Early Medieval Art

Prof. Karen Overbey

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Office hours: Wed 1:00-2:00 or by appointment

Belt buckle from Sutton Hoo burial (detail); gold, niello; early 7th century, Anglo-Saxon [British Museum 1939.1010.1]

This course investigates the production, function and reception of art in Western Europe from c.400-1000 CE. From the jeweled adornments of the Saxon kings to the illuminated Apocalypse manuscripts of tenth-century Spain, from Carolingian basilicas to Irish stone crosses, art and architecture was part of the dynamic religious, political, and economic life of the medieval period. Course topics include: craft production and artistic techniques; political patronage of art; Christian iconography and medieval devotion; portable arts, including clothing, jewelry, and weapons; cross-cultural exchange; and the role of artworks in defining ‘self’ and ‘other.’

Learning objectives:
• Become familiar with the art and architecture of Europe in the early Middle Ages
• Learn to analyze, interpret, and write about material culture
• Contextualize the cultural and historical significance of artworks, objects, and architecture
• Read actively and engage critically with both medieval primary texts and modern scholarship
• Develop and practice the ability to present research in both oral and written forms

Course Requirements:
The course includes a 12-page term paper; two exams (in-class); short responses to readings; and a manuscript project, in which you will study a facsimile of a medieval manuscript at Tisch Library. For that project, you will give a short presentation about the manuscript, and write a 5-page paper. Guidelines for all assignments will be posted on the course Trunk site. Attendance for all class meetings is expected.

Texts and Readings:
There is no specific textbook for the course; readings will be assigned from several books available on reserve at Tisch library, and other texts available as PDFs. We will have regular readings from Lawrence Nees, Early Medieval Art (New York: Oxford UP, 2002) and William Diebold, Word and Image: An Introduction to Medieval Art (Westview Press, 2001) — both are available for online purchase, and recommended. In addition, you will be expected to regularly consult reference works on medieval art, such as James Snyder’s Medieval Art — this is especially helpful for images and historical context.
Requirements and Grading

• Attendance and participation
• Two exams (in-class on 11/2 and 12/12)
• Object Description
• Manuscript Project
• Term Paper

Failure to complete any requirement may result in a failing grade for the course.

Attendance & Participation: 10% of course grade
Attendance and engaged participation are expected at all class meetings; short online summaries of and responses to readings are part of the assessment of participation. Habitual lateness or an excess of absences will substantially lower your participation grade; if you have 6 absences you will fail the course. In certain cases your absence may be excused due to emergency circumstances or religious observation. When your absence can be anticipated, please contact me.

Object Description: ungraded
A one-page paper due on 9.26. This paper provides practice in using art historical terminology and visual analysis. Choice of objects and assignment guidelines will be posted on Trunk. Paper should be submitted online, using the “Dropbox” feature of Trunk.

Exams: 40% of course grade (20% each); in-class, 11.2 and 12.12
Identification of objects and images; definitions of terms; comparisons and short discussions of artworks; essay questions. Exams cover major objects/sites from the course, and include material from assigned readings. Not cumulative.

Manuscript Project: 20% of course grade; due 10.17
5-page paper and 10- to 15-minute presentation based on study of a facsimile of a medieval manuscript in Special Collections, Tisch Library. Each student will work with a different facsimile manuscript, and research the historical and art historical contexts for the original medieval manuscript. One class session will be devoted to individual study of facsimiles; each student should arrange additional study time with the director of Special Collections.

