

The 39th Victoria Medieval Conference



Re-creating the Middle Ages

Saturday, February 7th, 2026
Bob Wright Centre (BWC), UVic

Coordinated by

Dr. Evanthia Baboula, Director, Medieval Studies Program
Melanie Hibi, Medieval Studies Program assistant

Sponsored by

The Medieval Studies Program, the Lansdowne Speaker Series, the Faculty of Humanities, and The Friends of Medieval Studies



University
of Victoria

Schedule

8:45 - 9:30

B150

Welcome, Terri Barnhard, UVic Elder
Opening Words, Annalee Lepp, Dean, Faculty of Humanities
Introduction, Eva Baboula, Director, Medieval Studies Program

9:30 - 10:15

B150

Re-creating the Middle Ages from York
Lightning talks, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York, UK
Introduced by Kenneth Clarke, Director, Centre for Medieval Studies
Steve Ashby, on archaeological science and Viking Age trade
Jessica Richardson, on re-creation of the Medieval past in 17th-century Italy
Richard McClary, on Islamic tiles for lost interiors in Medieval Iran
Marcus Milwright, on fiction as a response to Islamic art

Refreshments will be available at the BWC lobby from 10:00 am

10:15 - 11:00

B150

Art of the Medieval Duel
The Historical Combat Collective, Thomas Del Motte, Torben Schau,
Naseeb Hussain, and Erwin Li

11:00 - 11:30

B150

Breadcrumbs Through the Stacks
Michael Lines, Medieval Studies Librarian, UVic Libraries

11:30 - 1:30

BWC lobby

Hands-on experience and exploration
Embroidery, Laura Oakley
Spinning, Trish Baer
Pacific Association for Recreating the Middle Ages (PARMA)
Calligraphy, Georgia Angelopoulos
Dungeons & Dragons, Archer Nelson, Medieval Studies student
Medieval Ale Making, Noëlle Phillips
Student Research Posters, led by Erin McGuire, Department of Anthropology

McPherson

Library

Medieval manuscripts and facsimiles (Special Collections & Archives)
Making an icon (video demonstration)
Book binding, Michael Lines

Participants are welcome to enjoy their own lunch on the premises or any of the campus food services.

1:00 - 1:30

B150

Medieval Falconry and Hawking, The Raptors

1:30 - 2:15 **Recreating Instruments & Music Performance**
B150 **The Bourdons** and Dr. **John Tucker**, UVic emeritus

Refreshments will be available at the BWC lobby from 2:00 pm

2:30 - 3:30 **Medieval Brewing and the Downfall of the Alewife**
B150 Lansdowne speaker Dr. **Noëlle Phillips**, Douglas College

3:30 - 4:30 **Byzantium after Byzantium**
B150 Lansdowne speaker Dr. **Andrea Myers Achi**, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY

4:30 **Thank you and closing remarks**

Please note:

Some of the speakers will join us online from York, UK, and New York. There is a zoom link available for participants who may not be able to come to campus, but we encourage in-person attendance. All online talks will be broadcast in B150.

Tours of Medieval Victoria (Michael Reed)

Friday, Feb 6th, 11:00 am: Church of Our Lord, Pioneer Square, and Christchurch Cathedral

Sunday, Feb 8th, 11:00 am: Ross Bay Cemetery



**JOIN US TO CELEBRATE THE
40TH ANNUAL MEDIEVAL CONFERENCE
ON FEBRUARY 6, 2027**

RE-CREATING THE MIDDLE AGES

On behalf of the Medieval Studies Program, it is a pleasure to welcome you to the 39th Annual Medieval Conference. This event is our signature gathering, bringing together campus and community members who are curious about—and inspired by—the Medieval world.

This year's theme, **re-creation**, explores the many ways the past continues to be relevant to the present.

To re-create is to **reconstruct**. Medievalists from across disciplines piece together how people thought, lived and related to one another and to the world around them. We seek to understand medieval life through texts, music, images, objects, food, landscapes and built environments—sources that often come to us only as fragments.

To re-create is also to **reimagine**. Writers, artists and rulers in the Middle Ages looked to earlier ideals, weaving versions of the past into their own moment. Medieval literature, art and historical writings abound with anachronisms and nostalgia for a romanticized or lost Golden Age; and, at times, critiques of a sinful or ignorant past. These attitudes reveal as much about medieval concerns and ideologies as they do about the eras they invoke.

