

HY10120

London: from the Romans to the Renaissance



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I. MODULE DESCRIPTION, AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

(i) Brief description

Today London is one of the world's greatest cities, but it was founded by the Romans almost two thousand years ago. This module traces the growth and development of London from its foundation to the end of the Middle Ages. Students will consider how the Londoners both reacted and contributed to events such as the collapse of the Roman Empire, the Viking Invasions, the Black Death and the Reformation. Throughout the module, students will use archaeological and textual evidence to investigate the dynamic relationship between the urban landscape and civic society.

The module consists of 18 lectures and 5 seminars; seminars are compulsory.

(ii) Aims

The history of London is a hotly debated area of British historiography and one where new discoveries have radically transformed our understanding in recent years. The emphasis in this module is upon offering a wide-ranging but integrated perspective on the city by examining the interplay of structures and events, and of continuity and change. It will also introduce you to the multi-faceted and problematic character of urban history that has emerged in recent decades.

(iii) Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this module you should be able to:

Demonstrate an understanding of a body of historical knowledge and sources relating to London in this period.

Critically assess the major political, economic, social and cultural developments in London.

Express understanding, in written (assessed) and oral (unassessed) forms, within an academic context.

Work independently and collaboratively, and take part in group discussions (not formally assessed).

2. Lectures:

1. Introduction

Ancient London

2. London Before London
3. Roman London I
4. Roman London II

Early Medieval London

5. London Restored
6. Palaces, Castles, and Churches
7. London and the Thames
8. Making a Living
9. Civic Politics
10. Minorities

Later Medieval London

11. Disease and Death
12. Poverty, Revolt and Social Disorder
13. Women
14. Childhood
15. Suburbs I: Southwark
16. Suburbs II: Westminster

Postscript

17. London and the Reformation
18. Overview

Seminars:

Seminars are your opportunity to discuss the key issues of the module. For you to gain the most from the experience, it is vital that you prepare by reading thoroughly for the sessions. Seminars to be arranged in the first week of the semester; check Blackboard to see which group you are in.

1. London Before London

This seminar sets out to investigate the nature of cities both as physical environments and as social, political, and economic entities. We will consider the questions: what is a city and what is needed to create one?

Issues for discussion

Based on the archaeological evidence for the Ancient British, the following issues will be considered:

1. Who were the leaders of British society and how was their authority expressed?
2. What was the nature of the social structure? Was it stratified and hierarchical, or communal?
3. Was the economy generating a significant economic surplus, or were people producing only for consumption?
4. Is there evidence of trade specialization, with people engaged in non-agricultural pursuits?
5. Could the British build the infrastructure needed to sustain an urban population, such as fortification, water systems and bridges?
6. Did the British have writing, to organize their affairs?
7. Would the British have been able to build a city, given the nature of their civilization?

Readings:

Handout 1 – available on Blackboard

(Gates 2003, 1-10)

(Gordon Childe 1996)

(Mumford 1996)

(Ross and Clark 2008, 20-25)

2. Ancient London

Was ancient London a Roman city, a British city, a fusion of the two, or something else entirely? The Roman contribution to the city's architecture is difficult to overemphasize. The Romans built on a monumental scale, giving London sprawling public buildings and fortifications, but to what extent did the residents adopt a Roman way of life? Historians have discovered a few documents and inscriptions that tell us about the lives of Londoners in this period, but there is also a wealth of archaeological evidence. We will therefore focus on assessing that archaeological evidence.

Issues for discussion

Based on the archaeological evidence, the following issues will be considered:

1. How did the lives of the Londoners compare with those of their pre-Roman predecessors? In your evaluation, take into account such aspects of everyday life as eating habits, leisure activities, housing, language, religion, and burial practices.
2. The Romans had a strong influence on the lives of the Londoners, but other cultures also made contributions. Where are their influences most discernable?
3. Archaeological evidence offers us very important insights into the past, but it is not always easy to interpret. Why have the Walbrook skulls proved controversial?
4. What does the case of the Walbrook skulls indicate about the strengths and limitations of archaeological evidence?

