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MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

Spring 2018

How merry was “Olde England”? This course is intended as an introduction to the history of England from the withdrawal of the Roman legions in the early fifth century to the defeat of Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth Field in AD 1485. Sources will include chronicles, biographies, laws, charters, spiritual and political treatises, romances and parodies. Themes will include the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity, the Viking and Norman invasions, the development of the monarchy and parliament, monastic, peasant, and town life, the role of literacy and education in the development of a peculiarly “English” society, and the place of devotion, art, and architecture in medieval English culture. Students will have the opportunity to do a research paper or craft a project of their choice based on the themes of the course.

BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE FROM THE SEMINARY CO-OP BOOKSTORE

- Medieval England, 500-1500: A Reader*, Second Edition, ed. Emilie Amt (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2018)
- Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. Judith McClure and Roger Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
- Alfred the Great: Asser’s Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources*, trans. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984)
- Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977)
- Froissart, *Chronicles*, trans. Geoffrey Brereton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978)
- Michael Wood, *In Search of England: Journeys into the English Past* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001)
- Ian Mortimer, *The Time Traveler’s Guide to Medieval England: A Handbook for Visitors to the Fourteenth Century* (New York: Touchstone, 2008)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Reading, attendance, and participation in class discussion (20% of your final grade).
2. Two source reports (5-6 pages, double-spaced, each 15% of your final grade). First report due **April 20**. Second report due **May 18**.
3. Chronology (2-3 pages, 10% of your final grade). Due **May 30** in class.
4. Research paper *or* historical narrative (8-10 pages, double-spaced, 40% of your final grade). Due **June 7**.

READING AND DISCUSSION ASSIGNMENTS

March 26 “Albion’s Seed”

March 28 “Merrie Englande”

Wood, *In Search of England*, Part One “Myth and History,” pp. 1-106

April 2 The Conversion of the Anglo-Saxons

Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. McClure and Collins, books I-II
Medieval England, ed. Amt, nos. 1 and 3

April 4 The Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms

Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. McClure and Collins, books III-V
Wood, “Jarrow and English History,” in *In Search of England*, pp. 270-91

April 9 King Alfred and the Vikings

Asser, “Life of King Alfred,” in *Alfred the Great*, trans. Keynes and Lapidge, pp. 67-110
Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, 888-900, in *Alfred the Great*, trans. Keynes and Lapidge, pp. 113-19
Alfred’s prose translation of the psalter, in *Alfred the Great*, trans. Keynes and Lapidge, pp. 153-60
Miscellaneous sources on Alfred’s reign, in *Alfred the Great*, trans. Keynes and Lapidge, pp. 163-94
Wood, “Alfred the Great: The Case of the Fenland Forger,” in *In Search of England*, pp. 125-48

April 11 The Tenth Century, a.k.a. The Dark Ages

Medieval England, ed. Amt, nos. 6, 7, 10-14
William of Malmesbury, *Chronicle of the Kings of England*, trans. J.A. Giles (London: Bell and Daldy, 1866), pp. 128-41
Wood, “The Lost Life of King Athelstan,” and “The Story of a Book,” in *In Search of England*, pp. 149-85

April 16 Cnut the Dane and Edward the Confessor

Christ I: Advent Lyrics, trans. Craig Williamson, in *The Complete Old English Poems* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), pp. 303-25
Medieval England, ed. Amt, nos. 15-18

April 18 The Norman Conquest

Medieval England, ed. Amt, nos. 19-32

April 23 NO CLASS

April 25 Arthurian England

Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Thorpe, pp. 50-284, esp. 212-61

April 30 The Angevins

Medieval England, ed. Amt, nos. 33-50

May 2 The Thirteenth, the Greatest of Centuries

Medieval England, ed. Amt, nos. 51-66

May 7 Life in Medieval England I

Mortimer, *The Time Traveler's Guide*, pp. 1-142

May 9 Life in Medieval England II

Mortimer, *The Time Traveler's Guide*, pp. 143-292

May 14 The Hundred Years' War, Part One

Froissart, *Chronicles*, trans. Brereton, pp. 37-110, 120-69, 175-98
Medieval England, ed. Amt, nos. 67-77, 79-81

May 16 The Peasants' Revolt

Froissart, *Chronicles*, trans. Brereton, pp. 201-30
Medieval England, ed. Amt, nos. 82-86

May 21 "How can you say to me, I am a king?"

Froissart, *Chronicles*, trans. Brereton, pp. 303-8, 316-48, 402-71
Medieval England, ed. Amt, no. 87

May 23 Folkways of the Fifteenth Century

Medieval England, ed. Amt, nos. 88-102

May 28 MEMORIAL DAY—NO CLASS

May 30 Time travel—Chronologies

Robert Tombs, *The English and their History* (New York: Vintage, 2014), Parts One and Two,
pp. 21-156

Chronology (2-3 pages)

W.C. Sellar and R.J. Yeatman (*1066 and All That*) may think that there are only two memorable dates in English history, but we know that they are wrong! There are as many memorable dates as there are years of the Incarnation (*Anno Domini*).

Your task: using the dating system popularized by the ~~Venerable~~ Venerable Bede, list the most memorable events and/or references that you have found in our sources this quarter for *one* major theme in the history of England.

Possible themes include the kings of England, the role of dogs, the development of Parliament, the use of the psalms, the importance of towns, games people played including falconry and archery, crime and punishment, the story of King Arthur—to name only a few.

Order your entries by year (A.D.) and give a sentence or two of description for each.

Your chronology may cover the whole period we have studied in the course (A.D. 596, Gregory the Great's mission to the Angles, through A.D. 1485, Richard III's death at the battle of Bosworth Field) or focus more closely on a particular period or event.

Preface your chronology with a brief paragraph (about 250 words) explaining how you chose your theme and what you learned from following it through our sources.

Hint: Choose your theme to support the narrative or source you are going to explore in your final paper.

Final paper (8-10 pages, double-spaced)

CHOOSE ONE

1. A **research paper** on a particular source and/or theme that we have touched on in our readings and discussions. You may use a theme that you have written about in your source reports. You may choose a text from our *Reader* or one that you have found elsewhere. In your analysis, be sure to discuss what you have learned about the dating and authorship of your source. If there is a critical edition of your source, give details on how many manuscripts there are extant. Think about what your source tells us about the history of medieval England and how you would use it in writing a history of England. What problems of interpretation does it pose for us? Why did its author think that it was important enough to put down in writing? (*Hint:* Think here about what we have said in class about the growth of literacy and the kinds of things that were recorded in writing.)

2. A **historical narrative** based on a particular source or theme that we have touched on in our readings and discussions. The purpose of this exercise is to practice imagining yourself into the perspective of a medieval character so as to appreciate better the difficulties of taking an “objective” view when writing history. Choose your character and narrative perspective carefully. Are you a time traveler going back in time or a first-person participant in a particular event? You may choose to write a “day in the life” of your character or a meditation on a particular experience; your “narrative” need not be an event, although it can be. You might also choose to model your narrative on one of our medieval sources—a poem or a chronicle, for example. Use footnotes both to give sources for your details and to explain your interpretive decisions in crafting your narrative.

For both options: For articles on your source and/or theme, check the International Medieval Bibliography (available through Regenstein Library; check catalogue for Databases). You should

have at least **five** items (articles or books) in your bibliography in addition to the readings that you draw on from our syllabus. Use Chicago Manual of Style format for citations.