



GAME OF
THRONES

and Medievalism

Medium Aevum

- The Middle Age
- Where “medieval” comes from
- First used in late 15th century
- Refer to period in between Roman Empire and when they lived

Old-fashioned

outdated

Medieval?

- 1 : of, relating to, or characteristic of the [Middle Ages](#)
 - | *medieval* history
 - | *medieval* architecture
- 2 : having a quality (such as cruelty) associated with the Middle Ages
- 3 : extremely outmoded or antiquated
 - | has *medieval* ideas about the role of women in our society

Pulp Fiction (1994)



“

I'MA GET MEDIEVAL
ON YOUR ASS.

MARSELLUS WALLACE







First air date: April 17th, 2011



First book *Game of Thrones* published in 1996



Game of Thrones Seasons 1-8
2011-2019

Today's class...

- "Medievalism": definition and why this term
- *Game of Thrones* 101: What's it about? Where did it come from?
- *Game of Thrones* representing "medieval history"
- History and Popular Culture

“Worlds of Westeros and Essos are *refractions* of medieval and early modern Europe rather than *reflections*.”

--Kavita Mudan Finn, “Game of Thrones is Based in History—Outdated History”,
The Public Medievalist (May 16, 2019)

REFRACTION = “own skewed perspective that shows us what we want to see.”

MEDIEVALISM

“Medievalism is the art, literature, scholarship, advocational pastimes, and sundry forms of entertainment and culture that turn to the Middle Ages for their subject matter or inspiration, and in doing so, explicitly or implicitly, by comparison or contrast, comment on the artist’s contemporary socio-cultural milieu.”

--Tison Pugh and Angela Jane Wiesel, *Medievalism: Making the Past in the Present* (Routledge, 2013)

Medievalism: Key factors

- Use medieval period for inspiration
- Use medieval period to comment on the modern
- Create meaning for modern audience from conceptualization of medieval



Victorian Medievalism

- Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, 1846
- Inspiration but also method to express dissatisfaction with industrialization and social upheaval
- Emphasis on medieval society as one of order, Christian faith, chivalry, and splendor

A Song of Ice and Fire series



George R. R. Martin (born 1948)

Game of Thrones: **Essential Plot**

“In the mythical continent of Westeros, several powerful families fight for control of the Seven Kingdoms. As conflict erupts in the kingdoms of men, an ancient enemy arises once again to threaten them all. Meanwhile, the last heirs of a recently usurped dynasty plot to take back their homeland from across the Narrow Sea.”

--(Sam Gray, IMDB)



