

Department of History  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Semester II, 1994

**HISTORY 361: THE EMERGENCE OF MODERN BRITAIN 1485-1660**

Prof. Johann Sommerville

5214 Humanities

Office hours: Wednesdays 2-4, and by appointment

This course will explore a decisive period in the making of modern Britain, and of the modern western world. Though the social, economic and intellectual aspects of the period will not be neglected, the main focus of the course will be on political and constitutional change. The course will begin with a broad introduction to early-modern Britain. Then we will examine how the turbulent period of the Wars of the Roses was ended, and how the Tudor monarchy broke the independence of the 'overmighty magnates' of late-medieval England. The Tudors succeeded in introducing far greater unity and centralization than had existed earlier, and this will be the main theme of the first half of the course. Topics discussed will include the Reformation, the so-called 'Tudor Revolution in Government', the bitter factional politics of the court of Henry VIII, the Marian Reaction and the 'mid-Tudor crisis', and the re-establishment of royal power in the reign of Elizabeth - when an unprecedented flowering of English culture took place, and when English sea-power staved off conquest by Catholic Spain. The succession of James, King of Scots to the English throne in 1603 united the Scottish and English monarchies but the new Stuart dynasty was soon faced with grave problems. The second half of the course will examine the ways in which financial, constitutional and religious issues combined to lead to civil war and to the execution of the King and the introduction of a republic in England in 1649. We will also see how the advent of a military despotism and the proliferation of radical ideas led the English to re-introduce monarchy in 1660.

Required texts:

John Guy, Tudor England (covers England 1485-1603: use this as the basic textbook for the first half of the course)

A.G.Dickens, The English Reformation (useful for the Reformation and also for questions of Tudor thought, culture and politics in general)

Christopher Haigh, The reign of Elizabeth I (an up-to-date collection of essays on Elizabeth's reign, challenging some traditional interpretations)

Derek Hirst, Authority and Conflict (a balanced survey of England 1603-1658; the basic textbook for the second half of the course)

Christopher Hill, God's Englishman (biography of Oliver Cromwell in his historical context)

Required tasks:

3 credit students will take two mid-term exams (dates: 3/2 and 4/11) and a final (5/19, 12-25 p.m.).

4 credit students will have the same tasks and will also write a term paper of approximately 5-6 pages (due 4/19; topics: Was the Reformation an act of state forced on a reluctant population by a greedy and tyrannical government?; or Why did civil war break out in England in 1642; or another topic, by arrangement with me).

Honors students: as above, plus another 5-6 page paper (due 5/13).

Graduate students will take the final and write two papers (10-15pp, including notes and bibliographies; topics by arrangement; due 3/25; 5/13).

Schedule of topics: 1/24-8: Introduction: economy and society  
 1/31-2/4: the foundation of Tudor England  
 2/7-11: Henry VIII and Wolsey  
 2/14-18: Henry VIII and the Reformation  
 2/21-25: The mid-Tudor period  
 2/28: The Elizabethan Settlement  
 3/2: **EXAM**  
 3/4: Elizabethan England: exploration and foreign policy  
 3/7-11: Elizabethan England: economy, society and government  
 3/14-18: James I and Salisbury  
 3/21-3/25: Jacobean England: politics, society and economy  
 3/26-4/4: **SPRING RECESS**  
 4/6-8: Charles I, Buckingham and the crisis of 1625-9  
 4/11: **EXAM**  
 4/18-22: Charles I: the personal rule and its collapse: Britain 1629-42  
 4/25-29: The Civil War and its origins  
 5/2-5/6: Science, thought and culture in mid-seventeenth century England  
 5/9-13: The Commonwealth, Protectorate and Restoration: England 1649-60.  
 5/19: **FINAL EXAM, 12-25 P.M.**

Important dates:

Last day to drop course without record getting on transcript:  
 2/2 (Wednesday)

Last day to add course or fourth credit: 2/4 (Friday)

Last day to drop course or fourth credit: 3/25 (Friday)

**Date by which term papers are due: 3/25 (Friday)**