

John David Cotts
Professor of History
Chair of the Division of Social Sciences
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Research fields

Cultural and intellectual history of the High Middle Ages; clerical culture in twelfth-century France and England; intellectual history of the Crusades; learning, spirituality and practical theology; medieval epistolography

Teaching fields

Medieval and early modern Europe; cultural and intellectual history; history of religion; the Crusades; France and England

Education

Ph.D. (History) University of California, Berkeley, 2000

M.A. (History) University of California, Berkeley, 1995

B.A. (Classics and History) Oberlin College, 1993

Academic appointments

- Professor of History, Whitman College, 2017-present
- Associate Professor of History, Whitman College, 2009-2017, and Paul Garrett Fellow, 2014-2017
- Assistant Professor of History, Whitman College, 2004-2009
- Visiting Assistant Professor of History, Grinnell College, 2002-2004
- Lecturer in History, University of California, Berkeley, 2001-2002
- Visiting Assistant Professor of History, The Colorado College, 2000-2001

PUBLICATIONS

Books

* *On Warfare and the Threefold Path of the Jerusalem Pilgrimage: A Translation of Ralph Niger's De re militari et triplici via peregrinationis Ierosolimitane*, Routledge Crusade Texts in Translation (London and New York: 2023).

* *Europe's Long Twelfth Century: Order, Anxiety and Adaptation, 1095-1229* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2013).

- Named a *Choice* Outstanding Academic Title for 2013
- Translated, in condensed form, into German as *Zwischen Frömmigkeit und Fanatismus: Das turbulente Zeitalter der Kreuzzüge*, a special issue of *Spektrum der Wissenschaft: Archäologie – Geschichte – Kultur* 3/15 (September, 2015)

- Second Edition forthcoming with Bloomsbury, 2025

**The Clerical Dilemma: Peter of Blois and Literate Culture in the Twelfth Century* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2009)

Articles in journals and edited collections

- * “The Academic Historiography of the Crusades and the Twenty-First Century Debate over Religious Violence,” *International Journal of Military History and Historiography* 41 (2021): 343-376.
- * “Oppressor, Martyr and Hollywood Villain: Reynald of Châtillon and the Representation of Crusading Violence,” in *The Making of Crusading Heroes and Villains: Engaging the Crusades, Volume Four*, ed. Mike Horswell and Kristin Skottki (London: Routledge, 2020), 42-59.
- * “Earthly Kings, Heavenly Jerusalem: Ralph Niger’s Political Exegesis and the Third Crusade,” *Haskins Society Journal* 30 (2020): 265-298.
- * “The Exegesis of Violence in the Crusade Writings of Ralph Niger and Peter of Blois,” in *The Uses of the Bible in Crusader Sources*, ed. Elizabeth Lapina and Nicholas Morton (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 273-96.
- * “Was Bernard of Clairvaux a Republican? The Middle Ages and the Liberal Arts College,” *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Teaching* 15 (2008): 67-77.
- * “Monks and Clerks in Search of the *Beata Schola*: Peter of Celle’s Warning to John of Salisbury Reconsidered,” in *Teaching and Learning in Northern France Before the University*, ed. Sally Vaughn and Jay Rubenstein (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 255-77.
- * “Peter of Blois and the Problem of the ‘Court’ in the Late Twelfth Century,” *Anglo-Norman Studies* 27 (2005): 68-84.
- * “Monks and Mediocrities in the Shadow of Thomas Becket: Peter of Blois on Episcopal Duty,” *Haskins Society Journal* 10 (2001): 143-61.
- * “The Critique of the Secular Clergy in Peter of Blois and Nigellus de Longchamps,” *Haskins Society Journal* 13 (2004 for 1999): 137-50.

Other Publications

- * “Peter of Blois,” in *The Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception* (forthcoming from DeGruyter).

*“Peter of Blois: Selections from Four Letters,” translated in *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance: A Reader*, ed. Alex Novikoff (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

* “Nigel Whiteacre,” and “Peter of Blois,” entries in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2017) .

Book Reviews

*Clare Monagle, ed., *The Intellectual Dynamism of the High Middle Ages* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021), *Speculum* 99 (2024), 259-261.

