Study Questions for the Mid-Term Exam

Four of the following questions will be on the mid-term exam. You will be asked to write essays responding to two of them. You will also be asked to identify and briefly indicate the significance of four persons, events or concepts discussed in readings, sections or lectures. You will be given a list of eight choices for these I.D.s on the exam.

The examination will be held in class in the usual room on Monday, November 3. Please bring your own blue books and be prepared to write your answers in dark ink or pencil.

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1. Roman Christianity became the cultural foundation of medieval England. Discuss the ways in which missionaries and administrators made the church a fundamental part of government and society.

2. What accounts for the transformation of Anglo-Saxon England from a collection of petty kingdoms into one of the most unified nations in Western Europe?

3. The relationship between the church and the monarchy was beset by terrible quarrels throughout the Middle Ages. What were the main sources of conflict, and were they symptomatic of a fundamental conflict of interest between church and crown?

4. Some historians maintain that the only significant social change wrought by the Norman Conquest was the replacement of an English governing class by a Norman one. Do you agree with this assessment?

5. One influential interpretation of the development of the constitution in medieval England holds that the most significant changes were the result of opposition groups trying to reign in bad, tyrannical monarchs. Others, however, have pointed out that some crucial advances in law and institutions were actually promoted by strong and generally successful ones. Analyze both sides of this argument and its implications.

6. What can we tell about the circumstances of ordinary women from the experiences of Cecilia Penifader? (Note any special features of the manor of Brigstock that you might think relevant to an assessment of the typicality of her experiences.)

7. Many historians see the Black Death as a major turning point in English history. Discuss the possible reasons why one would think so, and give your estimate of the event’s significance.

8. What qualities of personality and policy distinguished successful medieval monarchs from catastrophic ones?

A review session will be held before the examination at a time and place to be announced later this week by email.