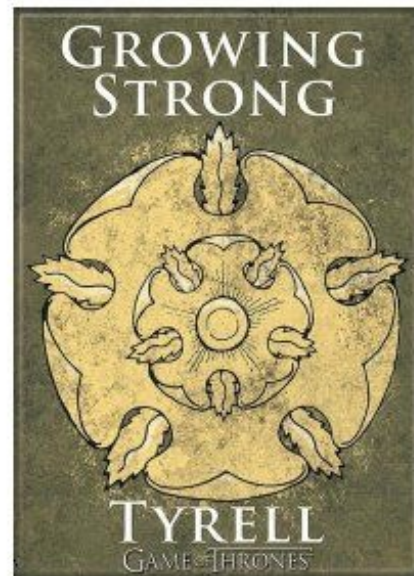
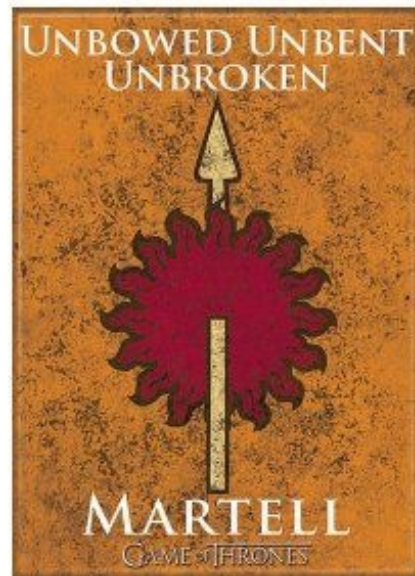
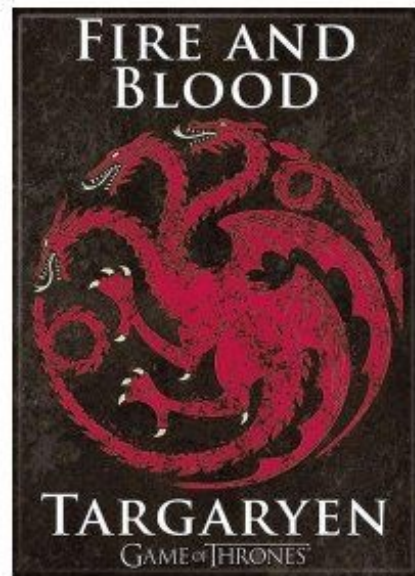
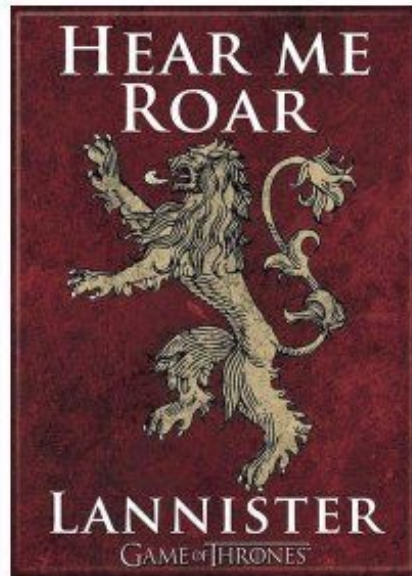
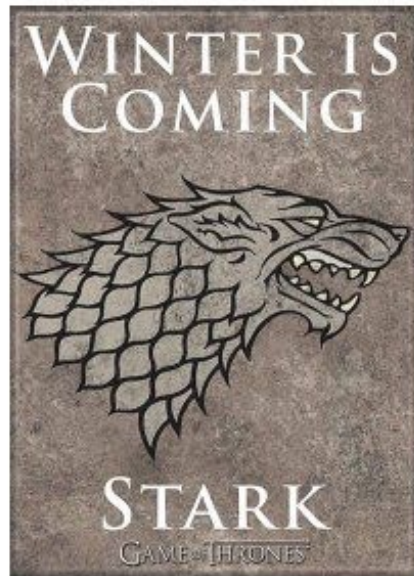
Seven Kingdoms (but 9 regions)

Iron Throne



“When you play the game of thrones, you win or you die. There is no middle ground.”

(Cersei Lannister, Season 1, Episode 7, Airdate: May 29, 2011)

