The Cathedral Syllabus

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To understand the deep historical, religious, social and architectural context that makes a serious study of the cathedral, we will start at the beginning with the development of cathedrals: Why did they come about and when? Why did they take on a particular shape? Who designed and built them, and for what purpose?

After exploring cathedrals from the earliest eras, we will spend time becoming familiar with the monumental style of church architecture and decoration known as Romanesque. We will then turn our attention to the Gothic style, developed in the area around Paris in the second half of the 12th century. Although Gothic architecture is usually associated with pointed arches and flying buttresses, in fact it contains a wide range of forms, and we will see that no two Gothic churches are alike.

We will explore some of the most famous Gothic cathedrals including Saint-Denis, Notre Dame, Chartres, Amiens, Laon and Reims. This course will feature videos by Professor William R. Cook, illustrated with breathtaking photos, detailed floor plans, and 3-D models.

Session 1: January 15
- Early Christian Architecture
- Romanesque—A New Monument

Session 2: January 22
- Vaulting—A look at roofs
- Romanesque at Its Best

Session 3: January 29
- Saint-Denis and the Beginning of Gothic Style
- The Urban Context of Cathedrals

Session 4: February 5
- Notre Dame
- Early Gothic Style—Laon

Session 5: February 12
- Chartres – the Building
- Chartres – the Structure

Session 6: February 19
- Chartres – the Windows
- Reims – The Royal Cathedral

Session 7: February 26
- Ameins- The Limits of Height
- Ameins- The Facade

Session 8: March 4
- Cathedrals – Who builds, who pays, how long?
- New Developments in Gothic France