The term **medievalism** describes how 'the medieval' manifests in later societies. This phenomenon is wide-ranging: from politics and ceremonial traditions, language and literature, fashion and the visual arts, to architecture, film, gaming, and digital media. The last three centuries alone have seen waves of revival, such as the Gothic Revival and the Pre-Raphaelites. Medieval classics have found new life in films about the *Arabian Nights*, Robin Hood or the *Canterbury Tales*. The popular game *Assassin's Creed* immerses players in tenth-century Baghdad; not to mention the *Game of Thrones*, the *Lord of the Rings* or *Dungeons & Dragons*. Here in Victoria, Neo-Gothic churches and castle-like buildings offer striking examples of how the medieval past has been reimagined in a colonial context. These uses of nostalgia highlight the continued appeal of the medieval while also reminding us that the past can be mobilized for troubling purposes by those who long for supposedly 'purer' or more 'heroic' pasts.

The study of medievalism is itself dynamic. Scholars now examine the implications of a predominantly Western concept in shaping understandings of societies with different historical journeys, especially regions affected by colonial rule or for whom 'medievalism' is an imported category. Interest in the Middle Ages has never been limited to Western Europe: Byzantium is an example of a culture with deep impact, which today also inspires fantasy and video games, yet used to be fraught with negative scholarly and popular stereotypes. The Medieval Islamic world, too, has generated its own forms of medievalism.

Finally, to recreate is to enjoy, and we are focusing on that element through the hands-on activities and demonstrations in this Conference. The event offers only a sample of the many ways we bring the Middle Ages to life. We hope that the Conference is a testament to the rich exchange between research and public engagement, and the enduring relevance of 'the medieval' in our lives.

PRESENTERS

Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York, UK

RE-CREATING THE MIDDLE AGES FROM YORK

Four 'lightning' talks by scholars connected with the Centre for Medieval Studies of the University of York, followed by a ten-minute question period, link Victoria with the ancient British city of York. They examine different approaches to the re-creation of the Middle Ages. The speakers cover topics drawn from a range of projects in Italy, Northern Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia. Together, they demonstrate the innovative approaches that can bring to life the varied cultures of the Medieval world.

The first talk by **Steve Ashby** will show how we can use the close examination of archaeological objects to understand the realities of international trade during the Viking Age.

The second talk by **Jessica Richardson** focuses on the re-creation of the Medieval past by Italian scholars and artists in the seventeenth century.

Richard McClary presents a case from his long-term study of Islamic tiles, showing how we can create a virtual reconstruction of a lost decorative program in fourteenth-century Iran.

In the final talk **Marcus Milwright** reflects on the role of fiction as a means to speculate on the ways in which people responded to Medieval Islamic art and architecture.

The Historical Combat Collective

ART OF THE MEDIEVAL DUEL

Historical European Martial Arts (HEMA) is the study and practice of the ancient forms of combat and swordsmanship. It delves into old manuscripts and texts from as far back as the 14th century and attempts to authentically recreate the chivalric arts as best as possible from both a theoretical and practical approach with a focus on applying these techniques in a competitive environment. In this presentation, we will examine a few lessons and sequences from some notable masters of the period. We hope this will help demonstrate the style and ethos of combat during this time which may have been used in matters of honour, self-defense, or even legal disputes.

Michael Lines

BREADCRUMBS THROUGH THE STACKS: A QUEST FOR MEDIEVAL SCHOLARSHIP

Why is medieval studies hidden all over the library, making us feel like Hansel and Gretel lost in the forest? This talk uncovers how quirky—and sometimes troubling—19th and early 20th century medievalisms reshaped the field, scattering its research across history, anthropology, art history, sociology, and more. Join me for a lively tour through the library's "deep dark wood" to discover how medieval studies became so wonderfully (and maddeningly) diverse and dispersed.

The Raptors

MEDIEVAL FALCONRY AND HAWKING

Birds of prey have always inspired and captivated us. Presentation on the popularity of birds of prey and falconry in the 15th and 16th centuries.

THE BOURDONS AND DR. JOHN TUCKER

How do modern makers manage to create reproductions of ancient musical instruments for which there are probably few, if any, surviving examples and few contemporary written sources? What practical compromises are necessary to make the instruments playable in modern contexts, and what skills do modern musicians need to develop to play them?

