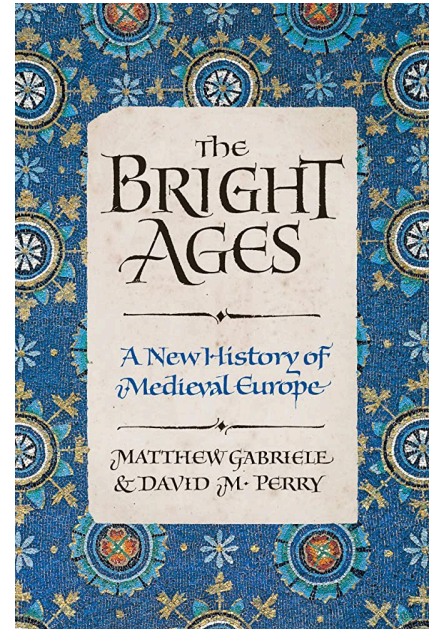


AP European History Summer Reading 2025

Welcome to European History!

Our course will begin in the 1400s, in a period that some contemporaries and many historians to follow described as a “Renaissance,” or “rebirth” — in contrast to the thousand or so years before, which have been described as the “Middle Ages” (*Medieval*) or even “Dark Ages.”

The book you will read this summer is a recent work that seeks to challenge the common view of Medieval Europe as being set in a “Dark Age.” It will do so in ways that are provocative and surprising; how convincing it is remains up to you.



Matthew Gabriele and David M. Perry, *The Bright Ages: A New History of the Medieval Europe* (New York: Harper, 2021)

ISBN: 978-0-06-298089-2. *This book is available online or at retail bookstores.*

You are *not* being asked to memorize the individuals and events presented in the book. Your aims, rather, are these: first, to lay a foundation that will help you understand the continuities and changes in the period we will be studying later; and, second, to give you an opportunity to engage with a work that *presents a historical argument* and *evaluates primary sources* — skills you will be using throughout this course.

As you read, please annotate for the following:

- 1) What is the core **argument** or set of arguments the book is making? (Pay special attention to the Introduction and Epilogue.) How convincing do you find these arguments?
- 2) Each chapter provides a **case study** of a particular time and place in the “Bright Ages.” How do these examples contribute to the authors’ larger goals? What case studies do you find most compelling?
- 3) The authors frequently **evaluate sources**, stating why the historical context, audience, purpose, or point of view of a text’s author or object’s creator should make it more or less credible to us. Find at least four examples of this throughout the book.
- 4) The authors are interested in how people **use (and misuse) history**. Find examples throughout the book of people (in our days or in times past) using history for purposes of their own moment.

Additionally, it will be very helpful for our course if you have some sense of Europe’s geography. [This game](#) helps you learn the map of contemporary Europe. I recommend playing it until you are reasonably confident with where places are. This will make things easier for you later on — think of it as a gift to your future self. (*Note that Europe’s borders have undergone constant change. If you want more fun, here is a [version for 1444](#) — right when our course begins!*)

I am looking forward to meeting you all in the fall. Until then, if you have questions or concerns, I can be reached at jacksosh@nths.net

— Mr. Jackson