*Megan Cassidy-Welch, ed., *Remembering the Crusades and Crusading* (New York: Routledge, 2017), *The Catholic Historical Review* 109 (2023): 400-402.

* Cédric Giraud, ed., *A Companion to Twelfth-Century Schools*, Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition 88 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), *Speculum* 98 (2023): 257-58.

*William Kynan-Wilson and John Munns, eds., *Henry of Blois: New Interpretations* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2021), *The Medieval Review*, 22.08.31 (August, 2022).

*Michael Staunton, ed, *Herbert of Bosham: A Medieval Polymath* (Woodbridge, UK: York Medieval Press in association with Boydell Press, 2019), *The Medieval Review*, 20.10.03 (October, 2020).

*Irene O’Daly, *John of Salisbury and the Medieval Roman Renaissance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), *The Medieval Review* 19.11.17 (November, 2019).

*Susan R. Kramer, *Sin, Interiority, and Selfhood in the Twelfth-Century West* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2015), *The Catholic Historical Review* 105 (2019)

*Julia Barrow, *The Clergy in the Medieval World: Secular Clerics, Their Families and Careers in North-Western Europe, c. 800–c. 1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,), *Church History* 87 (2018): 848-50

*Peter Dinzelbacher, *Structures and Origins of the Twelfth-Century ‘Renaissance’*, (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 2017), *Sehepunkte: Rezensionjournal für die Geschichtswissenschaften* 18.5 (2018)

*Valérie Fasseur and Jean-René Valette, eds., *Les Écoles de pensée du XIIIe siècle et la littérature romane (oc et oil)*, Bibliothèque d'Histoire Culturelle Du Moyen Âge 17,

- (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), *Sehepunkte: Rezensionjournal für die Geschichtswissenschaften* 19.9 (2017)
- *Richard Huscroft, *Tales from the Long Twelfth Century: The Rise and Fall of the Angevin Empire* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), *Speculum* 92 (2017): 837-38
- *Andrew Reeves, *Religious Education in Thirteenth-Century England: The Creed and the Articles of Faith* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015), *Speculum* 92 (2017): 570-71
- *Stephen Church, *King John and the Road to Magna Carta* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), *The Medieval Review* 16.02.34 (2016)
- *Alice Chapman, *Sacred Authority and Temporal Power in the Writings of St Bernard of Clairvaux*, *Medieval Church Studies* 25 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), *The American Historical Review* 120 (2015): 1091-92
- *E. Ann Matter and Lesley Smith, eds., *From Knowledge to Beatitude: St. Victor, Twelfth-Century Scholars, and Beyond. Essays in Honor of Grover A. Zinn, Jr.* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), *The Catholic Historical Review* 101 (2015): 618-619
- *Peter D. Clarke and Anne J. Duggan, eds., *Pope Alexander III (1159-81): The Art of Survival, Faith Church and Culture in the Medieval West* (Farnham, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), *The Medieval Review* 14.10.15 (2015)
- *Peter Frankopan, *The First Crusade: The Call from the East* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2012), *Church History* 83.3 (2014), 736-38
- * Clare Monagle, *Orthodoxy and Controversy in Twelfth-Century Religious Discourse: Peter Lombard's Sentences and the Development of Theology*, *Europa Sacra* 8, (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2013), *Sehepunkte: Rezensionjournal für die Geschichtswissenschaften* 14.6 (2014)
(<http://www.sehepunkte.de/2014/06/24133.html>)
- *Michael Burger, *Bishops, Clerks, and Diocesan Governance in Thirteenth-Century England: Reward and Punishment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), *History: Reviews of New Books* 42 (2014): 26
- * Martina Hartmann, *Studien zu den Briefen Abt Wibalds von Stablo und Corvey sowie zur Briefliteratur in der frühen Stauferzeit*, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica -- Studien und Texte*, 52 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2011), *The Medieval Review* 12.11.18 (2012)

