This course aims at a survey of English history during the sixteenth century. In 1485 a new family came to the throne of a small kingdom with a recent history of political instability. The prospects for this family were not good, faced as the dynasty was with a dubious claim to the throne, the fiscal weakness of the monarchy, and powerful enemies abroad. The Tudors, over the next century, faced continued challenges arising from an unsettled succession and sometimes unruly subjects. Henry VIII compounded the problem when, for personal and political reasons, he changed the religion of the country. Every major institution of English life (the Church, the monarchy, Parliament, and the law) faced conflict during this period. Yet society remained resilient. Even amidst uncertainty and revolution, old allegiances and habits survived, while new practices and relationships emerged. Against all odds, the Tudor dynasty proved successful in maintaining its grip upon the throne. Henry VIII and Elizabeth became iconic representations of the glory of monarchy. Our task in this course is to explore the successes and failures of the Tudor monarchs. Along the way we will investigate the reality behind the myths that surround these two monarchs.

While this is a lecture course, there will be frequent opportunities for students to participate in class discussion. You are expected to complete reading assignments by the date listed below, and to participate in a discussion of the day's text. Twice during the term we will watch DVDs that help to illustrate themes central to our examination of the Tudors. We begin with a Shakespeare play, "Henry V", which presents the idealized portrait of a king whose reputation haunted the monarchs of the sixteenth century. We will also view (during an evening session) "Man For All Seasons", a movie that captures some of the meaning of the religious conflict that accompanied the Reformation in England. The PBS series, "The Six Wives of Henry VIII" and "Elizabeth" (both produced in the 1970s) assist us to explore the power of myth and imagery that surrounded the early modern monarch. The course ends with a reading of another Shakespeare play, "Richard II", a monarch whose failure and death present a sobering portrait of anxieties that marked the conclusion of Elizabeth's reign. I will be using Blackboard to provide you with a few additional readings and to pass along study guides for the various reading assignments and exams. The grade for this course will be based on an analytical paper (based on the readings) (30%), a mid-term exam (30%), and a final exam (40%).

Course Objectives:
In this History course we have a number of different objectives. First and foremost, I want you to become familiar with the period we will be studying. This means not only learning such things as names, dates, and major economic, political, or intellectual trends, but also seeking to understand what shaped particular historical moments and exploring how people experienced them. One of the ways we approach the subject is through original sources, and in this course you will learn how to analyze and use such documents to build historical arguments. You will be taught how to read carefully and critically. Our goal is to learn that reading is not a passive activity, but rather one that requires constant alertness and a questioning mind. In the exams and papers you will be called upon to write in this class, you will be encouraged to develop the ability to organize a carefully reasoned argument or thesis out of imperfect or conflicting documents. You will be expected to develop a position and defend it with well-chosen evidence. These skills -- the analysis of complex situations, reading with a critical eye, and the composition of well developed essays -- will serve you well as you look forward to life beyond the university.

Required texts:
- The Paston Letters
- Anthony Fletcher & Diarmaid MacCulloch, Tudor Rebellions
- Christopher Haigh, Elizabeth I
- Shakespeare, Richard II
- John Guy, The Tudors

Course schedule:
Sept. 30 The troubled politics of fifteenth-century England

Oct. 2 Transformation in an agrarian economy

Oct. 7 The Paston Letters (entire book)

Oct. 9 Henry VII and the foundations of Tudor government Tudor Rebellions, ch. 1 & 2
"Governance" and "Kingship" on Blackboard

Oct. 14 Discontented Englishmen

Oct. 16 The ideal of the prince "Henry V" Essay Due

Oct. 21 Kings, courts, and courtiers: the reign of Wolsey Tudor Rebellions, ch. 3

Oct. 23 The Divorce and the Reformation

Oct. 28 Cromwell's vision of the state "Reformation" on Blackboard
evening viewing "Man for All Seasons"

Oct. 30 Loyalty, politics, and conscience Tudor Rebellions, ch. 4

Nov. 4 Mid-term exam

Nov. 6 Succession fears overcome and fulfilled Tudor Rebellions, ch. 5-7

Nov. 11 Religious controversy and social unrest

Nov. 13 Succession questions Haigh, ch. 1 & 2; Tudor Rebellions, ch. 8-9

Nov. 18 Parliament, Crown, and money Haigh, ch. 3-6
"Poor" on Blackboard

Nov. 20 The age of religious wars Haigh, ch. 7
"Religion" on Blackboard

Nov. 25 Puritans and Parliaments Haigh, ch. 8

Nov. 27 Thanksgiving

Dec. 2 Court and Country Richard II

Dec. 4 Elizabeth and James