

A photograph of a man in a library, looking at books. The scene is filled with bookshelves. In the foreground, a stack of four old, worn books sits on the floor next to a person's leg wearing jeans and a black boot. The title 'KNIGHT DRIVING' is overlaid in large white letters on a dark brown horizontal band.

KNIGHT DRIVING

Written by Tamzen Meyer Grimes | Photography by Dennis Wise



The days of knighthood, castles, expansive empires and damsels in distress mark a period in history that brings forth some of the most memorable and heroic figures and stories ever—King Arthur and the Knights of the Roundtable and Robin Hood, to name two. It's easy to see why John Ott, Assistant Professor of European Middle Ages at Portland State University, was inspired to study and teach the real stories of this exciting era. "I've loved the Middle Ages (approximately A.D. 400–1450) since I was pretty young," says John.

We caught up with him on the campus of Portland State to discover more about his job and take some photos of his newly accessorized Volkswagen Jetta. John decided early on in his education that he wanted to build a career in medieval history. "I knew while I was an undergraduate that I wanted to continue to study the Middle Ages and go for my Ph.D.," John recalls. "I love conveying to my students a sense of a foreign past. I like to explode their myths about the Middle Ages, and I love to share the cultural artifacts of the age—manuscripts, architecture and so on."

John shared with us a few interesting facts about the Middle Ages that he says never fail to surprise his students. For example, did you know that a full suit of late-medieval armor (with gauntlets, helmet and foot and leg protection) could easily weigh 80 pounds/36 kilograms or more? You might compare it to wearing the hood of your Volkswagen. And a menu for "meat day" at an elite urban household in the late 14th century included six courses, with thirty-one dishes. Some of the dishes were veal, meat pies, black puddings (blood sausage), sausage, hares in civey (wine-sauce), partridges, capons (castrated roosters) and larded milk—not exactly light eating.

John never grows tired of teaching what he loves, and when you sit in his classroom, that fact is obvious. Growing up, he enjoyed all the exciting stories and tales of the Middle Ages, and now this assistant professor enjoys making history come alive for his students every day.

Volkswagen DriverGear Accessory Makeover

John is the winner of the *Volkswagen DriverGear Accessory Makeover Sweepstakes*, and his 2000 Jetta GL now proudly sports a roof rack, genuine Volkswagen wheels and a CD changer. "The Jetta looks slick—like a brand-new car, really," John tells us.

Volkswagen continues the excitement with the *Autobahn Adventure Sweepstakes*, which includes a Grand Prize, five-day dream trip to scenic Bavaria, where in a high-performance Volkswagen R32, you'll take on twisting country roads and experience the exhilaration of driving on the Autobahn. Five first-prize winners will receive \$1,000 worth of hot new R-line accessories from Volkswagen. To enter, or for more details, stop by your local Volkswagen Service Store before November 30, 2004.



JOHN OTT—ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

When John isn't teaching the Middle Ages at Portland State University, he spends time with his family and also has a rather unusual hobby—Adult Co-Ed Kickball. He describes the sport as being "like grade-school kickball—big, red, rubber ball, lots of taunting, innuendos and basic idiocy." His 2000 Volkswagen Jetta fits in well with his kickball colleagues, "You should see all the Jettas parked on the street next to the fields where we play." Have an interesting job or hobby to tell us about? Write us at editor@vwdriver.com.