (excerpt - reserve)

presentations: Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word*.

**9. (Oct 29). Einhard and Charlemagne**

Einhard, *Life of Charlemagne*, entire (reread);  
Notker and the monk of Saint-Gall, *Life of Charlemagne* (entire);  
Suetonius, *Life of Augustus* (e-text and / or handout)

presentations: not yet set (hagiography / biography)

**10. (Nov 5). Einhard and the Relics**

Einhard, *History of the Translation of the Blessed Martyrs in Christ, Marcellinus and Peter* (Dutton, no. 34, entire [50 dense pp.]).

presentations: *Book of Sainte Foy*; Geary, *Furta sacra: theft of relics in the central Middle Ages* (2d ed., Princeton, 1992).

## **11 (Nov 12). *Division of Empire***

*Divisiones* and *ordinationes regni* (Dutton, 22, 23, 27)  
Nithard, *Histories*, entire (Sholz or Dutton);  
Treaty of Verdun (Dutton, 46)

presentations: 'The Astronomer', *Life of Louis the Pious* (ed. Cabaniss as *Son of Charlemagne*).

## **12 (Nov 19). *Destruction of Empire***

*Vision of Charlemagne* (Dutton, 55); *Vision of Charles the Fat* (Dutton, 75); Hincmar, *On the governance of the palace* (Dutton, no. 72); Annals of Saint-Vaast (Dutton 69); Abbo of Fleury on the Viking siege of Paris (Dutton, 71)

presentations: Flodoard's and /or Richer's chronicles; Jean Dunbabin, *France in the Making* (excerpt)

## **13 (Nov 26): *Afterlife 1: Charlemagne in the feudal age***

*The Song of Roland*; *Deeds of the Counts of Barcelona*; *Genealogy of the Counts of Flanders* (typescript translations by T. N. Bisson)  
Amy Remensnyder, *Remembering Kings Past* (excerpt)

presentations: *Pseudo-Turpin's Chronicle*; *William of Orange*.

## **14 (Dec 3). *Afterlife 2: Charlemagne in the modern world***

(dossier of visual depictions of Charlemagne: dist. in class or placed on line)  
Thomas Bulfinch, *Legends of Charlemagne, or, the Romance of the Middle Ages* (1863):  
introduction; Morrissey, "Charlemagne," in *Lieux de Mémoire* (handout).

presentation: *Karl der Grosse: Lebenswerk und Nachleben* (Düsseldorf, 1966);  
presentations of works-in-progress.

## **15 (Dec 10). *wrap up; presentation of works-in-progress***

✂ Final paper due Monday, December 16, at 5:00 pm

