

Medieval England (1066-1314)

Hist 388 004

Autumn 2017

TuTh 12-1:15

Robinson Hall B208

Sam Collins

Robinson B377B

Office Hours: Tu 1:30-3:30

and by appointment

scolline@gmu.edu

Description and goals

This course considers the changing shape of society and politics in England from the Norman Conquest of 1066 to the battle of Bannockburn in 1314. Through a close reading of a series of primary sources, our main focus will be on the

growth and development of the medieval kingdom of England and the place of this kingdom both within the British Isles and on the wider European stage. Topics to be considered include: the nature of medieval kingship in England, origins of parliament, the development of common law, English relations with Wales, Scotland and Ireland, change and continuity in medieval Christianity, and a careful consideration of the methods and sources by which modern historians study the medieval past. At the end of this course students will be both familiar with the main events of English political history in the period, as well as have developed an appreciation of just how (and how controversially) that history is written from the extant sources.

**Required books**

Emilie Amt (ed.), Medieval England, 1000-1500: A Reader (Toronto UP, 2000), 978-1442600065

Geoffrey of Monmouth, The History of the Kings of Britain, trans. Thorpe (Penguin, 1966), 978-0140441703

Henry of Huntington, The History of the English People, trans. Greenway (Oxford UP, 1996), 978-0199554805

Jocelin of Brakelond, Chronicle of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds (Oxford UP, 2009), 978-0199554935

Important enrollment information and deadlines:

- Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class.
- Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes. (Deadlines each semester are published in the Schedule of Classes available from the Registrar's Website registrar.gmu.edu.)
- Last day to add: 9/5
- Last day to drop (no tuition penalty): 9/5
- Last day to drop (33% tuition penalty): 9/19
- Final drop deadline (67% tuition penalty): 9/29
- After the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons.
- Undergraduate students may choose to exercise a selective withdrawal during the selective withdrawal period (10/2-10/27). For details, see: <http://chssundergrad.gmu.edu/forms/withdrawal/selective>

Honor code

George Mason University has an Honor Code that requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee.

See honorcode.gmu.edu for more detailed information.

Blackboard

Blackboard plays an important role in this course as a repository for many of our readings and all of our graded assignments. Please ensure that you have access to our blackboard page: mymasonportal.gmu.edu

Email

Please ensure that you have access to your GMU email account. I will occasionally communicate with the class via email, and the course email lists depend on your GMU mail account. Reminder: in order to comply with student privacy laws, faculty and students must use their GMU email accounts when corresponding with each other.

Students with disabilities

If you are a student with a disability for which you need academic accommodation, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703.993.2474, ods.gmu.edu. All academic accommodations must be arranged through ODS.

Student services

I want to remind you that George Mason University has put in place a number of academic support services and other resources to facilitate student success. You have already paid for these: they are your tuition dollars at work. Take full advantage of them.

The Writing Center: writingcenter.gmu.edu

Counseling and Psychological Services: caps.gmu.edu

University Career Service: careers.gmu.edu

Optional books

Everyone in the class would do well to keep up with a modern narrative of these difficult and complicated years. As there is no longer a suitable textbook in print at a reasonable price, I recommend below a few solid choices among the many contemporary histories of medieval England. None of these are perfect for our purposes, but if you read any one of them, you will come away from the course with an increased command of our material (perhaps dramatically so, depending on what you choose and how carefully you read it). None are, strictly speaking, required, but reading at least one of them is strongly recommended. I list them below in *descending order of complexity* (=hardest first, easiest last). This is not in any way an exhaustive list.

- Carpenter, The Struggle for Mastery 1066-1284 (Penguin History of Britain, Penguin, 2005); a gem, particularly/unusually rich in the attention paid to Scotland and Wales.
- Bartlett, England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075-1225 (Oxford UP, 2002); equivalent complexity to Carpenter, but thematic in arrangement as opposed to Carpenter's chronological approach.
- Clanchy, England and its Rulers 1066-1307 (3rd ed., Blackwell, 2006); wonderful in all ways save price.
- Hollister, Stacey, and Stacey, The Making of England to 1399 (Cengage, 2000); once upon a time this was the standard textbook for courses like



this one; now, with a list price closing in on \$100, it's off limits as an assigned textbook; cheap used copies, however, can still be found. *This book is the best choice for most students in this course; a tried and true mix of complexity and accessibility.*

