

International multidisciplinary seminar “Modern Visions of Medieval Northern Europe”

This seminar is a continuation of the “RIM-Nor” seminar (Representations, identities, memories of Northern Europe), convened by Odile Parsis-Barubé between 2012 and 2014. It will continue its work of Northern European identities and the concept of “nordicity”, as it was defined in the previous program. We will go on considering the place of Northern Europe in the definition of European identities. As in the previous cycle, identities will be studied as three distinct phenomena: groups are given an identity as they are identified by several authorities, as they are seen by external viewers, and as their members feel affiliated to them.

This three-years cycle (2015-2017) will now consider how Northern Europe(s) in the long Middle Ages (from the end of the Roman Empire to the Renaissance) is represented in a variety of visions, both scholarly and popular, in the early modern and modern era (that is, from the Renaissance down to our own times). We will also try to consider some present implications of the study and teaching of medieval history.

Many elements suggest that medieval Northern is relevant to the modern era: among many examples, we may mention the popularity of the Arthurian legend (stronger than ever in the early twenty-first century), the growing readership of books of heroic fantasy, the interest of the public for “barbarian” archaeology (as shown by the long queues at Birmingham museum to see the Staffordshire hoard), the taste for historical re-enactment. All these call out for answers and expertise from students of the early Middle Ages and of later periods. Popular culture is eager for patterns and stories drawn from the myths and literature of the medieval North, be it Celtic or Germanic, and their reception has become an important research topic. We may add that this popular culture is heir to a long scholarly reception, going back at least to the Renaissance: we may mention as an example the best-selling description of the North written by Olaus Magnus in the sixteenth century.

Our seminar aims at gathering scholars who work on several periods: students of contemporary phenomena, of the historiography and epistemology of early modern and modern times, and of early medieval Northern Europe. This program is also consciously multidisciplinary: we would like to invite historians, art historians, sociologists, students of literature, media and visual arts. The public will be academics and doctoral students, and masters students will be encouraged to attend.

We are planning a three-years cycle, each year consisting of three workshops gathering three or four scholars: this means that each year workshops will be organized in Lille (France), Boulogne-sur-Mer (France) and Brussels (Belgium). We want this seminar to allow time for scholars to speak (at least one hour), so that they may develop their ideas in a free and open atmosphere, leaving room for discussion. Doctoral students will be invited to respond to the papers of the invited scholars and animate the discussions. Some papers may get published afterwards, but this is clearly not the first purpose of this seminar: we will give priority to online publication of abstracts of the papers, connected documents and reports on the discussions on the RIM-Nor website (<http://rim-nor.hypotheses.org>).

Each of the three years will have its own sub-theme:

- Year 1 (2015): “Historiographies of Medieval Northern Europe”. We will consider the “scholarly” study of the period, especially the study of the early Middle Ages an “heroic age”.

- Year 2 (2016): “Medieval Northern Europe in Art and Culture”. We will turn to the study of literature, music and visual arts, concentrating in particular on the way “high” and “low” culture meet (from Wagner to Bergman, and from Tolkien to comic books).
- Year 3 (2017): “Modern Practice and Politics of Medieval Northern Europe”. We will study “societal” phenomena such as re-enactment, TV series, video games, along with specifically political uses of the Northern Middle Ages.

Dates for 2015:

- **Friday 23 January in Lille**
- **Friday 27 March in Boulogne-sur-Mer**
- **Friday 29 May in Brussels**

This is a seminar of the Lille Doctoral School in Human and Social Sciences. It is organized in partnership with three research groups:

- HLLI (Université du Littoral Côte d’Opale) with Alban Gautier
- IRHiS (Université Lille 3/CNRS) with Odile Parsis-Barubé
- SociAMM (Université libre de Bruxelles) with Alain Dierkens and Alexis Wilkin