Readings:

Handout 2 – available on Blackboard

(Bradley and Gordon 1988)

(Marsh and West 1981)

(Knüsel and Carr 1995)

(Ross and Clark 2008, 26-51)

3. Early Medieval London: William fitzStephen's Description of London

Following on from the last seminar, this seminar offers an opportunity to consider how life in the medieval city differed in turn from that in its ancient predecessor. There is significant archaeological evidence for early medieval London, but there is also a wealth of written records. In this seminar we will investigate a first-hand account of London in the late twelfth century.

Issues for discussion

Based on the written evidence, the following issues will be considered:

1. How did the lives of early medieval Londoners compare with those of their ancient predecessors? In your evaluation, take into account such aspects of everyday life as eating habits, leisure activities, housing, language, religion, and burial practices.
2. What are William fitzStephen's main concerns?
3. How complete do you think William fitzStephen's description of the city is? Are there aspects of urban life which he overlooks?
4. What does this account of the city indicate about the strengths and limitations of written evidence?

Reading:

(Douglas, 956-962)

(Schofield 1993, 36-57)

(Ross and Clark 2008, 52-65)

4. Living in the late Medieval City

Archaeologists have been able to discover the physical environment of medieval London, but we still have many questions about the ways in which people lived in that environment. In this seminar we will look at some of the surviving written evidence. The particular focus of this will be the way in which the 24 wards of the city regulated the community at the local level. We will look in detail at a series of documents which record the views of inhabitants of the wards about the anti-social activities of their neighbours in the years 1420-21 (ie during the reign of Henry V).

Issues for discussion

Based on the surviving evidence, the following issues will be considered:

1. The form and language of the document: how was it drawn up? By whom? How were the various complaints put together?
2. What are the main concerns of the inhabitants?
3. Are all the wards concerned about the same issues? If not, how do you explain the differences? Use the map of the wards of London.
4. What can the historians learn about the urban environment of the city from these documents? What are their limitations?
5. What else would you need to know to make the best historical use of this material?

Readings:

(Sabine 1933)
(Sabine 1934)
(Sabine 1937)
(Barron 2004)
(Barron 2001)
(Ross and Clark 2008, 66-83)

5. Social Control

All towns in medieval Europe tried to regulate the activities of prostitutes. In most European cities such women were expected to live and work in specified areas of the city and their work was, in some cities, formally recognized and even encouraged. In England very few towns appear to have had formally sanctioned 'red-light' districts. London probably came nearest to this and tried to prevent prostitutes from working within the city itself, while condoning their activities in the suburbs. Many prostitutes lived in Southwark, on the south side of the Thames, from which regulations drawn up to control and organize their activities have survived. We shall consider the cases of some individual prostitutes who came before the mayor's court and also the question of when and why this relatively relaxed attitude towards prostitution in London changed.

Issues for discussion

In considering the regulation of prostitution in London and the cases of individuals who came before the mayor's court, the following issues will be investigated:

1. How complete a picture of prostitution in London do these sources provide?
2. Were men and women prostitutes/pimps treated in the same way?
3. What were the main anxieties of the mayor and aldermen about the practice of prostitution?
4. What can we discern about the attitudes of the Church towards prostitution?
5. Why did the central government become less lenient towards prostitution in the course of the sixteenth century?

Reading:

(Carlin 1996 chapter 9)
(Goldberg 1999)
(Gowing 1996)
(Karras 1988)
(Karras and Boyd 1996)
(Post 1977)

4. ASSESSMENT AND WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

(i) METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

London: from the Romans to the Renaissance examines a broad period of history and demonstrates change over time. The conventional examination paper, demanding competence across the period, is the most appropriate way of assessing the extent to which this has been achieved. Therefore, you must sit a two-hour examination paper at the end of the academic semester in which the module has been taught. You must answer two questions. This paper constitutes 70 per cent of the final module mark.

In addition to the examination paper, you must write one 2,500 word essay which constitutes the remaining 30 per cent of the module mark.

(ii) ESSAY QUESTIONS

Please choose one title from the following group of questions and hand in the essay by the due date (see Guide for First Year Students 2012/13).