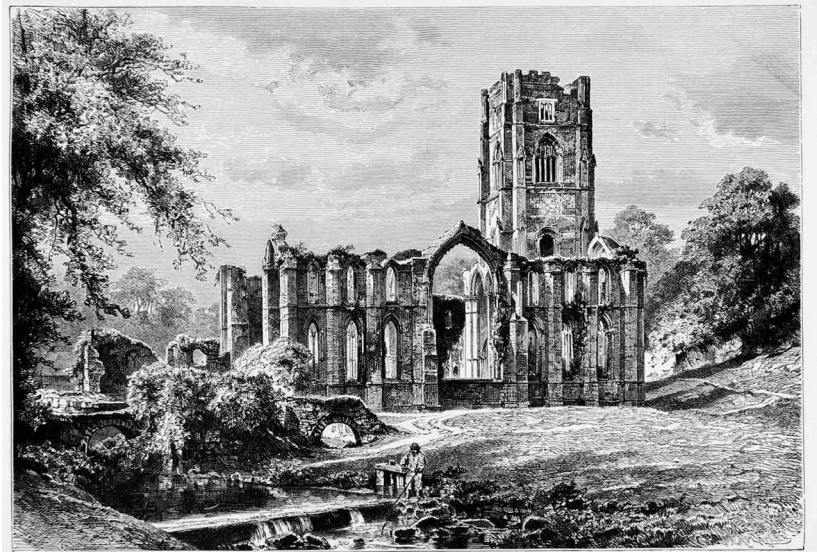
- Jones, *The Plantagenets* (Penguin, 2012); Jones is a skillful popular historian, and this (good!) book is designed as the tie-in to the BBC documentary (2015) TV series of the same name (narrated by no less than Robert Bartlett). The book is designed as something of a beach read, and is clear and well constructed. If you'd rather watch your Plantagenets than read them, here's the link to the 3-part documentary: <http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2esowe>
- Ackroyd, *Foundation* (St. Martin's, 2011); Peter Ackroyd fans have already read this; another engaging, fast-moving read with the author's characteristic eye for entertaining and significant points of detail. Perfect for the beach (and your desk).

Assignments and grading

Your grade in the course is composed of 8 source assignments (5 points each) and three essays (20 points each)

Source assignments (5 points each)

These are short interpretative writing exercises on various aspects of the primary sources we have considered together in class. These assignments are informal in the sense that they are graded for completion only, and are designed as a way for you to start thinking in some detail about the primary sources, but to do so in such a way that encourages and rewards experimentation. The source assignments are designed as testing grounds for ideas you will develop more thoroughly in the graded essays. Full guide and assignments in the "assignments" folder on blackboard.



RUINS OF FOUNTAINS ABBEY.

Three essays (20 points each)

These writing assignments (5-7 pages) ask you to think comparatively across two or more sources we have read together as a class. NB: 1) There are five assigned essays, but you must complete only three. 2) Choose which essays you write as taste and schedule allow, but it is *highly recommended* that all students write the first essay. 3) If you write more than three essays I will only count your top three grades. 4) Please note that all essays have a strict late policy as described in the instructions for each essay. Further information about these assignments may be found in the "essays" folder on our blackboard page.

The following conversion of point scores to university letter grades will be used:

A = 93-100	A- = 90-92	B+ = 87-89
B = 83-86	B- = 80-82	C+ = 77-79
C = 73-76	C- = 70-72	D = 60-69
F = all grades 59 and lower		

Essay due dates

first: 9/26 in class
second: 10/20 by email
third: 11/10 by email
fourth: 11/28 in class
fifth: 12/14 by email

Medieval events at CUA

The Center for Medieval and Byzantine Studies at Catholic University in Washington DC maintains a strong and varied series of public lectures. As of this writing their autumn schedule is not yet online, but as it comes out I will keep the class posted of any events that look relevant to our topic. All the details, when available, will be posted at: mbs.cua.edu.

Medieval events at Dumbarton Oaks

The Dumbarton Oaks Museum and research library also runs a series of public events during the academic year, many of them on topics of interest to students in this class. Like CUA, however, the autumn schedule at Dumbarton Oaks isn't yet online. I'll keep you posted as information becomes available, and you can check too at:

doaks.org/news. Remember too that the Dumbarton Oaks Museum fulfills one iteration of our museum project.

The Mason Diversity Statement

This course adheres in all respects to the Mason Diversity Statement: "George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth. An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected. The reflection of Mason's commitment to diversity and inclusion goes beyond policies and procedures to focus on behavior at the individual, group and organizational level. The implementation of this commitment to diversity and inclusion is found in all settings, including individual work units and groups, student organizations and groups, and classroom settings; it is also found with the delivery of services and activities, including, but not limited to, curriculum, teaching, events, advising, research, service, and community outreach. Acknowledging that the attainment of diversity and inclusion are dynamic and continuous processes, and that the larger societal setting has an evolving socio-cultural understanding of diversity and inclusion, Mason seeks to continuously improve its environment. To this end, the University promotes continuous monitoring and self-assessment regarding diversity. The aim is to incorporate diversity and inclusion within the philosophies and actions of the individual, group and organization, and to make improvements as needed."