Term Paper: 30% of course grade; due 12.20
12-page paper (with appropriate notes and bibliography), combining secondary source research with analysis of objects. Some suggested topics will be posted on Trunk; alternately, you may develop your own topic on a particular object, on a visual discourse, or on a methodological issue in the study of early medieval art. Topics must be approved by Prof. Overbey by Monday 11/14. An optional draft may be submitted by 12/7; see Trunk for details.
Policies and Resources

Academic Integrity
Honesty, scholarly ethics and responsibility are fundamental to the integrity of the University community. Academic dishonesty threatens the pursuit of knowledge and will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty including plagiarism will result in strict penalties including, but not limited to, a failing grade in this course. You will receive an F (zero) on any paper, exam or assignment (print or electronic) you turn in that is plagiarized in any way; plagiarism may result in disciplinary action by the University. Students are responsible for knowing Tufts policies on academic integrity, which can be found here: https://students.tufts.edu/student-academic-disciplinary

Sexual Misconduct Policy/Sexual Assault Policy (Title IX)
Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here: http://oeo.tufts.edu/tufts-university-title-ix-liasons/ and emergency contact information here: http://oeo.tufts.edu/emergency-resources/

Student Accessibility Services
Tufts University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Students who have documented physical or learning disabilities and need accommodations for their classes should email Student Accessibility Services. (accessibility@tufts.edu) Student Accessibility Services will work with you to provide counseling and support and arrange accommodations such as extended time exams, e-books, and time management tutoring. Additional information is available here: http://uss.tufts.edu/arc/disability/

Additional Information on Assignments and Absences

- All work is due as noted on the course calendar and/or Trunk.
- Work turned in late will be downgraded one-third letter grade per day.
- Any arrangements for extensions are at the instructor’s discretion, and may include a grade reduction.
- Computer and/or printer failure will not be considered a valid excuse for late or missing assignments. Most assignments will be turned in through Trunk.
- Keep a copy of all assignments until you receive your final grade for the course.
- Unless specifically requested, do not submit assignments as email attachments.
- If you are absent from class, for whatever reason, be prepared for the next class meeting by following the syllabus.
- Please notify me in advance of any scheduled absences. More than two unexcused absences, or frequent lateness, will lower your course grade. Excused absences must be documented in writing by your Dean, your academic advisor, or Health Services.
### Calendar Overview

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>Intro to Early Medieval Art</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>9.12</td>
<td>Late Antique &amp; Early Christian Art: Roman &amp; Byzantine Traditions</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>9.14</td>
<td>“Barbarians”</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>9.19</td>
<td>Jewelry, Wealth and Adornment</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>9.21</td>
<td>Visigothic Spain</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>9.26</td>
<td>Christian Art and Narrative <em>(Description paper due)</em></td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>9.28</td>
<td>Reading Illuminated Manuscripts</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>Manuscript Production and Technique <em>(meet in Tisch Library)</em></td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>Manuscript Facsimile Workshop <em>(meet in Tisch Library)</em></td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>10.10</td>
<td><em>Indigenous Peoples Day</em>: no class meeting</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>10.12</td>
<td>The Book of Kells: Word and Image</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>10.17</td>
<td>Manuscript Presentations <em>(meet in Tisch Library)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>10.19</td>
<td>Manuscript Presentations <em>(meet in Tisch Library)</em></td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>10.24</td>
<td>Burials, Hoards, and Other Discoveries: Anglo-Saxon Art</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>10.26</td>
<td>Sculpture and the Landscape in Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms</td>
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<td>10.31</td>
<td>Exam 1</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>The Staffordshire Hoard</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>Carolingian Art: Symbolic Architecture</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>Treasuries, Reliquaries, and Devotional Art</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>11.14</td>
<td>Medieval Iberia: Al-Andalus <em>(paper topic due)</em></td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>11.16</td>
<td>Art and Patronage in the Courts</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>11.21</td>
<td>Workshop (details TBA)</td>
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<td>11.23</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break: no class meeting</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>11.28</td>
<td>Mozarabic Spain: Images of Past, Present, Future</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>11.30</td>
<td>Invasion and Settlement: Vikings in England and Ireland</td>
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<td>12.5</td>
<td>Anglo-Scandinavian Art</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>Conclusions and Discussion <em>(optional paper draft due)</em></td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>12.12</td>
<td>Exam 2</td>
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Tuesday Dec 20: Term Paper due online. Papers gladly accepted sooner!

