

REVISED SYLLABUS – 1-11-17

History 332 Medieval England
Winter 2017
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Prof. Randall McGowen
Office: 365 McKenzie phone:346-4831
Hours: Mon.-Weds. 9-10

The dates covered by this course, from the Roman conquest to the fifteenth century, are far clearer than its geographical confines. Although our focus will be upon events that concerned the medieval kingdom of England, we must, necessarily, adopt a far wider view. England was only the largest of the political units found in the British Isles, and its rulers were often involved in the affairs of the other regions, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. The fate of the kingdom was deeply influenced by what happened in Scandinavia, and, later, by the entanglement of its rulers on the continent. This 1500 year period saw remarkable shifts in boundaries and changes in loyalties. It also saw the constant movement of peoples, sometimes as individuals, other times in groups. Warfare and trade, as well as religion, drew different cultures and peoples into contact with each other. England produced its own unique developments, but to a far greater extent it was simply a particular case of wider European patterns. The course will take up such familiar themes as the development of royal power, the creation of the common law, and the rise of parliaments. It will also address the changing character of religious belief and the institutional life of the Church during this era. In addition, we will seek to understand something of the experiences of population that did not belong to the elite, people who suffered from the actions of the powerful, but who also helped to shape the history of the period.

We will be making extensive use of original sources in this class. Students are expected to have completed reading assignments by the dates listed below. Some portion of most classes will be devoted to discussion of the various readings. I will be using Canvas to convey information to the class (study guides, maps, documents, etc.).

Course Evaluation:

- 10% student participation (includes map exercise)
- 20% short paper (based on the readings)
- 30% mid-term exam
- 40% final exam

Course Objectives:

In this History course we have a number of different objectives. First and foremost, I want you to become familiar with the period we will be studying. This means not only learning such things as names, dates, and major economic, political, or intellectual trends, but also seeking to understand what shaped particular historical moments and exploring how people experienced them. One of the ways we approach the subject is through original sources, and in this course you will learn how to analyze and use such documents to build historical arguments. You will be taught how to read carefully and critically. Our goal is to learn that reading is not a passive activity, but rather one that requires constant alertness and a questioning mind. In the exams and papers you will be called upon to write in this class, you will be encouraged to develop the ability to organize a carefully reasoned argument or thesis out of imperfect or conflicting documents. You will be expected to develop a position and defend it with well-chosen evidence. These skills -- the analysis of complex situations, reading with a critical eye, and the composition of well developed essays -- will serve you well as you look forward to life beyond the university.

Required Readings:

- J. Gillingham & R. Griffiths, Medieval Britain: A Very Short Introduction (MB)
- Beowulf, (Penguin ed., translator, Michael Alexander)

Richard Fletcher, Blood Feud: Murder and Revenge in Anglo-Saxon England
Judith Bennett, A Medieval Life
The Book of Margery Kempe (Penguin edition)
There is also a selection of documents and maps at the Canvas site

Course Outline: (documents on Canvas in quotation marks)

Jan. 11	Celtic and Roman Britain	
Jan. 16	MLK day (no class)	
Jan. 18	The arrival of the Anglo-Saxons	<u>Beowulf</u>
Jan. 23	Christianization of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms	<u>Blood Feud</u> , 1-57
Jan. 25	Political consolidation and the Viking challenge	<u>Blood Feud</u> , 58-110
Jan. 30	11 th century political struggles	<u>Blood Feud</u> , 111-203
Feb. 1	William I and the Norman state	Paper due <u>MB</u> 1-41
Feb. 6	Monastic reform and papal politics	“Jocelin of Brakelond”
Feb. 8	Henry II and the common law	Map Exercise due
	Special viewing – “Lion in Winter” (time to be announced)	
Feb. 13	Crisis of the Angevin state	“Magna Carta” <u>MB</u> 42-67
Feb. 15	Baronial unrest and parliaments	TAKE-HOME MID-TERM DUE
Feb. 20	Money matters	<u>MB</u> 68-79
Feb. 22	Peasant lives	<u>A Medieval Life</u>
Feb. 27	The dream of empire and the strains of war	<u>MB</u> 80-98
Mar. 1	Social unrest	<u>MB</u> 99-132
Mar. 6	Female spirituality	<u>The Book of Margery Kempe</u>
Mar. 8	The crisis of monarchy	<u>MB</u> 133-52
Mar. 13	Order and disorder in 15 th century England	“Paston letters”
Mar. 15	New developments in a diminished kingdom	