

My project asks exactly what role Pope Innocent III played in the planning, execution, and ultimate failure of the Fourth Crusade. Beginning in August of 1199, Innocent III proclaimed a new crusade by attempting to summon the *militia Christi*. After much political and internal turmoil, the crusaders set off for the Holy Land with the help of Venetian transport. Along the way, there was a diversion from the intended path that resulted in the siege and ultimate capture of the Christian city of Constantinople. To some degree, this diversion can be attributed to contingent factors beyond the pope's control, such as a fragile European political scene, secular intervention, and suspect Venetian dealings, that weakened his control over the mission. But a number of the serious problems that occurred in the Fourth Crusade were deeply rooted in decisions made during the developmental stages. This project will therefore argue that the failure of the Fourth Crusade to fulfill its original objective was a result of Innocent's inadequate preparation on both political and material levels.