

History 332 Medieval England  
Fall 2007

Prof. Randall McGowen  
Office: 365 McKenzie phone:346-4831  
Hours: M,W 10-11

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 Blackboard to convey information to the class (study guides, maps, documents, etc.).

Course Evaluation:

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

Required Readings:

- J. Gillingham & R. Griffiths, Medieval Britain: A Very Short Introduction (MB)
  - Beowulf, (Penguin ed., translator, Michael Alexander)
  - F. Barlow, The Godwins
  - Judith Bennett, A Medieval Life
  - The Book of Margery Kempe (Penguin edition)
- There is also a selection of documents at the Blackboard site

Course Outline: (documents on Blackboard in quotation marks)

Sept. 24 Celtic and Roman Britain

Sept. 26	The arrival of the Saxons	<u>Beowulf</u>
Oct. 1	Christianization of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms	“Christian conversion”
Oct. 3	Political consolidation and the Viking challenge	“King Alfred’s doom”
Oct. 8	11 <sup>th</sup> century political struggles	<u>The Godwins</u>
Oct. 10	William I and the Norman state	<b>Map Exercise due</b> <u>MB</u> 1-41
Oct. 15	Monastic reform and papal politics	“Jocelin of Brakelond”
Oct. 17	Henry II and the common law	“Henry II laws” <b>Paper due</b>
Oct. 22	Crisis of the Angevin state	“Magna Carta” <u>MB</u> 42-67
Oct. 24	<b>Mid-term exam</b>	
Oct. 29	Baronial unrest and parliaments	“rise of parliament”
Oct. 31	Money matters	<b>Map Exercise due</b> <u>MB</u> 68-79
Nov. 5	Peasant lives	<u>A Medieval Life</u>
Nov. 7	The dream of empire and the strains of war	<b>Paper due</b> <u>MB</u> 80-98
Nov. 12	Social unrest “Black Death”“14 <sup>th</sup> century religion”	<u>MB</u> 99-132
Nov. 14	No class	
Nov. 19	Female spirituality	<u>The Book of Margery Kempe</u>
Nov. 21	The crisis of monarchy	“Richard II” <u>MB</u> 133-52
Nov. 26	Order and disorder in 15 <sup>th</sup> century England	“Paston letters”
Nov. 28	New developments in a diminished kingdom	

The final exam is on Dec. 6, 10:15 am.