History 201: Poverty, Charity and Marginality in the Middle Ages

Sharon Farmer, Spring 2016

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Office hours: Wed. 2-4, or by appointment

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In this graduate reading course we will cover recent scholarship on poverty, charity, and marginality from the late antique period to the 15th century, with an eye, as well, to high and late medieval precedents for the formation of early modern systems of poor relief. Major themes include: the inheritance of the late antique period in Christian, Islamic, and Jewish cultures (weeks 2-5); the "charitable turn" of the 12th century (week 6), the role of the state in either alleviating the plight of the poor or in creating poverty and marginality (weeks 6, 8, 10), the experience of the poor (weeks 4, 7), gender and poverty (weeks 6, 7), and crises of the later middle ages (weeks 9-10). The goal is to provide you with a framework for designing and teaching your own courses on this topic and with a broader background for those of you who are working on dissertations on some aspect of this topic.

Course requirements: 1 critical review of the weekly readings, starting in week 3.

For class discussion: at least one major observation about the scholarly contributions of each week's readings, and 1 major question or concern about the readings.

I have not ordered books through the bookstore. In those cases in which we are reading entire books (weeks 2-3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10) please either purchase the books online or acquire them through the Library/Interlibrary Loan. You'll have to get Claustre's book (week 10) through the library/ILL. Articles in Journals should be available through Project Muse, Jstor etc.

I will supply copies of articles in anthologies and of Ragab's book (since we are only reading around 70 pp. of it).

Week 1-Mar 31: Short Organizational meeting

Week 2-Ap 7: Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of the Needle*, chaps. 1-24

(we will meet at 2:30, because I have a meeting that I have to attend at 1:30)

Week 3-Ap 14: Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of the Needle* (Princeton UP, 2012), chaps. 25-29, conclusion; Peregrine Horden, "The Earliest Hospitals in Byzantium, Western Europe, and Islam," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35(2005): 361-389 (Available on Project Muse); Ahmed Ragab, *The Medieval Islamic Hospital* (Cambridge UP, 2015), pp. 1-42.

Week 4-Ap 21: Marc Cohen, *Poverty and Charity in the Jewish Community of Medieval Egypt* (Princeton UP, 2005)

Week 5-Ap 28: Adam Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam: Mamluk Egypt 1250-1517* (Cambridge UP, 2000) (Professor Sabra will attend the class for the first hour)

Ahmed Ragab, *The Medieval Islamic Hospital*, pp. 185-222.

Week 6-:May 5 This week will deal with: the charitable turn in 12th century Christian Europe; charity in European Jewish communities; and questions of gender and charity:

--Farmer, ed., *Approaches to Poverty in Medieval Europe*, pp. 1-92 ( introduction and essays by Davis, Musson, Gray) (I can lend you 2 copies of this book);

--Judah Galinsky, "Jewish Charitable Bequests and the Hekdesh Trust in Thirteenth-Century Spain," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35(2005): 423-40;

--Elisheva Baumgarten, "Charitable Like Abigail: The History of an Epitaph," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 105.3(2015): 312-39;

--Sharon Farmer, "The Leper in the Master Bedroom: Thinking Through a Thirteenth-Century Exemplum," in *Framing the Family: Narrative and Representation in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods*, ed. by Rosalynn Voaden and Diane Wolfthal (2005), pp.79-100 (I have multiple copies of this essay).

Week 7-May 12: Farmer, *Surviving Poverty in Medieval Paris: Gender, Ideology and the Daily Lives of the Poor*

Week 8-May 19: William Chester Jordan, *From England to France: Felony and Exile in the High Middle Ages* (Princeton UP, 2015)

Week 9-May 26: (The Later Middle Ages: Crises, Recovery, and Evolving Public Policy)

--Christopher Dyer, "Poverty and Its Relief in Late Medieval England," *Past & Present* no. 216(Aug., 2012): 41-78.

--Samuel K. Cohn, Jr., "Rich and Poor in Western Europe, c. 1375-1475: The Political Paradox of Material Well-Being," in Farmer, *Approaches to Poverty*, pp. 145-174.

--Judith Bennett, "Compulsory Service in Late Medieval England," *Past & Present* no. 209(2010): 7-51.

--Farmer, "From Personal Charity to Centralised Poor Relief: The Evolution of Responses to the Poor in Paris, c. 1250-1600," in *The Experience of Charity 1250-1650*, ed. Anne Scott (2015), pp. 17-42.

Week 10-June 2: (or exam week if you prefer) Julie Claustre, *Dans les geôles du roi: L'emprisonnement pour dette à Paris à la fin du moyen âge* (Paris, 2007)

If reading French is a problem, let me know in week 1