1. How concerned were the rulers of ancient London to improve the environment of the city?
2. Were the merchants of later medieval London chivalrous?
3. To what extent did the interests of the Crown and the Londoners coincide in the early medieval period?
4. In what period were women accorded the most favourable treatment? Discuss with reference to at least **TWO** of the following periods: ancient, early medieval and later medieval.
5. Compare the impact of the Church and the Crown on the topography of early medieval London. Which one had the strongest influence?
6. How negative was the impact of the Vikings on London?
7. How far was London a society of two opposing cultures, popular and élite? Discuss with reference to **ONE** of the following periods: ancient, early medieval or later medieval London.

Suggest Reading

The following bibliography is intended to offer you more than sufficient reading for the module; it has been organised around the lectures and seminars and reflects, to some extent, the order of the module. There is no expectation that you look at everything listed here. That said, you may well come across books or articles which are not listed here but you find relevant and/or interesting. Do not be put off using them just because they are not mentioned here; this bibliography is not intended to be comprehensive, simply indicative. Many items are available through the university library or on our Blackboard site; another source is the National Library of Wales.

1. General surveys, Bibliographies, Maps

Books in this section are cited as valuable introductions to aspects of the subject; they are the sort of texts you might want to go to if something in a more specialized reading doesn't make sense or introduces an unfamiliar fact or concept. In other words, they can be dipped into for background information.

(Inwood 1998)
(Porter 1994)
(Reynolds 1977)
(Ross and Clark 2008)
(Saul 1997)

Bibliographies

(Fulford 1995)
(Keene 1995)
(Barron 1995)
(Garside 1998)

Another excellent resource is the 'Bibliography of British and Irish History' which is accessible through the university library (Primo - Databases).

Maps

(Lobel, et al. 1989)
(Ross and Clark 2008)

London - some specific studies

The following include some of the 'core' texts for the module:

Ancient London
(Perring 1991)

Early Medieval London
(Brooke and Keir 1975)
(Keene 2000)

(Schofield 1993)
(Stenton 1960)
(Vince 1990)
(Williams 1963)

Later Medieval London

(Barron 2004)
(Barron 2000)
(Carlin 1996)
(Rosser 1989)
(Schofield 1993)
(Thrupp 1948)

2-4. Ancient London

(Milne 1995)
(Milne 1985)
(Perring 1991)

5. London Restored

(Clark 1999)
(Haslam 2010)
(Keene 2003)
(Milne and Goodburn 1990)
(Pirenne 1996)
(Schofield 1993, 14-36)
(Vince 1990)

6. Palaces, Castles, and Churches

(Brooke and Keir 1975)
(Keene 1999)
(Keene 2008)
(Phillpotts 1999)
(Schofield, et al. 2008/2009)
(Stenton 1960)

7. Medieval London and the Thames

(Keene 2000)
(Keene 2001)
(Milne 2003)
(Watson, et al. 2001)

8. Making a Living

(Barron 2008)
(Keene 1996)
(Keene 1984)

(Nightingale 1995)
(Veale 1969)
(Veale 1991)

9. Civic Politics

(Barron 2001)
(Barron 2001)
(Barron 2004)
(Keene 2001)
(Pugh 1980)

10. Minorities

(Carlin 1996, ch.6.)
(Hillaby 1990)
(Hillaby 1992)
(Rosser 1989, 190-196.)
(Roth 1939)
(Skinner 2003)

11. Disease and Death

(Bolton 1996)
(Cohn 2002)
(Grainger, et al. 2008)
(Hawkins 1990)
(Horrox 1994, 3-13, 64-65)
(Megson 1998)
(Sloane 2011)

12. Poverty, Revolt and Social Disorder

(Barron 1981)
(Barron 2008)
(Hanawalt 2005)
(Prescott 1981)
(Rexroth 2007)

13. Women

(Barron 1989)
(Barron and Sutton 1994)
(Bennett 1996)
(Keene 1994)
(Hanawalt 1998)
(Hanawalt 2007)

14. Childhood

(Barron 2007)

(Hanawalt 1993)
(Orme 1995)

15. Suburbs I: Southwark

(Barron 2008)
(Boyd and Karras 1995)
(Carlin 1996)
(Hanawalt 1998)
(Karras 1988)

16. Suburbs II: Westminster

(Rosser 1989)
(Keene 1999)
(Harvey 1993)
(Tout 1915)

17. London and the Reformation

(Brigden 1991)
(Schofield and Lea 2005, 130-155)

18. Overview

(Ross and Clark 2008)

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