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Francis of Assisi

Course Guidebook

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State University of New York, Geneseo



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William R. Cook, Ph.D.

Professor of History, State University of New York at Geneseo

William R. Cook was born and raised in Indianapolis, Indiana, and attended public schools there. He is a 1966 graduate of Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana (*cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa). He received Woodrow Wilson and Herbert Lehman fellowships to study medieval history from Cornell University, where he received his Ph.D. in 1971. Cook's dissertation was a study of a Hussite theologian and diplomat named Peter Payne.

In 1970, Cook was appointed Assistant Professor of History at the State University of New York, College at Geneseo. He has taught there for 30 years and holds the rank of Distinguished Teaching Professor. SUNY Geneseo is an undergraduate college of about 5,000 students located in a village of 8,000 in the western part of New York's Finger Lakes and about 25 miles south of Rochester.

At Geneseo, Cook has taught courses in medieval history, as well as ancient history, the Renaissance and Reformation periods, and biblical and Christian thought. He has teamed with Professor Herzman to teach several courses, including "The Age of Dante" and "The Age of St. Francis of Assisi."

Beginning in 1974, Cook and Herzman have taken students from SUNY Geneseo to study in Europe. Recently, Cook has taught a course every other January in Siena, Italy, about medieval Italian city-states.

After publishing several articles on Hussite theology and monastic thought, Cook has focused his research on St. Francis of Assisi for more than 20 years. In 1989, he published a volume in a series, *The Way of the Christian Mystics*, entitled *Francis of Assisi: The Way of Poverty and Humility* with Michael Glazier (later published by the Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN). For years, Cook sought to find and catalogue all the early paintings of St. Francis done in Italy. In the 1990s, he published a series of articles in Franciscan and Italian journals on specific images of the saint. In 1998, he published *St. Francis in America*, a study of early Italian paintings of Francis that are currently in the United States and Canada (Franciscan Press, Quincy, IL). These years of research on the images of Francis were brought to a conclusion with the 1999 publication of a comprehensive catalogue: *Images of St. Francis of Assisi in Painting, Stone and Glass from*

the Earliest Images to ca. 1320 in Italy: A Catalogue (Leo S. Olschki, Florence), part of the series *Italian Medieval and Renaissance Studies*.

Cook and Herzman published *The Medieval World View* with Oxford University Press in 1983 and are currently preparing a second edition. They have also written several articles together on such subjects as Dante, the *Song of Roland*, and paintings of the life of St. Francis in Assisi.

Currently, Cook is writing articles based on research that was not used in his books, and he plans to bring two great loves—St. Francis and the city of Siena—together by doing research on the 15th-century Franciscan Bernardino of Siena.

Cook has taught about Francis at Siena College (Loudenville, NY) and has given lectures about Francis and Franciscan art throughout the United States. With Herzman, he has taught about Francis to groups ranging from school children and religious education classes to Trappist monks.

Cook has directed ten Seminars for School Teachers for the National Endowment for the Humanities since 1983; six have had Francis as their subject and have been conducted in Siena and Assisi.

Ronald B. Herzman, Ph.D.

Professor of English, State University of New York at Geneseo

Ronald B. Herzman was born in Brooklyn, New York. He attended Brooklyn Prep and Manhattan College, graduating with honors in 1965 and receiving the Devlin Medal for excellence in French. He studied English literature at the University of Delaware as a DuPont Fellow and a New York State Regents Fellow. He received his M.A. in 1967 and Ph.D. in 1969, writing his dissertation on Geoffrey Chaucer. He has also studied at Princeton University (summer 1973) and as a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow-in-Residence at the University of Chicago during the academic year 1978–1979. Herzman received the Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching in 1976 and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from Manhattan College in 1991.

In 1969, Herzman was appointed Assistant Professor of English at the State University of New York at Geneseo. He currently holds the rank of SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor of English. He has held a number of concurrent positions. He has been an adjunct Professor at Genesee Community College, teaching in the inmate education program at Attica Correctional Facility (together with Cook); he has been a professorial lecturer at Georgetown University; and a guest tutor at St. John’s College in Santa Fe, New Mexico. From 1982 to 1985, Herzman was on leave from SUNY to work at the National Endowment for the Humanities, where he was the founding Program Officer for the Summer Seminars for School Teachers and the Assistant Director of the Division of Fellowships and Seminars.

His teaching interests, in addition to Francis of Assisi, include Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare, the Bible, and Arthurian literature. With Cook, he has team-taught several courses during the length of their academic careers at Geneseo, including “The Age of Dante” and “The Age of Francis of Assisi.” Cook and Herzman have taken students to Europe to study various aspects of the Middle Ages. Herzman has taught Francis of Assisi at Geneseo (with Cook), and at Georgetown University, as well as lecturing on Francis with Cook to Trappist Monks, school children, and religious education classes.

Cook and Herzman published *The Medieval World View* with Oxford University Press in 1983 and are currently at work on a second edition.

Herzman's other books include *The Apocalyptic Imagination in Medieval Literature* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992, with Richard Emmerson) and *Four Romances of England* (Medieval Institute Publications, edited with Graham Drake and Eve Salisbury). Herzman has written extensively on Franciscan subjects, including an article with Cook on the paintings of Francis in Assisi, an article on the Franciscan poet Jacopone da Todi, the article on Francis in the new *Dante Encyclopedia*, and several articles on Francis and Dante. Chapter two of *The Apocalyptic Imagination* is a study of Bonaventure's *Major Life of St. Francis*. His current research interests include Francis in a book-length study of Dante's *Paradiso*.

Herzman has directed nine Seminars for School Teachers for the National Endowment for the Humanities, conducted at Geneseo; at St. John's College in Santa Fe, New Mexico; and in Siena and Assisi, Italy.