

The Briton's Britain: Constructing Medieval England

Spring 2017
MWF, 10:10-11:00 am



Instructor:

John Wyatt Greenlee

Contact Information

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Office: 340a Goldwin Smith Hall

Conference Hours / Locations:

Tues.: 9:30-10:30, Amit Bhatia
Café, Olin Library;

MWF: 9:15-10:10 (usually),
Carol B. Tatkon Center

Course Description

This class is meant to serve as an introduction to the ways that medieval English people conceptualized and imagined their island home. Did they think of it as a unified space? Did they see it through any kind of proto-nationalist lens? And lastly: what is the role of history writing and the historian in setting the stage for how Britons understood Britain? To get at these questions we will examine in detail Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* – two of the most important medieval texts to influence English conceptions of Britain. We will also look at the work of the 12th century author Gerald of Wales and use his work to broaden out our view of Britain, looking away from England and towards the islands' Celtic fringe. Lastly, we will look at the way that Britain found representation on maps. Throughout the semester we will pay attention to several things, chief among them: how the writers of British histories thought about their roles, and how their texts deal with questions of ethnic or national communities.

The other chief objective of this class is to help you to improve your writing. Towards that end we will interweave readings from Keith Hjortshoj's *The Transition to College Writing*, and we will frequently bend class discussion towards questions of writing. The class requires you to write a great deal; you will need to compose five formal essays, two informal ones, frequent Blackboard discussion posts and occasional in-class writing assignments. We will spend class time working on the process of revision, and you will share your work with your peers on a regular basis.



Learning Outcomes:

By the conclusion of this class, students should achieve and demonstrate competency in the following areas:

- Presentation of thesis-based arguments, carried out over multiple-page essays, employing sound grammar, diction, organization and mechanics.
- Effective use of preparatory writing strategies including note taking, multiple drafts, and peer editing.
- Comfort with approaching professors for help with papers and assignments
- Thoughtful analysis of historical texts, both primary and secondary
- Ability to extrapolate a nuanced understanding of the present from analysis of the past
- Capacity to work within the strictures of a style guide for the management of source materials
- Familiarity with Cornell's library system, including the Olin Library Map Room and the Kroch Rare Books and Manuscripts Collection
- An understanding of the transferability of writing techniques – and of the critical skills that underlie strong writing – to other disciplines and fields.

Required Books:

Bede. *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People, the Greater Chronicle, Bede's Letter to Egbert*. Edited by Judith McClure and Roger Collins. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Geoffrey of Monmouth. *The History of the Kings of Britain*. Translated by Lewis Thorpe. London: Penguin Books, 1966.

Gerald of Wales. *The History and Topography of Ireland*. Edited and translated by John J. O'Meara. London: Penguin Books, 1982.

———. *The Journey Through Wales and The Description of Wales*. Edited and translated by Lewis Thorpe. London: Penguin Books, 1978.

Hjortshoj, Keith. [*The Transition to College Writing*](#). Boston and New York: Bedford / St. Martins, 2009.

Recommended Books

Turabian, Kate L. [*A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*](#). Revised by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, and the University of Chicago Press Editorial Staff. 7th edition. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

All other required readings will be available in .pdf form on Blackboard. Alternatively, you may find them through the library or order them via ILL.

Grading Rubric and Due Dates

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Participation		
In-Class Participation.....	15%	∞
Blackboard Discussions Posts.....	10%	Weekly +
Informal Writing Assignments		
Paper 1.....	5%	Feb. 3
Paper 2.....	5%	Feb. 17
Formal Writing Assignments		

Essay 1.....	5%	Jan. 27
Essay 2.....	10%	March 3
Essay 3.....	15%	April 21
Essay 4.....	15%	May 1
Essay 5.....	20%	May 19

Participation:

Please note that your participation grade makes up a full 25% of your total grade, and is comprised of four basic components:

Attendance:

Each student is allowed three missed classes without penalty. Each absence thereafter results in the automatic loss of 5.56% of the participation grade. **Any student whose participation grade reaches 0% during the semester will fail the course automatically, regardless of the quality of his or her other work.**

In-Class Participation:

Getting to class is only the first part of your participation grade. Once you are in the classroom I expect you to make substantive contributions to our discussions on an ongoing basis. Your grade will reflect the seriousness with which you approach your peer-review responsibilities, and the attentiveness that you give to speakers, but the single largest factor in your participation grade will come from the contributions that you make to our discussions. If, at the end of the semester, I struggle to think of times when you have added to the discussion, then your grade will suffer accordingly.

