The Medieval City

This course explores themes and texts in relation to urban space, with special reference throughout to the literary, social and mental world of London, the metropolis of medieval England. As a centre of power, display and text, London had no rival in the British Isles, with the result that there is a rich array of visual, literary and documentary material to explore. *This reading list is designed to provide some essentials and a guide, but you are encouraged to use the material to follow up further reading to enrich and extend the themes chosen beyond what is specified here.*

For the purposes of the course, the ‘medieval’ period in England will be understood to last until at least the Catholic resurgence under Queen Mary (d 1558)

Many of the articles listed are available on Jstor through the University Library.

**Introductory Reading**

*Please read a selection from this list of Introductory Reading before the course begins. Sections from some of these studies will also be recommended for particular classes.*

*All the essays in the collection edited by Butterfield are germane.*

*The study by Girouard invites reflections on the broader question of how urban living affects lives and mentalities. The seminal book by Murray, one of the recent classics of medieval historical writing, explores that same broad theme but with more precise reference to medieval rationality and the rise of the universities, all (as they remain) urban phenomena. The study by Hutton introduces the theme of festivity and the festive year, as important for the medieval city as for the countryside (on which see the volume edited by Hanawalt et al). The volume edited by Rawcliffe and Wilson offers valuable insights into what was once a major provincial city of medieval England. The others are self explanatory.*

https://londonist.com/2013/10/fly-through-17th-century-london

A. Butterfield, ed., *Chaucer and the City* (Cambridge, 2006)


B. Hanawalt, et al., eds., *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe* (University of Minnesota Press, 1994)

R. Hutton. ‘Seasonal Festivity in Late Medieval England: Some Further Reflections’, *The English Historical Review*, 120 (2005), 66-79


L. R. Mooney and E. Stubbs, *Scribes and the City: London Guildhall Clerks and the Dissemination of Middle English Literature, 1375-1425* (Woodbridge, 2013)

See also  https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london/permanent-galleries/medieval-london

The virtual St. Paul’s Project (including the acoustic files)  
https://vpcp.chass.ncsu.edu/


**Class 1: Visions of the city**

William Dunbar, ‘London thou art of townes…’ (poem in praise of London; numerous online texts)


Matthew Paris, map of London  
http://worldcitieshistory.blogspot.co.uk/2013/06/medieval-london.html

*Pearl* (numerous editions available; the one volume edition by E. V. Gordon is still of value).

*Revelation* Chapter 21 (best read in the King James Bible)


Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Miller’s Tale* (in the Riverside Chaucer)


**Secondary literature**

A. Butterfield, ed., *Chaucer and the City* (Cambridge, 2006)


https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london/permanent-galleries/medieval-london

https://londonist.com/2013/10/fly-through-17th-century-london

**Class 2: The city and the numinous**

Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Prioress’s Tale, The Parson’s Tale* (in the Riverside Chaucer)

Anonymous, *St. Erkenwald*, various editions, including Clifford Peterson (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977)

*The Diary of Henry Machyn: Citizen and Merchant-Taylor of London*, ed J. G. Nichols (1848) available on Google books

B. Millett, ed., *Ancrene Wisse* (EETS 2005-6) there are numerous other editions, and various translations, including one by Millett.

**Secondary literature**


https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Ives_Bridge


R. Gilchrist, *Contemplation and Action: The Other Monasticism* (Leicester, 1995)


The virtual St. Paul’s Project  
https://vpcp.chass.ncsu.edu/

**Class 3: The city and the performative**

Langland *Piers Plowman*  (Prologue and Passus 1)


**Secondary literature**


H. Carrel, ‘The Ideology of Punishment in Late Medieval English Towns’, *Social History*, 34 (2009), 301-320


J. Dillon, ‘Clerkenwell and Smithfield as a Neglected Home of London Theater’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 71 (2008), 115-135

Ronald Hutton, ‘Seasonal Festivity in Late Medieval England:Some Further Reflections’, *The English Historical Review*, 120 (2005), 66-79


**Class 4: The city and the outcast**
William Langland, *Piers Plowman*


Chaucer, *The Prioress’s Tale*


*Cleanness*, especially 1093ff

The Requiem Mass http://www.requiemsurvey.org/latintext.php

**Secondary literature**

M. A. Krummel, *The Semitisms of Middle English Literature* - Wiley Online Library


https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/the-lost-hospitals-of-london-leprosaria

Peter Richards, *The Medieval Leper and his Northern Heirs* (Cambridge, 1977)

Derek Pearsall, “Lunatik Lollares’ in Piers Plowman”, in Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (eds.), *Religion in the Poetry and Drama of the late Middle Ages in England* (Cambridge, 1990), 167-85