- *Franklin T. Harkins, *Reading and the Work of Restoration: History and Scripture in the Theology of Hugh of St. Victor* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2009), *Church History* 80 (2011): 857-59
- *Thomas N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Lordship, Power and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), *History: Reviews of New Books* 38 (2009):24-25
- *Michael Reeve, ed., and Neil Wright, trans., *Geoffrey of Monmouth: The History of the Kings of Britain* (Woodbridge, UK, and Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 2007), *The Journal of British Studies* 77 (2009):514-16
- *Martin Aurell, *The Plantagenêt Empire 1154-1224*, trans. David Crouch (Pearson Longman: Harlow, London and New York, 2007), [H-Albion reviews](#), April 2008
- *David Gary Shaw, *Necessary Conjunctions: The Social Self in Medieval England* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), *Speculum* 82 (2007): 482-83
- * R. W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe. Volume 2: The Heroic Age* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), *Religion and the Arts* 6 (2003): 414-16
- * Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, 3rd edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), [H-Net reviews](#), October 2003

SCHOLARLY PRESENTATIONS

- *Concluding roundtable participant, Exegesis, Sermons, Liturgy: New Pathways in Crusade Studies,” an online conference hosted by the Universities of Swansea, Vienna, and Heidelberg, November 3-4, 2022.
- *“Was Becket an Ideal Bishop? Exegesis and Theories of Leadership in the Decades after His Martyrdom,” presented at the 56th International Congress of Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo Michigan (virtual), May 10, 2021.
- *“Turning the Pilgrim’s Cheek? The Interpretation of Matthew 5:39 in the Age of the Crusades,” presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association in New York, NY, January 4, 2020.
- *“Courtly Exegesis? Power and Authority in the Old Testament Commentaries of Ralph Niger,” presented at the 37th Annual Meeting of the Haskins Society in Chapel Hill, NC, October 26-28, 2018.
- *“The Academic Historiography of the Crusades and the Twenty-First Century Debate over Religious Violence,” presented at the Leeds International Medieval Congress, July 5, 2018
- *“Exegesis, Historical Memory, and Crusading Violence in the Biblical Commentaries of Ralph Niger,” presented at the joint conference of the Medieval Association of the

- Pacific and the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association in Las Vegas, NV, April 12-15, 2018
- *“Earthly Kings, Heavenly Jerusalem: Ralph Niger’s Political Theology and the Third Crusade,” presented at the 35th Annual Meeting of the Haskins Society in Northfield, MN, November 4-6, 2016
 - *“The Exegesis of Violence and the Third Crusade,” presented at the Leeds International Medieval Congress on July 8, 2014
 - *“Exegesis and the Third Crusade: From Biblical Violence to Moral Reform in the Writings of the English Clergy,” presented at the annual meeting of the Medieval Association of the Pacific in San Diego, CA, March 23, 2013
 - *Comment on “Medieval Culture in the Context of the Crusades, Part 1: Political Fictions,” a panel at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association in New Orleans, LA, January 2013
 - *Comment on “The ‘Renaissance of the Twelfth Century’: New Perspectives,” a panel at the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association in Boston, MA, January 2011
 - *“Clerical Culture and Anti-Semitism: Peter of Blois’ *Contra perfidiam Iudaeorum* Reconsidered,” presented at the 44th International Congress of Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, MI, May, 2009
 - * “*Curiales* and Crusaders: Intellectuals in England and the Third Crusade,” presented at the Early Middle Ages Seminar of the Institute of Historical Research, University of London, February 25, 2009
 - *“The Practical Theology of Holy War: The English Clergy and the Third Crusade,” presented at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association in New York, NY, January 3, 2009
 - *Presider, concluding roundtable, at the Twenty-Seventh International Congress of the Charles Homer Haskins Society, Washington, DC, November 9, 2008
 - *“Anxiety, Remorse, and the Twelfth-Century ‘Renaissance,’” presented at the 43rd International Congress of Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, MI, May, 2008
 - *“The Practical Theology of Remorse,” presented at “Sapientia inter Verbum et Res,” a one-day symposium at the University of California, Berkeley, November 13, 2004
 - *“Peter of Blois and the Problem of the ‘Court,’” presented at the Battle Conference of Anglo-Norman Studies, Battle, UK, July, 2004.
 - *Untitled presentation in “Teaching the Middle Ages at a Small Liberal Arts College,” a session at the Thirty-Ninth International Congress of Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, MI, May 2004.
 - *“Penitential Thought and the Formation of a Clerical Elite in Europe, 1140-1215,” presented at the Missouri Valley History Conference, March 4-6, 2004
 - *“Remorseful Clerics and the Penitential Impulse in the Schools and in the World,” presented at the annual meeting of the Charles Homer Haskins Society, Ithaca, NY, November 19, 2002.
 - *“*Alia est conditio mea*: Perceptions of Religious Difference in Twelfth-Century Correspondence,” presented at the Thirty-Seventh International Congress of Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, MI, May 2-5, 2002”

