This course will survey the development of one of the most important cultural institutions of the Medieval era, the Gothic Cathedral. Starting in the Ile-de-France around 1140, the cathedral became the most important innovating force in Europe, leading the way in the development of architecture and the visual arts, as well as education and music. The centrality of the cathedral in the later medieval world reflects a fundamental change in the structure of medieval society, which changed from being primarily rural to urban in the course of only a century. A study of the Gothic cathedral therefore provides an ideal jumping off point to examine the most important trends of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries. These include the use of complex stone vaulting and stained glass, the primacy of the university school and the acceptance of secular learning, and the conflict between ecclesiastical and secular authority in the newly empowered medieval city.