Hist 388
Anglo-Saxon England: 400-1066
Spring term 2020
TTh 9-10:15
Krug Hall 210

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Office hours: T 10:30-12:30
and by appointment
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Description and objectives
In this course we will consider the political, cultural, and religious history of England from the end of Roman control in the fifth century (c.410) to the Norman Conquest of the eleventh (1066). Our primary aim is to think through the early kingdoms of England both for their own unique characteristics and as examples of wider trends in the post-Roman history of Western Europe. Topics to be addressed include: the changing nature of kingship and rule; the spread of Christianity; interaction between England and its Celtic neighbors to the north and west and its continental connections with the Frankish kingdoms, Scandinavia, the papacy, and the Normans; art and archaeology; the impact of the Vikings on English politics and culture; and the alleged debts of modern Anglo-American political and legal culture to the “Anglo-Saxon” past.

At the end of this course students will be familiar with the main outline of English early medieval history and how the history of England in this period relates to wider European developments. And, more importantly, students will have developed a familiarity with the main literary, documentary, and material sources for that history and will have begun to confront the difficulties of interpretation this complicated and fragmentary source-base presents.

Required books


Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred & Other Contemporary Sources (Penguin, 1984) 978-0140444094

Higham, et al., The Anglo-Saxon World (Yale UP, 2015) 978-0300216134; NB: the full text of this title is available online through the university library: https://wrlc-gm.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01WRLC_GML/n7c9vo/alma9931623893404105

Students with disabilities
If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations please see me and contact the office of Disability Services at 703.993.2474 (ds.gmu.edu). All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.
Honor code
• George Mason University has an Honor Code which 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.

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: 1/28
• Last day to drop with 100% refund: 2/5
• Last Day to Drop (Last Day for 50% Refund): 2/11
• Unrestricted Withdrawal Period: 2/12-2/24
• Selective Withdrawal Period (Undergraduate Students Only, 100% tuition liability): 2/25-3/30
• After the last day to drop or withdraw, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons.

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.

Winter weather
In the event of snow (or, since this is greater Washington, the very faintest hint of snow) classes may be cancelled. In such events we will follow whatever amended opening and closing times the university sets. These are always announced on the main webpage: gmu.edu and sent out by text alert for those of you signed up for this service. You may also call the switchboard: (703) 993-1000.

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
Course requirements

Informal writing: Source Assignments
During many weeks of the term you will write short responses on questions about one or more of the primary sources under discussion for the week, 10 source assignments in total. These assignments are graded only for completion; they’re 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. NB: 15 source assignments are assigned, but you need do only 10 for full credit. Complete guide to the source assignments in the “assignments” folder on blackboard.

Formal writing
There are two options for completing the requirements for the formal written portion of the course.

**Option A:** Weekly source assignments, 2 essays, and Longer Source Assignment.
The two essays are written at home, 6-8 pp. each, in which you are asked to consider two or more of our assigned primary source readings in comparison on one of a short list of topics. The Longer Source Assignment is an essay, 4-6 pp., which asks you to analyze a primary source that we have not considered together as a class. These will all be short sources, chosen by me, all of which should offer ample opportunity for you to draw parallels and distinctions with other sources we have read and discussed together.

**Option B:** Weekly source assignments, Essay 1, and research paper. Students choosing this option will write the weekly source assignments and first essay along with the rest of the class, but then, in lieu of the Longer Source Assignment and remaining essays, they will compose a short research paper of 10-15 pp. on a topic designed in consultation with me.

Students who wish to pursue this option must adhere to the following deadlines without exception: No later than F 2/28 you must schedule a meeting with me to being the process of choosing a topic. F 3/20 a paragraph-length description of your topic and an annotated bibliography of primary and (at least 10) secondary sources are due. F 4/10 full, complete draft of the essay due. M 5/11 final draft of the essay due.
Grading

Option A
Ten source assignments: 2 points each
Essay 1: 30 points
Essay 2: 30 points
Longer Source Assignment: 20 points

Option B
Ten source assignments: 2 points each
Essay 1: 20 points
Research paper: 60 points

The following conversion of numerical grades 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

Optional supplementary material
On the syllabus I’ve listed optional material (mostly audio and video) for each lecture. This additional material reflects the wealth of high-quality public history produced in Britain, and the English Middle Ages is extremely well represented in this genre of programming. None of this material is required, and all of it will improve your experience of the class and understanding of our material. In general I’ve listed episodes from three ongoing series: Time Team (video, popular television on archaeological topics from Channel Four, generally 50 minutes each), In Our Time (audio, Melvyn Bragg’s extraordinary radio show where each episode features a panel of experts discussing a set topic, 60 minutes), and BBC Radio 3, Anglo-Saxon Portraits (audio, short thumbnail sketches of important figures from the Anglo-Saxon period by a mix of scholars and other public figures, generally 15 minutes each). If you like Time Team or In Our Time, both franchises offer more of the same sort of material on a dizzyingly wide range of topics. Pick and choose among the optional offerings below as time and dedication allow.