*“Clerks, Courtiers, and Shepherds: Peter of Blois and the Search for the Ideal Cleric,” presented at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, Boston, MA, January, 2001.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

- *Vice-President for North America and Conference Program Director, The Haskins Society, 2006-2011
- *External reviewer, Department of History, James Madison University, 2018
- *External reviewer, Department of History, Macalester College, 2017
- *External reviewer, “Search for Values” First-Year Program, Rhodes College, 2016
- *Reviewer/consultant, College Board AP European History Research Study, 2012
- *Referee/manuscript reviews for *Speculum*, *Historical Research*, *Viator*, *The Mediaeval Journal*, *Florilegium*, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Teaching*, *The Haskins Society Journal*
- *Book manuscript reviews for Longman Publishers and Oxford University Press
- *Book proposal review for Ashgate Publishing
- *Evaluations for tenure or promotion at Willamette University, Hamilton College
- *Fellowship proposal reviewer for the Erwin Schrödinger Fellowship Program, FWF der Wissenschaftsfonds, Vienna.

AWARDS

- *Paul Garrett Fellowship for Excellence in Teaching and Scholarship, Whitman College, 2014-2017
- *2013 *Choice* Outstanding Academic Title, for *Europe’s Long Twelfth Century*, American Library Association
- *The Robert Y. Fluno Award for Distinguished Teaching in the Social Sciences, Whitman College, 2012
- * The Bethell Prize, for the outstanding paper given by a graduate student or junior professor at the International Conference of the Charles Homer Haskins Society, 1999
- * Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award, University of California at Berkeley, 1997

Institutional Service at Whitman College

- Chair of the Division of Social Sciences, 2022-2025, responsibilities including
 - The Committee of Division Chairs
 - The Elected Chairs Committee
 - President’s Budget Advisory Committee
 - Assessment Committee
 - Tenure-track searches: Sociology (2022-23), Computer Science (2022-23), Gender Studies (2023-24), History (2023-24), Mathematics (2023-2024), Politics (2023-24), Psychology (2023-24)
- *College Safety Committee, 2023-

- *Curriculum Committee, 2019-22
- **Ad Hoc* Committee on Faculty Governance, Spring 2020
- *College Writing Committee, 2018-2019
- *Director of the Encounters First-Year Program, 2015-2017
- Chair, Department of History, 2012-2015
- Chair, Environmental History Tenure-Track Search Committee, 2013-14
- Chair, Ancient History Tenure-Track Search Committee, 2012-13
- English Department Tenure-Track Search Committee (Medieval Literature), 2013-14
- Music Department Tenure-Track Search Committee (Orchestral Conducting), 2011-12
- Music Department Tenure-Track Search Committee (Music History), 2010-11
- Library Advisory Committee, 2005-2008, 2013-2016 (chair, 2014-15)
- Encounters Curricular Subcommittee, fall 2010, spring 2013 (chair)
- Assessment Committee, 2010-2013
- First-Year Core Curricular Committee, 2008
- General Studies Committee, 2007-2008 (chair, fall 2008)
- British Fellowships Committee, 2007-2008, 2018-2019
- Copyright Policy Task Force, 2007-10
- *Aid to Scholarship and Instructional Development Committee, fall 2005

Memberships in Professional Organizations

- *American Historical Association
- *Medieval Academy of America
- *The Charles Homer Haskins Society
- *The American Society for Church History
- *The Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East