Why do we care what others believe? Does the construction of the self rely on the demonization of the other? Does it necessarily inspire violence? By exploring the history of Jewish, Muslim and Christian relations in the Middle Ages we will examine how these groups, in violence and peace, shaped their own and each other’s identities for centuries to come. In light of contemporary discussions of orthodoxy and heterodoxy and the nature of difference, we will analyze the broad sweep of the Crusades from the early pilgrimages to the Reconquista of Spain. These movements of Europeans to retake what they believed to be Christian territory from Muslim hands created bitter divisions among these groups and new solidarities within them. During the course, we will also focus on the disturbing legacy of these interactions in a post 9/11 world and discuss ways of moving beyond them.

Course goals and expectations: There are several goals I hope we accomplish. We are together exploring some of the fundamentals of historical inquiry—understanding sources, deconstructing narratives, plunging into the debates about these particular developments—and I hope we will all come away with a greater sense of just how complex and rich they are. We are not just trying to understand past concerns, however, but also discern the continuing relevance of the “deep” past. The Crusades allow us to discuss the importance and fragility of historical memory: why the events of hundreds of years ago still matter to us today and how these histories are constantly being invoked in the creation of modern
national, ethnic and religious identities, sometimes in divisive and sometimes in constructive ways. I don’t think these goals are incompatible—the usefulness of studying the past for the present day coupled with an understanding of its irreducible alterity—because I hope the course is more about engendering a sense of responsibility for those uses rather than denying their importance.

More generally, Heretics and Infidels is a first year seminar and as is designed to introduce you to liberal arts learning. I believe it will spark your interest in this period in history and the kinds of questions we’ll raise, but also allow you to work on skills that will help you navigate through the next four years successfully: critical reading, analytical thinking, clear communication and information literacy. To these ends, you are asked to come to class prepared to discuss both primary texts and secondary literature in class, and complete several written assignments and produce a final project that is both collaborative and well-researched. And because we are privileging group discussion rather than lecture, I ask that we are all both respectful of each other’s viewpoints and unafraid to closely examine them in class.

This FYS can be applied for credit in History, including the major and minor. Successful completion also gives W-Int credit.

Course materials:
All required books are available at the Oberlin Bookstore and are on reserve in the library.

Required Readings:
Talal Asad, Suicide Bombing (2007)
Amin Maalouf, In the Name of Identity (2003)
Christopher Tyerman, Crusades: a short history (2008)
Geraldine Brooks, People of the Book (2008)

*Requirements and Grading:
Participation 20%; 5-7 page Crusades paper 20%; 4 Reading Responses 25% total; Final Project (Group teaching lesson (15%) and individual written paper (20%) 35% total

Grading based on the following: A+ 100-97; A 96-93; A- 92-90; B+ 89-87; B 86-83; B- 82-80; C+ 79-77; C 76-73; C- 72-70; D 65-69, F below 65.

All written work must be turned in to receive credit for this class.

Details:
Participation (and attendance): This course is a seminar, which means your participation is ESSENTIAL for making it work; we need you there and wide awake! If there is an emergency and you must miss a class, please let me know before class begins that you will be absent, or similarly, if you can come to class but have not been able to do the reading, please come and see me and we’ll set up a time to talk. You may miss one class without penalty; after that your participation grade may suffer.
**Crusades paper:** 5-7 pp. Will include first and final drafts, plus peer review. This paper will be about an aspect of the Crusades that interests you, based on our readings together, both primary and secondary, and the research that you have done on your own from our library session. We will discuss the paper more, but note: this is not an ‘information-only’ assignment, in this sense that you choose something (ex. what did crusader women do?) and just tell us what you found out. You are also to bring in questions that arise from what you have discovered and make connections to larger issues.

**Reading responses:** There are five reading responses marked on the syllabus. You’re writing all five but I will drop the lowest grade at the end of the course (so four count). These are shorter writing pieces designed to give you space to grasp the reading and reflect on it. The responses should be typed, 2-3 pages in length (approx. 500-600 words), and have a good balance of summary and analysis. Feel free to link your thoughts to previous weeks’ readings/discussion and to use the questions given for that class.

**Final Project:** Working in small groups, you will create a teaching lesson on the Crusades that has historical, theoretical, and contemporary relevance. This is your chance to think creatively with the tools discussed during the semester and think about what and how to communicate about them. Your project will have two parts: 1. A group presentation/lesson and 2. An individual paper connected to the group work. The paper should be approximately 10-12 pp. and will be due during the final exam period. I will grade the paper, but you will have the opportunity to grade yourself and your (small group) peers on your teaching lesson. More after Fall Break.

**Evaluation in general:** I will be handing out grading rubrics so you get a clear idea of what is expected. But in general, what I look for is that you are learning how to understand and evaluate what we are reading and discussing and that you are able to express your point of view with thoughtfulness and as much clarity as you can muster! We will also work on citations; in Blackboard I have posted a guide on how to do footnotes and bibliographies. All written assignments should be typed and double-spaced, with at least ½ in. margins on all sides. All pages numbered! Proofread! Edit! When in doubt, please get in touch with me.