These are some of the questions that will be addressed by Dr. John Tucker and Victoria's medieval ensemble, Bourdons. The session will include discussions on the art of building and playing of reproduction instruments, including musical demonstrations.

Dr. John Tucker, founding director of the UVic Medieval Conference

Bourdons:

Linda Donn, bowed strings

Doug Hensley, plucked strings

Bill Jamieson, winds

Gwen Jamieson, hurdy gurdy/harps

LANSDOWNE SPEAKERS



Dr. Noëlle Phillips

MEDIEVAL BREWING AND THE DOWNFALL OF THE ALEWIFE

For many years, beer has traditionally been seen as a man's drink. Beer marketing (especially that of the behemoth global "beerocracies" such as Anheuser-Busch Inbev, owner of Budweiser) often caters to male interests and desires, even now.

However, beer in the medieval period had very different associations. For the vast majority of the Middle Ages, most of the brewing outside the monasteries was done by women, called alewives or brewsters. So how did men come to take over this industry by the time we get to the early modern period? This talk will outline how women were gradually pushed out of a rapidly transforming industry towards the end of the Middle Ages, and the ways in which women's participation in brewing or serving ale became a subject of mockery and disgust.

Dr. Noëlle Phillips is an English professor at Douglas Collage and former Medieval Studies student here at UVic. While her primary field is Medieval literature, she writes on brewing and beer history for both academic and non-academic venues. Noëlle is the author of *Craft Beer Culture and Modern Medievalism: Brewing Dissent* and also a beer judge and a Certified Cicerone (the beer world's version of a wine sommelier).



Dr. Andrea Myers Achi

BYZANTIUM AFTER BYZANTIUM

This talk explores the central themes of a forthcoming exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, tentatively titled *Byzantium After Byzantium* (1453 to Today). The exhibition will highlight the impact of Byzantine art on artistic and cultural development in the centuries following the fall of Constantinople. Focusing on topics such as diaspora, modern reinterpretations, and contemporary icons, the exhibition interrogates how the concept of "Byzantium" has been reimagined across diverse geographies and historical periods, sustaining its resonance in both modern and global contexts.

Using the *Byzantium After Byzantium* exhibition as a starting point, this talk proposes strategies by which the curator-scholar might bridge the divide between public-facing exhibitions and scholarly discourse, offering reflections on how curatorial practice can foster deeper intellectual engagement and expand the field's reach beyond the academy.

Dr. Andrea Myers Achi, Mary and Michael Jaharis Associate Curator of Byzantine Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has organized and co-organized a series of groundbreaking exhibitions, including *Afterlives: Modern Art in The Byzantine Crypt* (2024–26), *Africa and Byzantium* (2023–24), *The Good Life: Collecting Late Antique Art at The Met* (2021–23), *Crossroads: Power and Piety* (2020–22), and *Art and Peoples of Kharga Oasis* (2017–21); and has edited the highly acclaimed volume *Africa and Byzantium*.

The Medieval Studies Program sincerely thanks the donors who supported students and initiatives in 2025-2026.

Thanks to your generosity, six undergraduate scholarships were awarded this year. We also expanded the Medieval Conference with a wide range of demonstrations and hands-on activities.

We are grateful to the vibrant community that makes the Medieval Conference such a meaningful event:

- Our Medieval Studies students and volunteers
- Our presenters, who generously give their time
- The artists and community groups who share their expertise
- And you--the attendees--for your enthusiasm, support and inspiration



THE VICTORIA MEDIEVAL ASSOCIATION

THE VICTORIA MEDIEVAL ASSOCIATION was founded in 1988 with the purpose of encouraging the large and “lively community of interest in the Middle Ages among people” of the Island and beyond. Managed through the Medieval Studies Program at the University of Victoria, the Association is open to all and will sponsor events such as lectures, workshops, and a newsletter with the goal of circulating information and invitations to medieval events on the Island. Join by writing to events.medi@uvic.ca or call 250 721 6271.

Contact us:



Medieval Studies

University of Victoria, Clearihue D267,

PO Box 1700 STN CSC,

Victoria, BC V8W 2Y2

Phone: 250-721-6271

Email: events.medi@uvic.ca

Website: uvic.ca/medieval

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