*This syllabus subject to change. See Trunk for updates*
Calendar: Topics, Readings, Assignments
See Trunk for assignment guidelines, links to texts, additional suggested readings, full bibliographic citations, and online resources

EMA = Nees, Early Medieval Art
W&I = Diebold, Word and Image

W 9.7 Intro to Early Medieval Art
- Nees, “Introduction” [PDF]
- and review of Speculum 72.4 [online]

M 9.12 Late Antique & Early Christian Art: Roman & Byzantine Traditions
- EMA 17-45

W 9.14 “Barbarians”
- EMA 63-79
- Primary sources on Romans and “Others” (see folder on Trunk)

For discussion: After reading a selection of primary source texts from the late Roman world (see "Roman sources" in Readings section of BB), consider the ways in which Roman writers represent "self" and "other." How do Priscius and Sidonius describe the "barbarian" courts they visit? What is striking about their descriptions and characterizations? What do these writers seem to be valuing, and de-valuing? Why? What is the role of visual and/or material culture in identifying "self" and "other"? Consider also the ways in which these texts resonate with (or complicate, etc) issues raised by Nees.

M 9.19 Jewelry, Wealth and Adornment
- Bright Light in the Dark Ages, Chapter 4 135-193: read essay (135-164) and skim catalog (164-193); choose 1 object to discuss in class.
- Also suggested: Chapters 2 & 3 (your object can come from these chapters)
- book available in department; see Prof. Overbey

W 9.21 Visigothic Spain
- Lopez, “The Formation of Visigothic Spain” [PDF]

M 9.26 Christian Art and Narrative
- W&I 9-44, 71-98
- Description paper due (online)
For discussion: What were some of the roles and functions of early medieval manuscripts? What connotations do “copy” and “original” have in manuscripts? How and why is this different from our notions of the terms? What do we know of the practices of early medieval scribes and illuminators?

For discussion: Write a 2-paragraph summary of the essay you read, focusing on the writer’s main argument, and the specific material evidence employed. Be ready to talk about this text in relation to Karkov’s arguments about the Bewcastle Cross: what are some of the ways that sculpture related to landscape in Anglo-Saxon England? How did audiences experience and understand monumental sculpture?
W 11.2 The Staffordshire Hoard
   - Essays from “Hoarders and Hordes: Responses to the Staffordshire Hoard”:
     o Overbey and Williams, “Introduction”
     o Castriota, “Mediating Meanings: Conservation of the Staffordshire Hoard”
     o Overbey, “Passing Time with the Staffordshire Hoard”

M 11.7 Carolingian Art: Symbolic Architecture
   - Stalley, Early Medieval Architecture 37-81 [reserve]

W 11.9 Treasuries, Reliquaries, and Devotional Arts
   - W&I 45-70, 139-148

M 11.14 Medieval Iberia: Al-Andalus
   - Jenkins, “Al-Andalus, Crucible of the Mediterranean” [PDF, reserve]
   - Dodds, “Islam, Christianity, and the Problem of Religious Art” [PDF]
   - paper topic due

W 11.16 Art and Patronage in the Courts
   - W&I 127-137
   - Garrison, “Otto III at Aachen” [link on Trunk]

For discussion: What are some specific ways in which rulers used art to construct their public image? How, according to Garrison, did Otto III create a visual, historical legacy? How did “portraits” function in the Middle Ages? (Consider this also in relation to other cultures and artworks we have encountered.)

M 11.21 Workshop (details TBA)

W 11.23 Thanksgiving Break: no class meeting

M 11.28 Mozarabic Spain: Images of Past, Present, Future
   - Arbeiter and Noack-Haley, “The Kingdom of Asturias” [PDF]
   - Werckmeister, “Art of the Frontier: Mozarabic Monasticism” [PDF]

W 11.30 Invasion and Settlement: Vikings in England and Ireland
   - Carroll, Harrison, and Williams, The Vikings in Britain and Ireland [reserve, PDF]

M 12.5 Anglo-Scandinavian Art
   - Readings TBA

W 12.7 Conclusions and Discussion
   - See Trunk for class prep

M 12.12 Exam 2