**Other Class Policies:**

**Disabilities:** If you have specific physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to Jane Boomer in the Office of Disability Services in Peters G-27/G-28.

**Lateness:** Late assignments will be penalized by dropping 3 points from your grade every day a paper is late.

**Plagiarism:** All work turned in for this course must be your own. The College requires that students sign an "Honor Code" for all assignments. This pledge states: "I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment." For further information, see the student Honor Code which you can access via Blackboard>Lookup/Directories>Honor Code. If you
turn something in without pledging the honor code, I will wait to grade it until you do. There are many gray areas with plagiarism, especially in the age of digital browsing, and so if you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me or raise it in class.

**Finding and doing the assignments: All required books are available at the Oberlin Bookstore and are on reserve in the library. Readings posted on Blackboard are labeled Bb. They are located under Course Documents in the file “Reading Assignments”. The readings listed for a particular class should be done before that class. ABOVE ALL, BRING READINGS TO CLASS!**

**Schedule of Classes**

**Part I. Constructions of Self and Community**

Week 1  
9/3  **Introductions**

Week 2  
9/8  **The Nature of the Beast**  
Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity*, Sections I-II (all) (pp. 9-83)

**Q:** Is othering natural? What is the relationship between othering and power? Does it imply domination, necessarily? Is belief at the heart of group identity (we all believe something in common) and therefore is that why religion is such a fundamental basis of group membership?

9/10  **Individual Rights and Communal Identity**  
Finish Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity*, Section III, Chapters 2-4, Section IV, Chapters 2, 5 and the Epilogue (95-109, 128-134, 151-164)

**Reading response 1 due.** You may want to think about: what is the problem of identity, for Maalouf, and what causes it? What does he propose to do to solve the problem? Do you agree with 1. his conception of the problem and 2. how to fix it? Why or why not?

Week 3  
9/15  **Three Abrahamic Communities. Class will meet in the lobby of the Allen Memorial Art Museum.** We will discuss both the readings and the images in the museum.  
Bb. Hebrew Bible: Genesis 11-13,15-18, 21, 22, 25; Christian Bible: Matthew 1, 3; John 8, Paul, Romans, 9, Galatians, 3; Qur’an Surat 2 rv 122-141, 258-260.

**Q.** Who are Christians, Jews and Muslims, and what does this one story mean to their different faiths?

9/17  **Living Together, Thinking Apart?**  
Q. What is Cohen’s overall point about the place of Jews in early medieval Islamic and Christian societies. Does it make sense to you from his evidence? Does it surprise you? What made Judaism so problematic for medieval Christians, and vice-versa, for Chazan and Cohen? Is Christianity a form of Jewish heresy? More broadly, does the way a society is ordered (how people seen themselves in relation to the group) make a difference in the treatment of those considered different?

Week 4
9/22 Convivencia or Careful Segregation?
Bb. Richard Fletcher, “Convivencia,” in Moorish Spain, 131-156 . Watch Bettany Hughes, BBC, When the Moors Ruled Europe http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_Xnc8ijkrA (90 minutes). Was this really a golden age?

Reading response 2 due: I have posted in Blackboard two sets of primary sources on the topic of Christians, Jews, and Muslims living together in the Iberian peninsula (Spain and Portugal) in the medieval period. Choose one set of sources and analyze them. Some possible avenues of thought include: what can we learn about the author and society in which he/she lived? Do these sources conflict with or tie in with Bettany Hughes documentary or Fletcher’s chapter; i.e. was there convivencia or conflict, or both? And based on what you’ve learned thus far about the relations among these groups in the Muslim world and in the rest of Europe, what kinds of questions do these sources about Spain lead you to ask?

Part II. The Crusades

9/24 Defining/Launching the Crusades

Week 5

9/29 Encounters **Class will meet in Mudd Library, room TBA, with Jennifer Starkey. Please bring your ID!

We will discuss these readings and find 1-2 articles or book chapters on an aspect of the First Crusade that you want to write about further—it could be concepts of war, it could be gender, holy sites, relics, your choice.

9/30 (Tuesday, 5PM) Reading response 3 due. Please email it to me and to your writing group—we will discuss in class on 10/1. Pick an event or group of people portrayed in at least two different accounts (the author can identify with the group described), such as
The Peasants’ Crusade or Peter the Hermit, the attack on Jews, the discovery of the Holy Lance, the siege of Antioch or Jerusalem, the Franks, the Greek Christians, the Seljuk Turks, etc. and discuss what you can learn from these accounts about the author’s or authors’ viewpoints and the event/group of people being described. What interested/surprised you?

10/1 Holy Wars

Week 6

10/6 Gendering the Crusades

Q. The Song of Roland is an epic poem written about the time of the First Crusade (probably early 12th century) but about a battle in northern Spain during the 8th century that involved Emperor Charlemagne and his beloved nephew Roland. How does this author portray Charlemagne and his (various) men, and how does he describe their various Muslim foes? What are the attributes associated with each religion? Why do you think this song was created when it was, and why Charlemagne and Roland as the heroes? And what are the crusade values shown here? In what ways can you put Mirrer’s point about masculine ideals in conversation with this poem? And what do you think her reading of this literature contributes to the relations among these groups in the medieval period?

