This course aims at a broad survey of English history from the late fifteenth to the mid-seventeenth century. In 1485 a new family came to the throne of a small kingdom with a recent history of political instability. The next two hundred years saw great religious and economic change, as well as political turmoil, that dwarfed anything that had happened between 1350 and 1500. Every major institution of English life (the Church, the monarchy, Parliament, the law) faced fundamental challenges or complete destruction. Yet society proved remarkably resilient as well. Even amidst uncertainty and revolution, old allegiances and habits survived, while new practices and relationships emerged. This course is organized around three themes: the religious revolution of the sixteenth century and its consequences; the transformation of political ideas and allegiances as a result of the struggle between Parliament and the Crown; social and cultural change that resulted from the commercial transformation of England. We will explore these themes through political and moral treatises, a biography, a local study, and a collection of documents.

While this is a lecture course, there will be frequent opportunities for students to participate in class discussions. You are expected to have completed reading assignments by the date listed below, and to participate in an investigation of the day’s text. The grade in the course will be determined on the basis of a midterm exam (30%), a four-page paper (30%), and a final exam (40%).

Required reading:
- The Paston Letters
- A. Fletcher & D. MacCulloch, Tudor Rebellions (5th edition)
- C. Haigh, Elizabeth
- Paul Seaver, Wallington's World
- Divine Right and Democracy, ed. David Wootton
- Original sources on Blackboard (identified as Doc. Below)
- Required viewing – “Man for All Seasons”

Course Outline:

Jan. 4    "A sore troubled kingdom”

Jan. 6    Henry VII and the restoration of royal government   Tudor Rebellions, ch. 1-3   Doc. I

Jan. 11   Local experiences   Paston Letters (entire book)

Jan. 13   The King’s great matter   extra viewing – “Man for All Seasons”   Doc. II
Jan. 18     MLK Holiday

Jan. 20     A question of loyalty  

Tudor Rebellions, ch. 4-5, doc. 1-11

Jan. 25     Uneasy succession – Edward VI and Mary

Tudor Rebellions, ch. 6-7, doc. 12-21  
PAPER DUE

Jan. 27     Elizabeth and the challenge of order

Elizabeth, ch. 1-4  
Tudor Rebellions, ch. 8-9, doc. 22-24  
Doc. III

Feb. 1      Ambition, fear, and intrigue in 16th century England  

Elizabeth, ch. 5-8

Feb. 3      Religion and politics in Elizabethan England  

Doc. IV

Feb. 8      mid-term exam

Feb. 10     Money matters and the new dynasty  

Doc. V

Feb. 15     Constitutional questions  

Wootton, chap. I (#1 & 2)

Feb. 17     A Puritan artisan  

Wallington's World (entire book)

Feb. 22     Religious passion and politics

Feb. 24     The Court and the Country

Wootton, chap. III (#1, 2, 3)

Mar. 1      The drift to civil war  

Wootton, chap. IV(#1,2,3,4)

Mar. 3      The world turned upside down  

Wootton, chap. V(#1,2,3,4)

Mar. 8      Cromwell and the search for settlement  

Wootton, chap. VI(#1,2,34,5,6)

Mar. 10     The Restoration