This grade will also reflect your preparedness for class, and your promptness. Please be on time for classes, and be ready to work from the beginning – we need to make the most of the limited time that we have in each class period, and late arrivals interrupt the class.

Blackboard Discussion Posts:

Throughout the semester you are required to make timely contributions to the weekly discussion boards on Blackboard. Your posts should address specific questions, issues or problems that you found in the assigned reading – vague statements about the text or the topics are not acceptable. Your posts do not need to be especially long, but they do need to be substantive: they should demonstrate that you have both read and thought about the materials at hand. The purpose of these postings is to jump-start our class conversations, and to give me an idea of the issues in the texts that you find important.

Most weeks will have only one message board, but there are several weeks that require multiple posts in separate message board threads.

Blackboard posts must be made prior to the beginning of class on the day they are due. Late posts will receive no credit, regardless of their intellectual merit.

Style:

The writing style for Blackboard posts is more relaxed than they required style for your more formal papers. Remember, however, that you will still be engaging in public discourse with your colleagues and classmates – your writing must be civil and respectful (which doesn't mean you have to agree with others' thoughts; disagreement is the soul of historical inquiry). Even in this more relaxed setting,

remember to support your arguments and to cite your sources – parenthetical citation in Blackboard posts is acceptable.

Written Assignments:

Formal Writing Assignments:

Throughout the course of you will be required to write five formal essays, of varying length and format. Several of these essays will include structured steps that include paper proposals and drafts that we will work on in class, as well as conferences with the instructor. For those assignments, the entirety of the process will be included in the final grade.

You will need to turn in each formal essay in two forms: electronically via Blackboard in MS Word format, and in hard copy in class. Both versions must be turned in by the start of class on the paper's due date. If you need an extension on a paper talk to me in advance of the due date...I am flexible insofar as it helps you to craft a better paper.

You will only need to submit Essay #4 as a hard copy in class.

N.B.: Unexcused late papers will be assessed a 5% penalty on the first day, and a 10% penalty for each day thereafter.

All papers should follow the same basic format:

- Written in Times New Roman, Garamond or a similarly readable font
- Conform to the Turabian / Chicago style guide
- Within the required word limits.
- Double spaced
- Numbered pages
- Make sure that your name and the assignment are clearly listed at the top of the first page, or as a header

Conferences:

At least twice during the semester you will be required to meet with me to discuss formal writing assignments. Everyone must schedule a conference to go over essays 2 and 5. For both of these assignments, the conference forms a part of the final grade.

You are not limited to only those essays; you may, of course, meet with me as often as you need throughout the semester, either by appointment or during my office hours.

Informal Writing Assignments:

There are two informal exercises noted on the syllabus. These assignments will be read and marked, but not graded for content. To get full credit you only have to complete the assignment, bearing in mind that this also includes completing any follow-up work in class.

Public Domain:

For our class to work well we all need to be able to share our work with each other. We will be engaging in a significant amount of peer review and editing, and we will need to share our ideas in our

discussions. Consequently, every piece of written work that you produce for this class may be read by other members of the class, or the instructor. Remember this as you work...don't write something that you don't want us all to read. Your work will not, however, be shared with people outside of our class without your permission.

Statement on University Policies and Regulations:

This instructor respects and upholds University Policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired student; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor.

Statement on academic integrity:

Students are strongly advised to consult the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity (<http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html>). This code includes the following statements: “A Cornell student’s submission of work for academic credit indicates that the work is the student’s own. All outside assistance should be acknowledged, and the student’s academic position truthfully reported at all times...” A useful practical guide to the code is available at:

<http://www.theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/AcadInteg/>

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is a serious violation of Cornell's Code of Academic Integrity, and will result in an automatic failing grade for the course. Plagiarism includes many shades of representing others' work as your own, from the use of purchased papers to failure to properly cite source material. We will spend time this semester working on gaining a nuanced understanding of plagiarism, and we will work together to eliminate accidental plagiarism in your work. However, as you work, keep this in mind: when in doubt, cite your sources, and ask questions.

