

AHIS 220g: MEDIEVAL VISUAL CULTURE

Spring 2025

Section 11874R

Tuesday/Thursday 12:30-1:50 PM (VHE 206)

Professor Luke Fidler (lfidler@usc.edu)



Syriac Lectionary, gold, lapis lazuli, and tempera on paper (ca. 1220-60), Vat. sir. 559, fol. 93v.

This course examines the art, architecture, and cultural production of the European Middle Ages from the decline of the Roman Empire to the Reformation and the ‘image explosion’ of the fifteenth century. During this period, works of art profoundly influenced the ways that people understood the world around them. The role of images and the status of art underwent significant change, while shifting networks of trade and devotion put ideas, materials, and people in circulation from sub-Saharan Africa to North America. In short, medieval visual culture—once perceived as an embarrassing precursor to the rise of the Renaissance—was a rich arena of dispute and experimentation. With an awareness of the political, religious, and socioeconomic contexts in which medieval objects were produced, we will examine key topics, including: performance, vision, sexuality, race, and the relationship between word and image. To do so, we will draw on primary sources (in translation) and contemporary works of scholarship, engaging buildings, paintings, illuminated manuscripts, devotional objects, sculptures, coins, and textiles.

The course has one required text: Caskey, Jill, Adam S. Cohen, and Linda Safran. *Art and Architecture of the Middle Ages: Exploring a Connected World*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022.*

*If you order this book through the publisher’s website (<https://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/>) and use the code 09STUDENT, you will receive a 40% discount that brings the price down to \$46.40.



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