

Serving Queen and King: Sir Walter Raleigh and court politics in England, 1580-1620

Start date Friday 1 July 2022 **End date** Sunday 3 July 2022

Venue Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge
CB23 8AQ

Tutor Dr Mark Nicholls **Course code** 2122NRX091

Director of ISP and LL Sarah Ormrod

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Tutor biography

Dr Mark Nicholls is a College Lecturer in History and a Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge. His research looks at court politics and political dissent in early modern England, with a particular focus on the law of treason and 'political trust'. Mark's published work includes a textbook on the 16th-century British Isles, a study of investigations into the Gunpowder Plot, and a biography of Sir Walter Raleigh. A former President, Senior Tutor and Librarian of St John's College, Mark has also written on the history of the College and the University. He has appeared in several TV and film productions on Tudor and Stuart politics, and he has contributed extensively to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Mark is currently writing a history of treason in English History.

Course programme

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the Terrace Bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00 Dinner

20:30 – 22:00 A Far-Off Country: Late Tudor England and the limits of knowledge

22:00 Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30 Breakfast (for residents only)

09:00 – 10:30 Raleigh and his Queen: What it meant to be Elizabeth's 'Favourite'

10:30 Coffee

11:00 – 12:30 The Perils of a Courtier: Allies and Enemies in a Wartime Court

13:00 Lunch

14:00 – 16:00 Free time

16:00 Tea

16:30 – 18:00 Scapegoat or Traitor?: 1603 in British Politics

18:00 – 18:30 Free time

18:30 Dinner

20:00 – 21:30 The Tower Prisoner: Raleigh's *History of the World*

21:30 Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30 Breakfast (for residents only)

09:00 – 10:30 El Dorado and Execution: Why did Raleigh die a traitor's death?

10:30 Coffee

11:00 – 12:30 400 Years on: Why do we remember Sir Walter Raleigh?

12:45 Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

The course will introduce you to:

- 1) The realities of Elizabethan and Jacobean politics, kingship, and life at a royal court;
- 2) The remarkable career of Sir Walter Raleigh, a courtier, politician, scholar, poet, explorer, and soldier, whose name remains familiar four centuries after his execution as a traitor in 1618.

Content:

The first objective of this course will be to explore the remarkable career of one of Queen Elizabeth I's most famous courtiers. Sir Walter Raleigh was a man of many talents. A soldier, explorer, colonist, politician, poet, historian and chemist, Raleigh was praised for his writing, condemned for his religious scepticism, admired for his courage and despised for his avarice. His talents led him to a position at the centre of political life under the last Tudor monarch, while his shortcomings led him to the executioner's block under Elizabeth's successor James VI and I.

Moving beyond a tale of the individual, this course will approach early modern English political and cultural life from different angles, drawing on Raleigh's varied career to discuss court politics, political trust, statecraft, the limitations of government, historical writing and knowledge, and seamanship and exploration. In a discussion of Raleigh's 'afterlife' we also consider why someone who died a traitor's death in 1618 is still remembered, discussed, denounced and memorialised today.

Presentation of the course:

The course will involve illustrated lectures and group discussion.

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

- 1) Talk with confidence and knowledge about the Elizabeth I, James VI and I, and their courts;
- 2) Understand the realities of kingship and rule in this period;
- 3) Form a balanced view of Sir Walter Raleigh, his abilities and weaknesses, and the forces that drove his remarkable career;
- 4) Evaluate why certain figures from this period are portrayed as heroes or villains, both in response to the politics of the time and also in writing the history of Tudor and Stuart England today.

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
Mark Nicholls and Penry Williams	<i>Sir Walter Raleigh in life and Legend</i>	London: Continuum, 2011
Raleigh Trevelyan	<i>Sir Walter Raleigh</i>	London: Allen Lane, 2002
Nicholas Popper	<i>Walter Raleigh's History of the World and the historical culture of the late Renaissance</i>	London: University of Chicago Press, 2012
Anna Beer	<i>My Just Desire: the life of Bess Raleigh, wife to Sir Walter</i>	London: Constable, 2004
Agnes Latham and Joyce Youings (eds)	<i>The Letters of Sir Walter Raleigh</i>	Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999