CONFERENCE THEME AND GOALS

For a thousand years and more, from the sixth to the sixteenth century and beyond, monks, nuns, canons, friars, and others under religious vows stood at the pinnacle of Western European society. For their learning, piety, and expertise, and for their embodiment of Christian ideals and values, they were accorded positions of power and influence, and a wide range of legal, financial and social privileges. This international and interdisciplinary conference seeks to explore the phenomenon of medieval cultural elites through the lives and experiences of these men and women. Its participants seek to uncover the essential markers of religious life’s elite status, and how those under vows claimed and manifested that status in complex spiritual, temporal, and social combinations. We seek also to explore the workings of elite status from day to day, across region and locale—who earned it and how, whether through specific achievements or the deployment of specific capacities; who recognized, conferred, or helped maintain elite status, how and why; how elite status could be redefined, contested or rejected. We seek also to understand how these European religious elites compared to those found in other cultures and settings, from Syria and South Asia to the early modern transatlantic world.
CONFERENCE SCHEDULE
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 17
5:00-6:00 PM | REGISTRATION (UNIVERSITY CLUB)
OPENING RECEPTION (UNIVERSITY CLUB) SPONSORED BY THE SUMMERSELL CENTER AND THE SUMMERSELL CHAIR OF SOUTHERN HISTORY
6:00-7:00 PM | WELCOME AND OPENING ADDRESS (UNIVERSITY CLUB)
INTRODUCTION: DANIEL RICHES (ALABAMA)

GERT MEVILLE (DRESDEN)
What Do We Mean by “Elite”? Introductory Reflections on a Vague Concept

JAMES MIXSON (ALABAMA)
Religious Life, Elites, and Medieval Culture: An Outline of a Theme and its Possibilities

7:00-9:00 PM | DINNER (UNIVERSITY CLUB)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18
8:30-10:30 AM | FOUNDATIONAL IDEAS AND DYNAMICS: STRUCTURING, REFORMING, AND CRITIQUING ELITES (205 GORGAS LIBRARY)
CHAIR: JÖRG SONNTAG (DRESDEN)
STEVEN VANDERPUTTEN (GHENT)
From Elite Distinction to Distinct Elites: Ideals and Modalities of Monastic Reform in the Medieval West

EVA SCHLOTHEUBER (DÜSSELDORF)
The Role of the sponsa Christi, the “Bride of the Highest King,” in the Social and Sacral Hierarchy of Medieval Society: Assumptions, Potential, and Reinterpretations

KAI HERING (DRESDEN)
Deviding the Elite. Images of Monastic Life in Later Medieval Satirical Texts

10:45 AM-12:45 PM | RELIGIOUS LIFE AND ELITES IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE (205 GORGAS LIBRARY)
CHAIR: NATHAN LOEFEN (ALABAMA)

12:45 PM-1:45 PM | LUNCH (GORGAS HOUSE)

1:45-3:45 PM | FUNCTIONS AND FIELDS OF ACTIVITY: MONASTIC ELITES IN ECONOMY AND SOCIETY (205 GORGAS LIBRARY)
CHAIR: JUAN PONCE-VÁZQUEZ (ALABAMA)
JENS RÖHRKASTEN (BIRMINGHAM, U.K.)
Monastic Elites between the Struggle for Religious Perfection and the Management of Economic Affairs

DEEANA KLEPPER (BOSTON)

6:00 PM | PLENARY RECEPTION AND DINNER (SMITH HALL GALLERY)
8:00 PM | PLENARY ADDRESS (SMITH HALL GALLERY)
JOHN VAN ENGEN (NOTRE DAME)
Privilege and Paradox: Positioning Monks and Nuns in Medieval Society

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19
8:30-10:30 AM | MANIFESTATIONS OF ELITE STATUS: RELIGIOUS AND LAY ELITES BETWEEN CLOISTER AND WORLD (205 GORGAS LIBRARY)
CHAIR: LUCY KAUFMAN (ALABAMA)

ALBRECHT DIEM (SYRACUSE)
The Second Ascetic Invasion: Lay Aristocrats and Columbanian Monasticism

JONATHAN LYON (CHICAGO)
Religious Life and the Upper Nobility in Twelfth-Century Germany

DANIEL BORNSTEIN (WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY)
Cultivating Patronage in Late-Medieval Tuscany

10:45 AM-12:45 PM | MANIFESTATIONS OF ELITE STATUS: POWER, GOVERNMENT, AND SERVICE (205 GORGAS LIBRARY)
CHAIR: THEODORE TROST (ALABAMA)

JÜRGEN SARNOWSKY (HAMBURG)
Military Orders and Their Members as Elites

SEAN FIELD (VERMONT)
Longchamp’s Rule of 1259: An Elite Perspective on Female Franciscan Governance

HANS-JOACHIM SCHMIDT (FRIBOURG)
Power through Poverty. Mendicant Friars at the Imperial Courts in the 14th Century

1:00-2:30 PM | LUNCH (HOTEL CAPSTONE, MURPHY/GAYLE ROOM)

2:30-4:30 PM | MARKING ELITE STATUS: READING TEXT AND IMAGE (HOTEL CAPSTONE, BAGBY/FITZPATRICK ROOM)
CHAIR: JENNIFER M. FEITMAN (ALABAMA)

DAVID MICHELSON (VANDERBILT)
Diligent Readers: Contemplative Reading Skill as Elite Demarcation in East Syrian Monasticism of the Sixth and Seventh Centuries

ELIZA GARRISON (MIDDLEBURY)
The Golden Spaces of the Uta Codex

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20
8:30-10:30 AM | MANIFESTATIONS OF ELITE STATUS: VALUES, SACRINITY, AND CULTURE (HOTEL CAPSTONE, BAGBY/FITZPATRICK ROOM)
CHAIR: JAMES MIXSON (ALABAMA)

PIERANTONIO PIATTI (ROME)
Ecce novi confessores iniuria mundo prodeunt. Monastic Sacrinity in the Middle Ages between Charisma and Ecclesiastical Recognition

NICOLOANGELO D’ACUNTO (CRESCIA)
The Hermits of Medieval Italy: An Otherworldly Elite (XI-XIII centuries)

TIMOTHY JOHNSON (FLAGLER)
Franciscans as “Therapists of Commitment”: Reflections on Philip Rief’s Theory of Cultural Elites and Pre-Modern Religious Life

10:45 AM-12:45 PM | RELIGIOUS LIFE AND ELITES IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE (HOTEL CAPSTONE, BAGBY/FITZPATRICK ROOM)
CHAIR: NATHAN LOEFEN (ALABAMA)

KLAUS-DIETER MATHES (VIENNA)
Elites of Tibetan Buddhism — With a Particular Focus on the Role of Tantric Masters

KARIN PREISENDANZ (VIENNA)
Forest-Dwelling Hermits as a Brahminical Elite in Ancient South Asian Imagination

GUILLERMO WILDE (BUENOS AIRES)
Forging the Catholic Monarchy: Religious Orders as Elites in the Iberian Transatlantic World (16th century)

1:00-2:30 PM | LUNCH (HOTEL CAPSTONE, MURPHY/GAYLE ROOM)

2:30-4:00 PM | ROUNDTABLE AND CONCLUDING DISCUSSION (HOTEL CAPSTONE, BAGBY/FITZPATRICK ROOM)