



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Institute of Continuing Education

Ambiguous beings in the Middle Ages

Start date 14 Apr 2019 **End date** 14 Apr 2019

Venue Madingley Hall
 Madingley
 Cambridge

Tutor Dr Rosemary Horrox **Course code** 1819NDX034

Director of Academic Centres Sarah Ormrod

For further information on this course, please contact Head of Academic Centre Administration, Zara Kuckelhaus
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To book See: www.ice.cam.ac.uk or telephone 01223 746262

Tutor biography

Rosemary is a Life Fellow & Director of Studies in History at Fitzwilliam College; Fellow of the Royal Historical Society; Honorary Fellow of the Historical Association; Affiliated Lecturer in the Faculty of History; General Editor of the Cambridgeshire Records Society and Series Editor of Manchester University Press medieval sources.

Her teaching style is standing and talking with minimal technology and questions/discussion are always welcome. She has taught over 110 weekend courses at Madingley and taught on our International Summer Programmes from the mid 1980s.

Course programme

09:30	Terrace bar open for pre-course tea/coffee
10:00 – 11:15	Session 1: The Monstrous
11:15	Coffee
11:45 – 13:00	Session 2: Elves & Fairies
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:15	Session 3: Green Children, Little Red Men and others
15:15	Tea
15:30 – 16:45	Session 4: The Returning Dead
16:45	Day-school ends

Course syllabus

Aims:

To explore some less familiar dimensions of what might be called the medieval world view, and the reasoning behind contemporary anxieties about things that 'didn't fit'.

Content:

A prevailing concern throughout the middle ages was the establishment of order, in all senses of that word: social, political and intellectual. Disorder was profoundly uncomfortable and, if possible, things that didn't fit should be brought into harmony with the accepted scheme of things. This day-school looks at a range of beings which stubbornly resisted categorisation and thereby raised big questions about the boundaries not just between human/animal and material/immaterial, but between spiritual and demonic.

The first session is concerned with the first of those boundaries and the question of what counted as a human being. It will consider not only the 'monstrous races' believed to live at the edge of the known world, but also physical monstrosity among European humans – how extreme did that have to be to eclipse their identification as human and what were the essential attributes of human-ness? There will also be discussion of werewolves and wodeuses, which also challenged the animal/human boundary.

The next two sessions consider beings that are definitely neither human nor animal but puzzlingly 'other'. Elves and fairies are the best known today and have a session to themselves, but they blur into a range of not-quite fairies, such as follets (who behave rather like poltergeists) and pygmies. And then there are the strange, one-off appearances in early collections of tales like the two green children who emerged from the earth in Woolpit one day and announced that they had come from St Martin's country.

Finally we come to the returning dead. They might seem an odd category to include – ghosts were almost always identifiable as a named individual. But how they came back, especially in early stories, raises the possibility that these were in fact demons animating a corpse, and a collection of later, early fifteenth-century, accounts from Byland Abbey introduces some very strange manifestations indeed.

Presentation of the course:

Teaching will be mainly through the exploration of contemporary sources from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, some of which will be circulated in advance to facilitate discussion.

As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

Gain a fuller understanding of medieval thinking about the world in general.

Explore for themselves, through the sources provided, facets of that thinking concerned with 'marvels' and 'wonders' that seemed not to fit the accepted model.

Discuss the challenges that such accounts posed.

Reading and resources list

Listed below are texts that might be of interest should you wish to supplement your learning on the course. Any essential reading is marked with an asterisk *

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Walter Map:	De nugis curialium	(ed. M.R. James, C.N.L Brooke & R.A.B. Mynors)
Gervase of Tilbury:	Otia Imperialia	(ed. S.E.Banks & J.W.Binns).
Thomas of Erceldoune,		ed J.A.H. Murray (Early English Text Society, o.s. 61)
Thomas the Rhymer, F.J.Child,	The English and Scottish Popular Ballads I no.37;	
	see also Tam Lin (no.39) in the same volume.	
Sir Orfeo,		ed A.J.Bliss (1966)
Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight		[various editions / translations]
J. Wade,	Fairies in Medieval Romance	(2011)
C. Saunders,	Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance	(2010)
L. Daston & K. Park,	Wonders and the Orders of Nature 1150-1750	
C.S.Watkins,	History and the Supernatural in Medieval England	(2007)
Sophie Page	(ed), The Unorthodox Imagination in late medieval Britain	(2010)
R. Bartlett,	The Natural and the Supernatural in the Middle Ages	(2008), chap 3
John B. Friedman,	The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought	
R. Wittkower,	'Marvels of the East: a study in the history of monsters' in idem, Allegory and the Migration of Symbols	(1977)
C.Walker Bynum,	Metamorphosis and Identity	(2001)
Timothy Husband	(ed), The Wild Man	(1980)
D.A.Sprunger,	'Wild folk and lunatics in medieval romance', in J.E. Salisbury (ed), The Medieval World of Nature	(1993)
Peter Sobol,	"The Shadow of Reason": explanations of intelligent animal behaviour in the thirteenth century', in ibid	
Joyce E. Salisbury,	The Beast Within: animals in the middle ages	(1994)
Keith Thomas,	Man and the Natural World: changing attitudes 1500-1800	(1983)
P. Doob,	Nebuchadnezzar's Children	(1974)
Basil Clarke,	Mental Disorder in earlier Britain	(1975) [has some useful case studies]
R. Mellinkoff,	Outcasts: signs of otherness in European art of the later middle ages	(2 vols, 1993)

Additional information

Venue

Details of how to find Madingley Hall can be found on our website:
<http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/who-we-are/how-to-find-the-institute>

Refreshments

Tea and coffee and lunch will be provided. If you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies and have not already advised us, please inform our Admissions Team on ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk or +44 (0)1223 746262.

Note Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

Information correct as of: 25 March 2019