EH3113/3613 APPROACHES TO ENGLISH LOCAL HISTORY

Module outline

This module offers a stimulating sample of approaches and subjects of current research in the University’s unique Centre for English Local History. The Centre is famous for pioneering local historical research of an inter-disciplinary nature, particularly into landscape history and its influences upon the evolution of communities, and into cultural regions. The module introduces students to methods, sources and approaches in the study of English local history, covering all periods from the medieval to the modern. It deals with subjects like landscape history, place-name studies, patterns of human settlement, medieval urbanisation, spiritual elements in the landscape, early modern communities and their structure, the history of women, the geography of Victorian religion, ‘outsiders’ and how they were treated in local societies, and ways of interpreting landscape painting.

Aims and objectives

By the end of the module students should have:
1. Acquired a good knowledge of a range of interpretative and comparative approaches to landscape and local history, across a broad chronological range.
2. Become familiar with some of the main sources - whether visual, material, archival and documentary - that have been used to interpret local societies and cultures in the English past.
3. Developed their analytical skills in dealing with the concepts that are important in local and regional historical work.
4. Improved further their written and oral communication skills.

Teaching methods

Teaching will be by a lecture, usually followed by a source-based seminar, discussing relevant historical materials and how they might be researched and interpreted.

Assessment

This course will be assessed by an examination and by course work. For their course work, 15 credit students will submit one essay and complete one minor assignment; 20 credit students will submit two essays and complete one minor assignment. There will be a two-hour, two-question examination in mid summer.

Short introductory bibliography:

Lectures are on Tuesday afternoons, in the seminar room at 5 Salisbury Road (The Marc Fitch Historical Institute), starting at 2.30pm.

1. January 28 - What’s in a name? How place-name studies can help local and regional historians.
   Dr Graham Jones.

   Richard Coates, ‘New light from old wicks: The progeny of Latin vicus’, *Nomina* 22 (1999), 75-116

2. February 4 - Saints and sinners. The role of the supernatural in landscape and society.
   Dr Graham Jones.

   Mick Aston, *Monasteries in the Landscape* (Stroud, 2000).

3. February 11 - Villages, hamlets and fields: settlement patterns and landscapes.
   Prof. Christopher Dyer

   M. Aston, *Interpreting the Landscape* (1985)


4. February 18 - The rise and rise of towns, 850-1400
Prof. Christopher Dyer

R. Hall, *Viking Age York* (1992)*
M. Beresford, *New Towns of the Middle Ages* (1962)

5. February 25 - Crisis and transition in English communities, 1315-1550.
Prof. Christopher Dyer.

M. Beresford & J.G Hurst, *Deserted Medieval Villages* (1971)

Dr Dave Postles

Core texts
Alexandra Shepard & Phil Withington, (eds), *Communities in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2000)

Contexts
Graham Crow & Graham Allan, *Community Life. An Introduction to Local Social Relations* (Hemel Hampstead, 1994)
Dr Dave Postles.

Core texts

Contexts

Prof. Keith Snell

Alan Everitt, *The Pattern of Rural Dissent* (1972)
Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* (1966 and 1970), 2 parts

Prof. Keith Snell


10. April 1 - Heritage or interpretation? Landscape Painting and Local History.
Prof. Keith Snell.

John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place, 1730-1840* (1972)
S. Daniels, *Fields of Vision* (1992)
M. Rosenthal, *Constable, the Painter and his Landscape* (1983)
COURSEWORK

**Minor assignment** (1,500 words), due in before midday on Friday 7 March 2003

Write a review of a local historical book of your choice, covering a part of the British Isles. The book you choose to review must be agreed in advance by one of the course tutors teaching this module. You should assess the quality of the book as local history, its main arguments, its research methodology, the way it handles sources, and your review should also assess its contribution to local and wider historical understanding. You should relate the book to other scholarly work, where relevant. You may if you wish review a book comprising a collection of scholarly essays by one person, but you should not review an edited book which comprises a collection of essays by different authors.

**Major essay list**, (2,500 word essays) - 15 credit students to do one essay, and 20 credit students to do two essays; essay 1 due in before midday on Friday, 2 May 2003, essay 2 due in before midday on Friday, 9 May 2003.

1. Discuss the range of place-name types found on a single one-inch sheet of the Ordnance Survey, and what light individual names may shed on a chosen theme or themes relating to the economic, social, administrative, or landscape history of the area.

2. Survey the religious dedications of a chosen group of parishes, as recorded in a TASC dataset (http://www.le.ac.uk/elh/grj1/database/data.html), and suggest how the various cults may have reflected social, economic, cultural, and spiritual concerns.

3. Why did villages (focusing on the period c. 850-1200) form in some regions but not in others?

4. ‘We cannot explain why medieval towns grew, unless we look at the countryside around them’. Do you agree?

5. ‘Greedy landlords destroyed villages to create sheep pastures in the fifteenth century’. Is this a valid explanation of deserted villages?

6. Is it time that we abandoned ‘community’ as a category of analysis for early-modern local societies?

7. What roles did gossip play in early modern and modern local societies?

8. How did one become legally ‘settled’ in past local societies after 1662, and what might one gain as a consequence?

9. Describe and explain the regional geography of one religious denomination in the Victorian period.

10. Critically discuss and elucidate the relationship between one landscape painter working between c.1700-1938 and the regional landscape he or she depicted.