10/8 Holy Sites
Tyerman, The Crusades, pp. 109-125

Due: 1-2 paragraphs describing the secondary source/s you found in the library on 9/29

Q. In this class, I’m hoping we can think about the question of both pilgrimage and place in historical memory, particularly Jerusalem and the journey to it, of course, but others as well. Can you think of modern examples of the power of place in historical memory?

Week 7 Crusades Paper (5-7pp., see assignments above) *Dates are different from usual!

10/12 (Sunday) Due: Turn in first draft (electronic please) by 4 PM. This is a Sunday, but I want to give your small group time to read over your draft—it will benefit you in the end! The more you have at this point, the better and more useful the feedback will be.

10/13 Peer review/discuss drafts

10/15 Paper Work and Midterm Evaluations in class.
Due: Please bring in your second draft to discuss with your peer group.
10/17 3PM. This is a Friday. **Due:** Final draft, turned in electronically.

Week 8 10/20-10/24 **Fall Break No Classes!!**

**Part III Imagined Crusading-post 9/11**

Week 9

10/27 **Medieval Battles and Modern Martyrdom**

Q. Do you think there is or can be a “truth” about the Crusades?

10/29 **Worlds colliding?**
Bb. Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” (FPQ, 1993). Begin Talal Asad, *On Suicide Bombing*, Chapter 1, pp. 1-17 (to But Walzer wants to reassure his readers), 21-29 to the break, and p. 38 (last two paragraphs of chapter)

**Note:** Asad’s essay is perhaps the most difficult reading we do this semester. There are references to many scholars that you might or might not know; he is using them to ‘think with’ but Asad does clearly mark his own conclusions to their work and to the questions he poses throughout.

**Q (for this and next class).** 1. What are civilizations, and why do they clash? And why now? Is Huntington on to something important, in your view, or is he just paranoid about waning American power? 2. Huntington uses language akin to plate tectonics—in that civilizations are like the earth’s plates that grind against others along fault lines. Do you think this is a core and perhaps most important aspect of identity—and does it differ or reflect Maalouf’s view? How does Asad respond to this idea? 3. What is terrorism, to Asad, and where does it come from? Is terrorism simply in the eyes of the beholder? What is the difference between terrorism and a discourse of terrorism? 4. How do the Crusades figure into Huntington’s argument? Into Asad’s?

Week 10

11/3 **Sacrifice, Holiness, and Death**
Finish Asad, *On Suicide Bombing*, Chapter 2, pp. 39-45 (to the break), Chapter 3 (entire), pp. 65-96

11/5 **Final Assignment Work**
TBA: watch Tedtalks. Small group class time talking about final assignment

**Reading response 4 due:** Analysis of Asad and Huntington. You may use some, all or none of the questions for discussion listed above.
**Sunday 11/9 6PM Movie Showing! Kingdom of Heaven (Ridley Scott, 2005)**
Pizza provided!! BYO drink (We will watch 100 min. of the movie and finish up in class 10/29)

**Note:** This movie has gratuitous violence and bloodshed—think video game combat. If that is an issue for you, please come to speak to me ahead of time and we will work something out.

Week 11

11/10  Hollywood and historical accuracy
We will finish watching *Kingdom of Heaven* in class and then discuss our responses to it.

11/12  Nintendo and (much less) historical accuracy

**Q.** Biddick takes a queer approach to Crusader martyrdom and *Kingdom of Heaven*. Based on her article, what do you think that approach entails? Did Biddick add to your understanding of martyrdom as you understood it from Asad? While Biddick has a deep reading, however, Assassin’s Creed takes a lighter approach to uses of the historical past, I think. Or does it? Please read the wiki-entry on Assassin’s creed and if you have access to the game itself, refresh your memory (unless you have just stopped playing in order to read this syllabus-then you’re more than ready!)

Week 12

11/17  Bringing our history with us
Geraldine Brooks, *People of the Book*, beginning up to Wine Stains, my version pp. 1-144

**Q.** While based on a true story of survival of a 15th-century book, the Sarajevo Haggadah, *People of the Book* is very much a work of fiction. What does fiction allow the author and the audience to do that essays and articles like Asad’s, Huntington’s and Maalouf’s or primary sources from the Crusades, for example, do not? Do you think it is successful? Do we need to know it really happened this way for it to be true?

11/19  No Class. Small group meetings with Professor Wurtzel. We will discuss where you are on your final projects and any problems/debates you are having amongst yourselves. Keep reading *People of the Book!*

Week 13

11/24  Reimagining the Past, Reimagining the Future
Geraldine Brooks, *People of the Book*, finish

**Reading Response 5 due:** *People of the Book*
11/26  **NO CLASS** before Thanksgiving

Week 14

12/1  **Bringing our history with us**
Bb. Anouar Majid, *We are All Moors*, Introduction, pp. 1-29

12/3  **Teaching Presentations (2 groups)**

Week 15

12/8  **Teaching Presentations (2 groups)**

12/10  **Teaching Presentations (1 group); Wrap up, Evaluations and Celebrations**

12/20  **Due**: Final paper 4PM