History is full of crisis. From big battles that changed the fate of continents to stories of unrequited love that only mattered to one or two sad souls, what we know about the past is often centered on painful experiences. These crises didn't just change the lives of the people who wrote history; they changed the way history writing worked. This class examines how crisis changed both people and the literary practices of people who wrote history. We'll look at how an author's personal response to crisis shaped the limits of their text, the literary themes on which they depended, and the ways in which they characterized the people around them. From the Battle of Thermopylae to the Fall of Rome to the Black Death, we'll focus on large-scale crises, the societies they affected and the texts written by people who lived through crisis. We'll also come face to face with personal crises, Augustine's religious conversion; the anguished advice written by Dhuoda for her captive son; and the lifelong complaints of Peter Abelard, a man castrated for love, through the eyes of the people who experienced them.