The Knight Institute Writing Walk-In Service

The Writing Walk-In Service (WWIS) provides support for individuals at any stage of the writing process. It is a free resource available to everyone on campus - faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students - for nearly any kind of writing project: applications, presentations, lab reports, essays, papers, and more. Tutors (trained undergraduate and graduate students) serve as responsive listeners and readers who can address questions about the writing process or about particular pieces of writing. They can also consider questions of confidence, critical reading, analytic thought, and imagination. Many writing tutors also have experience working with non-native speakers of English.

The WWIS operates out of several campus locations. During the academic year, the WWIS is open Sunday through Thursday from 3:30 – 5:30pm and from 7:00 – 10:00pm. Writers can schedule appointments or drop in at a convenient time. For more information or to schedule an appointment:

<http://www.arts.cornell.edu/writing>.

Calendar of Readings and Assignments

Week	Dates	Readings	Papers
1	1/25 1/27	Introductions and Overview none	Essay 1 due
2	1/30 2/1 2/3	Hjortshoj, <i>College Writing</i> , Ch. 1-3 (1-55) Anderson, <i>Imagined Communities</i> Ch. 1-2 (1-36) none	Informal Paper 1 due
3	2/6 2/8 2/10	Bede, <i>E.H.</i> , Preface and Book 1 (3-62) Hjortshoj, <i>College Writing</i> , Ch. 4 (56-68)	
4	2/13 2/15 2/17	Bede <i>E.H.</i> , Book 2 (63-107) Hjortshoj, <i>College Writing</i> , Ch. 5 (79-106)	Informal Paper 2 due
5	2/20 2/22 2/24	Feb. Break: No Classes Library Orientation Day: Meet in Uris Library Bede <i>E.H.</i> , Book 3 (110-167)	
6	2/27 3/1 3/3	Hjortshoj, <i>College Writing</i> , Ch. 6 (107-137) Bede, <i>E.H.</i> , Book 4 (170-233)	Essay 2 Draft Due
7	3/6 3/8 3/10	Bede, <i>E.H.</i> , Book 5 (236-295) Hjortshoj, Ch. 7 (138-162)	Essay 2 Due
8	3/13 3/15 3/17	Geoffrey of Monmouth, <i>HRB</i> , Dedication and Part 1 (51-106) Hjortshoj, Ch. 8 (164-192)	
9	3/20 3/22 3/24	Geoffrey of Monmouth, <i>HRB</i> , Part 3 (107-148) Rare Books Orientation: Meet in Kroch Library Geoffrey of Monmouth, <i>HRB</i> , Part 4 (149-169)	
10	3/27 3/29 3/31	Geoffrey of Monmouth, <i>HRB</i> , Part 5 (170-185) (skim) William of Newburgh, <i>HRA</i> , Preface (BB) Geoffrey of Monmouth, <i>HRB</i> , Part 6 (186-211) Map selections (BB)	
11	4/3 4/5 4/7	Spring Break: No Classes Spring Break: No Classes Spring Break: No Classes	

12	4/10	Geoffrey of Monmouth, <i>HRB</i> , Part 7 (212-261)	
	4/12	Geoffrey of Monmouth, <i>HRB</i> , Part 8 (262-284)	
	4/14		Essay 3 Draft Due
13	4/17	Gerald of Wales, <i>The Description of Wales</i> (211-274)	
	4/19		
	4/21	Map Selections	Essay 3 Due
14	4/24	Gerald of Wales, <i>History and Topography of Ireland</i> (31-91)	
	4/26		
	4/28	Map Selections	
15	5/1	Gerald of Wales, <i>History and Topography of Ireland</i> (92-125)	Essay 4 Due
	5/3		
	5/5		
16	5/8	tba	
	5/10	Last Day of Classes	Essay 5 Draft Due
	5/19		Essay 5 Due

** Please note that all assignments are subject to change at the instructor's discretion **