

SOCIETY AND IDEAS IN SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND



This course is about society and ideas in England during Shakespeare's lifetime (1564-1616) and, more generally, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a whole. In that period, English population doubled, and though the economy grew more sophisticated, the country's resources were barely sufficient to feed the increased population. Poverty and vagrancy spread. People competed for scarce jobs, and to gain an advantage in the competition tried to improve their educational attainments. In order to get more food from the soil people became increasingly interested in new agricultural techniques and scientific ideas. As education and science spread, so old attitudes came under attack. The ferment in ideas contributed to political conflict which culminated in the Civil War of 1642-6 and the execution of the king (and abolition of monarchy) in 1649. Intellectual and social changes were also closely linked to the great flowering of English literature and culture in the age of Shakespeare, Donne, Milton, Hobbes and Locke.

The course will explore the nature and development of English society, and the emergence of new social, political and religious ideas. Themes surveyed will include the impact of massive population growth on the English economy and social structure; the spread of scientific thinking and the decay of belief in witchcraft; patriarchalist social and political theories; radical and democratic political ideas, including the thinking of the Levellers (who advocated manhood suffrage), and Diggers (who wanted the abolition of private property); new religious groups such as the Quakers (who included revolutionaries as well as pacifists), and Fifth Monarchists (who expected the imminent second coming of Christ); and the contrasting political thinking of authoritarians like Hobbes and anti-authoritarians like Locke.

In addition to surveying social history in Shakespeare's England, and the history of ideas about society and politics, the course will also discuss the religious thinking of Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and various radical groups which emerged in the mid-seventeenth century. It was from the struggle between these various groups that religious toleration emerged by the end of the seventeenth century. It was also in the late-seventeenth century that belief in witchcraft faded amongst educated people. The final part of the course will discuss popular and elite ideas about witches, and about such things as ghosts, fairies, omens and astrology.

Course objectives include (1) to foster an understanding of societies very different from our own; (2) to enrich appreciation of Shakespeare and other writers of the period by investigating their context; (3) to show how and why attitudes which we take for granted first came into being; and (4) to enhance critical and analytical thinking, and communication skills.

367 Course Requirements

NOTE THAT THIS IS A 3 CREDIT COURSE FOR GRADUATES, AND A FOUR CREDIT COURSE FOR UNDERGRADUATES.

Undergraduates:

- attend lectures (1101 Humanities, 11-12:15 TR).
- do the reading (for details see the course schedule) and explore this web site.
- two midterms (in class; 2/26 and 4/15)
- a final exam (2:45 PM, Monday 5/10; place to be announced).
- a term paper of 5-6 pages (due 4/1).
- Honors students do an extra term paper (due 5/6).

(Of your total grade, each midterm is worth 18.75%; the final 37.5%; and the term paper 25%.)

Term paper: write on one of these topics

(1) How and why did English society change in the century between 1580 and 1680?

(2) What arguments did people in the seventeenth century use in favor of and against the Divine Right of Kings? How convincing were the arguments, and why did people find them persuasive?

(3) Why did religious and political radicalism spread in England in the mid-seventeenth century, what did the radicals want, and why did they fail to attain their objectives

(4) another topic, by arrangement.

Graduates:

- attend lectures
- 2 term papers (12-15 pp. including notes and bibliography; due 3/9; 5/6).

Topics by arrangement. (Total grade consists of 50% for each paper.)

Schedule of Topics:



Lecture Topics

1. Introduction: society and ideas
(1/20-22)

Part I

Part II

2. English institutions (1/22-2/27)

Monarchy and government

The Church and Religion -I

Documents & readings

Shakespeare on England

Who Was Shakespeare?

by William Rubinstein

Britain in 1500 by Steven Gunn

Wrong Side of the River by Jessica
Browner.

