

## Research seminar:

### MORTALITAS

Mortality crises in the Northwestern  
Mediterranean, 11th-16th centuries:  
Narrative memory, serial records and the  
construction of sociodemographic indexes  
(Project PID2023-151785NB-I00 funded by  
MICIU/AEI/10.13039/501100011033)

### ARQHISTEC

Consolidated research group 'Economies  
alimentàries i dinàmiques poblacionals  
a la Mediterrània occidental: Arqueologia  
i Història de les societats premodernes'  
(2021 SGR 1607 – UdL)

## Scientific coordinators:

Pere Benito i Monclús (UdL)

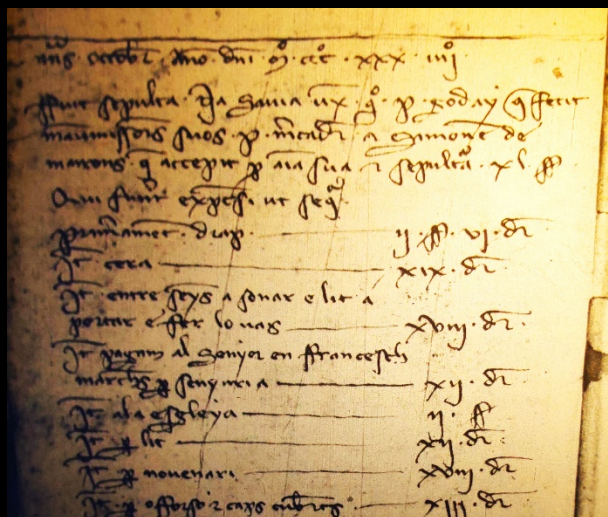
Albert Reixach Sala (UdL)

Antoni Riera i Melis (IEC)

María José Vilalta i Escobar (UdL)

## Information and link to the session:

[albert.reixach@udl.cat](mailto:albert.reixach@udl.cat)



Obituary book of the parish of Sant Esteve de Vilanova del Vallès,  
register of the year 1334 (Diocesan Archives of Terrassa)

# 14<sup>th</sup> Seminar Crises and cycles in History Mortality crises in the Medieval Mediterranean: sources and approaches

ON-LINE

11 June 2024

Universitat de Lleida  
Facultat de Lletres

## 15:15 Introduction

15:30

**Daniel Lord Smail**  
(Harvard University)

*The Notarial Archive as Sediment Core:  
A Resource for Understanding Mortality and  
Other Crises*

16:15

**Marcelo Cândido da Silva**  
(Universidade de São Paulo)

*Describing and explaining mortality crises in  
early medieval Mediterranean sources*

17:00

**André Filipe Oliveira da Silva**  
(Universidade de Évora)

*Atlantic seeds and documentary challenges:  
how to study the plague in Portugal and the  
territories of Portuguese influence (c. 1333?-  
1600)*



Dance of Death. 1490 mural at the Church of the Holy Trinity in  
Hrastovlje, Slovenia

The availability of direct documentary evidence is one of the main challenges in studying mortality crises during the Middle Ages. This is likely one of the reasons why, in recent decades, there has been little progress in this field, which lies halfway between Historical Demography—tending to focus on later, better-documented periods—and the economic and social history of the Middle Ages, which often acknowledges the importance of demographic variables but without delving deeply into the consistency of the available data.

Three specialists in the study of crises across the Mediterranean and the Atlantic will compare different regions, from Portugal to Byzantium and from the Early Middle Ages to the late 16th century, to demonstrate the potential that written documentation offers for studying mortality crises

Firstly, emphasis will be placed on notarial records, whose changes in volume and in the types of documents drafted serve in themselves as indicators of various crisis situations throughout the 13th to 15th centuries. The focus will also shift to narrative sources—not only from the Christian world but also from Islamic and Muslim contexts—in order to anticipate the study of mortality events of epidemic or other origins at the end of the first millennium. Finally, attention will be drawn to the necessity of combining different types of written sources in the case of Portugal, which—far from playing a peripheral role in southern Europe—must be considered in light of its role as a ‘spreader’ of the plague in the Atlantic archipelagos of Madeira and the Azores, as well as in the North African enclaves under Portuguese rule.