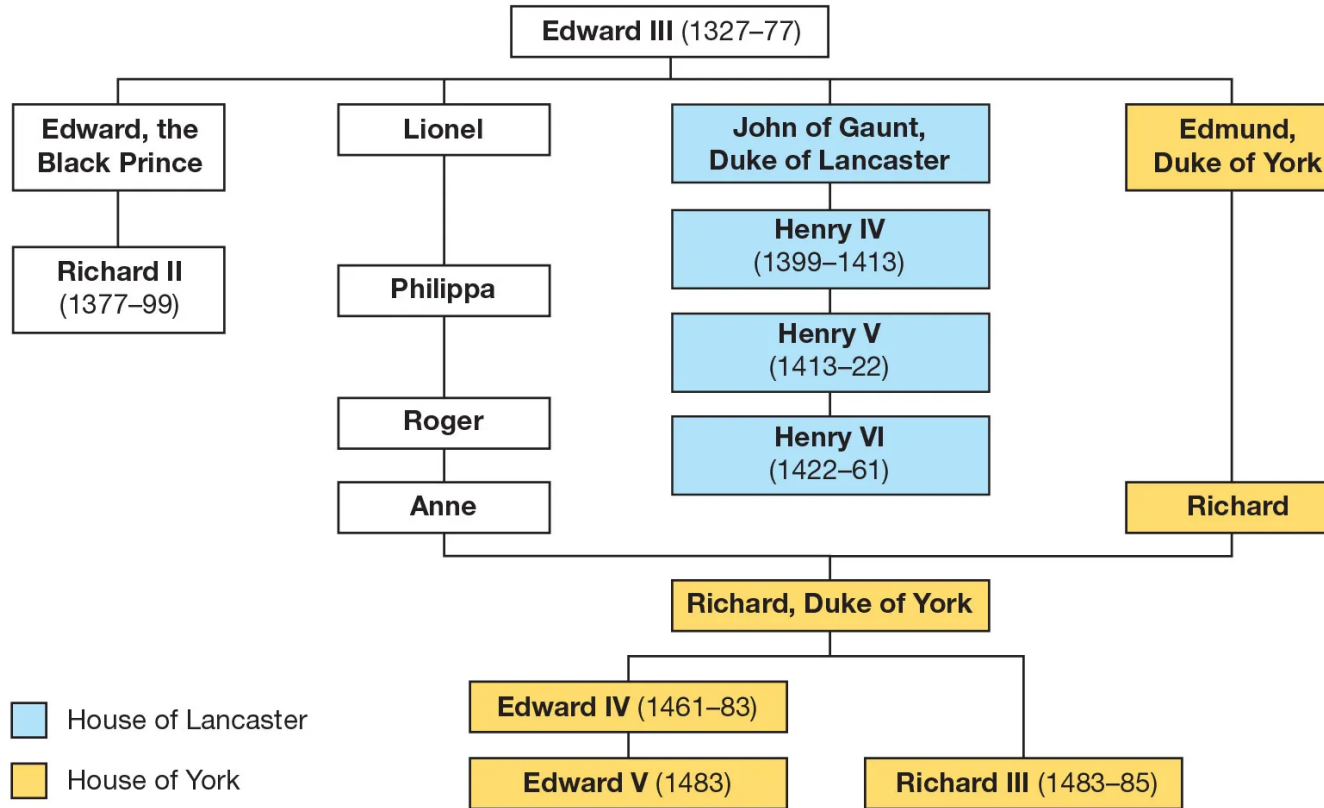




HBO

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OFFICIAL TRAILER

The Houses of Lancaster and York*



*Dates indicate years of reign

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War of the Roses, 1455-1487

Kavita Mudan Finn, “Game of Thrones is Based in History—Outdated History”, *The Public Medievalist* (16 May 2019)

Helen Young, “Game of Thrones’ Racism Problem”, *The Public Medievalist* (July 21, 2017)

GAME OF THRONES & MEDIIEVALISM

HIST492 Winter 2021 @UNBC

- Political conflict
- Eunuchs, castration, and masculinity
- Disability
- Race, racism, and the white saviour complex
- Law, order, and justice
- Sexual violence and incest
- Religion and violence
- Children
- Queenship and female power
- Warfare

Medieval Myths in *Game of Thrones*

Myth: No law, order, or justice



Myth: Religion =
Violence





Myth: Children = Little
Adults



Myth: Rampant Sexual
Violence against women

Contemporary Themes

- Racial violence (protests in 2014, 2015, and 2016)
- #MeToo movement (2017)
- Hillary Clinton as presidential candidate
- Discussions of race and racism in American society
- Sexual violence against women in the workplace
- Female political power



Brienne of Tarth



Melissandre of Asshai



Asha Greyjoy



Arya Stark



Daenerys Targaryen



Cersei Lannister: Wife of King Robert Baratheon, Mother of King Joffrey and King Tommen, Queen on her own



Does it matter
(that *Game of Thrones* is
“bad” History or not
historical)?

**What about tv shows and movies
based on real events?**