Elizabethan Life

Britain in 1600 by John Miller

From David Hume's History of

England

<u>The Church and Religion - II</u>	<u>Elizabethan and Jacobean England</u> <u>Bancroft - <i>Survey</i></u> <u>Barrow - <i>Discovery</i></u>
3. English society (1/27-2/3): <u>Social structure</u> <u>Women in society</u> <u>The Family</u> <u>The Economy</u>	<u>Description Of Elizabethan England</u> <u>English population</u> <u>Cleaver & Dod - <i>Household</i></u> <u><i>government</i></u> <u>Macfarlane on Stone</u>
4. Divine Right, Patriarchalism, Common Law and Constitutionalism (2/5-12): <u>The Divine Right of Kings - I</u> <u>The Divine Right of Kings - II</u> <u>Filmer's patriarchy</u> <u>Common Law</u>	<u>Mocket - <i>God and the King</i></u> <u>Filmer - <i>Patriarcha</i></u> <u>James - <i>Speech to Parliament</i></u> <u>Hedley - <i>Speech to Parliament</i></u> <u>Patriarchalism, Politics and Mass</u> <u>Attitudes in Stuart England, Gordon</u> <u>J. Schochet</u>
5. Contract, Resistance, and Parliament (2/17-24): <u>Protestant resistance theory</u> <u>Catholic resistance theory</u>	<u><i>Vindiciae contra tyrannos</i></u> <u>John Floyd - <i>God and the king</i></u> <u>Manetsch - <i>The Saint Bartholomew's</i></u> <u><i>Day massacre</i></u>
6. The Onset of Civil War (3/2-3/9): <u>Early Stuart England:</u> <u>Parliamentarian and Royalist theory</u> <u>in the Civil Wars (1642-6) and</u> <u>Interregnum (1649-60)</u>	<u>Buckingham in verse</u> <u>Prynne <i>Histrionomastix</i></u> <u>Cornwallis - <i>On alehouses</i></u> <u>Smith - <i>On Noah's drunkenness</i></u> <u>Spelman - <i>Considerations</i></u> <u>Parker - <i>Observations</i></u> <u>Ascham - <i>Discourse & Bounds</i></u> <u>Weston - <i>English Constitutional</i></u> <u><i>Doctrines The Theory of Mixed</i></u> <u><i>Monarchy under Charles I</i></u>

SPRING BREAK, MARCH 13-21

7. Political and Religious Radicals
(3/23-25):

Levellers and Diggers
Other religious radicals

An Agreement of the people
Denne - The Levellers design
Wood - The Levellers (falsely so called)
Levellers and sects in verse
Dell - Building of the Church
Winstanley - Letter to Fairfax
Coppe - A Fiery Flying Roll

Kishlansky - The Army and the Levellers: The Roads to Putney

Harrington - Oceana Excerpts
Sidney - Speech on the scaffold
Wren - Monarchy asserted

8. Republicans and Whigs (3/30-4/6):

Harrington, Sidney and Locke

J. G. A. Pocock - James Harrington and the Good Old Cause: A Study of the Ideological Context of His Writings

TERM PAPERS DUE 1 APRIL

9. Towards Modernity: Hobbes, Locke, Science, Religion and Toleration (4/8-4/13)

Hobbes
Hobbes II
Religious Toleration

Hobbes - Excerpts
Coke - Survey of Hobbes
Ross - Leviathan drawn out
Objections answered
John Goodwin - Theomachia
Jeremy Taylor - Liberty of prophesying

Tom Sorell - Hobbes's Persuasive Civil Science
Perez Zagorin - Clarendon and Hobbes

10. Popular Culture (4/20-29):
Providence and Prophecy
Magic and Medicine
Ghosts, fairies and omens

Francis Bacon, from Essay XXXV: Of Prophecies
Hilliard Fire from heaven
Miracle of Miracles

Astrology

Corbet *Ballad*
Rudstone *Prognostication*
Foulweather *Prognostication*

Camden *Astrology in Shakespeare's Day*
Wright *Astrology and Science in Seventeenth-Century England*

11. Witchcraft:

Prosecution and beliefs
Dynamics and decline

Henry Holland *A Treatise against witchcraft: The Most wonderfull and true storie Witches Apprehended, Examined and Executed*
Reginald Scot, *Discovery of witchcraft*

Holmes, *Women: Witnesses and Witches*

HONORS PAPERS DUE 5/6 IN CLASS

**FINAL EXAM: 2:45 PM, MONDAY 5/10; 1111 GEORGE L. MOSSE
HUMANITIES**