

History 4440G
The Virgin Queen: Elizabeth I and her World
Winter 2026

Instructor: **Dr. Sara Morrison**

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Office: **Department of History, Stevenson Hall 2124**

Office Hours: **Monday 1:00-2:00; Tuesday 11:00-12:00**

This is a **draft** outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

Course Description

The Virgin Queen or Gloriana, Elizabeth I is the most studied Briton of the early modern period. Using primary and secondary sources including literature and film, this research seminar examines Elizabeth's role as a leader, woman, and queen, exploring her self-representation and later use of her image and memory.

Prerequisite(s): Registration in third year or above, any module.

Antirequisite(s): [History 3441F/G](#), [History 4496F/G](#) if taken on Main Campus in 2024-25.

Course Syllabus

Queen Elizabeth I or Elizabeth Tudor is often referred to as the Virgin Queen in popular culture. She has fascinated scholars for centuries, reaching new heights with developments in women's and gender history, but more recently with studies in the emerging field of "Queenship and Power." Using primary and secondary sources, this seminar will explore Elizabeth I and her world 1558-1603 through history, literature, portraiture, and film. Elizabeth I is the most studied Briton of the early modern period. Why is this? Scholarly interest has increased dramatically over the last twenty-five years, peaking at the 400th anniversary of her death in 2003. Is the growing interest in women's and gender history responsible for this escalation of historical interest? And yet, the fascination with the subject of Elizabeth continues. This course will consider Elizabeth I as a leader, a woman, and a queen within the context of later sixteenth century England.

As a seminar course, student evaluation reflects the importance of the weekly readings, participating in class discussion, and reflection on course materials. Students will also be responsible for one of the weekly seminar presentations, one documentary analysis from the primary sourcebook for the course, in addition to researching and writing an original essay on a theme or topic related to Elizabeth I. This course provides flexibility in the selection of assignments and encourages students to study topics that particularly interest them. Follow up on something exciting from discussion or readings and craft your own research question and topic. Support will be provided to refine your research topic and objectives.

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In this class students will be building on their research and presentation skills and upon successful competition can:

1. Identify and describe key events and influences in the Elizabethan World.
2. Evaluate Queen Elizabeth's role as a leader, a woman, and a queen.
3. Use and evaluate diverse forms of historical evidence not only from historical sources but also from literature, portraiture, and film.
4. Identify key concepts and understand the historiography of the field.
5. Develop their own research questions in consultation with faculty and pursue them through all available and appropriate primary and secondary sources.
6. Strengthen writing skills.
7. Engage with faculty and peers and in a respectful and collaborative seminar setting writing history.

This course provides flexibility in the selection of assignments (seminar, essay topic & journal reflections.) You will be supported in class and during office hours as you refine your research topic.

Advanced preparation, attendance, and participation are vital to the success of a seminar course. It is hard to do well in this course if you miss many classes; however, one major advantage of this reading seminar is that there is no final exam. Students participate in discussions, formulate questions for weekly topics, and later reflect on their growing knowledge and understanding within their reflection journal. It is advisable to keep up with this after every class (a paragraph or two) whilst it is fresh in your mind; trying to write this at the end will be very difficult and you will lack the required perspective. The result is that each student will end the course with a unique reminder of their progress in their own personalized reflection journal. During the term, each student will have the opportunity to present a seminar to the class and lead a short discussion on a topic related to the weekly theme. The weekly reading materials will assist you as you select a topic and develop the idea for your final essay. I encourage you to consult with me after seminars and during office hours, as you prepare a research question, essay proposal, and an annotated bibliography for your essay. The thesis will develop out of the question and the research. Towards the end of term, by sharing a progress report with the class, and engaging in peer review you will further clarify your ideas in the final writing and editing stage of your essay.

Course Materials

Required Text: available at Western Libraries & from Western's Bookstore [Campus Bookstore](https://bookstore.uwo.ca) <https://bookstore.uwo.ca>. There are many library copies and second-hand copies.

- Donald Stump & Susan M. Fetch, *Elizabeth and her Age*, Norton, 2009.
- All other readings will be made available in OWL Brightspace or through the Weldon Library Course Reserves for History 4440G.

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Methods of Evaluation

Historiography Exercise /brief oral presentation	10%	23 February
Seminar	10%	TBA
Attendance & Participation Includes weekly Passport 1 page + 3 questions; Each student takes role as seminar/ document lead	20%	Ongoing
Essay Proposal/Annotated Bibliography Discuss proposals (5%) Progress Report in class Final Essay 35% (12-15 pages) Accepted without penalty until Paper copy in class	40%	9 Feb 16 & 24 March 20 March (Fri) Flexible till 22 March (Sun) 23 March (Mon)
Reflection Journal	20%	30 March

Course-specific conditions: Absences and Late Assignments

As this is a reading seminar course, attendance and participation is critical for success. You must complete all course assignments in order to pass this course.

- **Students must attend at more than half (at least 7 of 12) of the class meetings to pass the course, regardless of grades received for other assignments.**
- As the course is designated an **Essay Course (E/F/G)** students must demonstrate competence in essay writing **completing all course written assignments in order to pass the course.**

A late penalty (5% for the first day, 2% for subsequent days including weekends) will apply to final research papers, research proposals, and reviews not submitted by the deadline, unless there is a recommendation from academic advising for accommodation. **No papers can be accepted after the last day of classes,** unless there is a recommendation from academic advising for accommodation.

- **If you are not able to attend your chosen seminar presentation (10%)** on your scheduled day (due to medical/non-medical reasons), you may arrange to give your presentation to the professor in office hours or in class if the schedule permits.

Course Seminar Schedule Winter 2026

- 5 Jan Introduction: Elizabeth I and her world, 1558-1603.
- 12 Jan Princess Elizabeth: valuable early life lessons.
- 19 Jan Elizabeth's Leadership Style; Female Rule. Lessons from Mary Tudor.
- 26 Jan Virgin Mary & the Virgin Queen. Establishing the Elizabethan Church.
- 2 Feb The Marriage Question, Courtships and Diplomacy.
- 9 Feb Elizabeth's Representation & Self Representation:
Portraiture, Processions, Progresses at Court.
Discuss Essay Proposals (5%)
- 16 Feb READING BREAK
- 23 Feb "Many Elizabeths:" Elizabeth I & Historiography.
Book Review due Brightspace 23 Feb & oral in class 10%.
- 2 Mar "Two Queens and One Isle": Anglo-Scottish Relations &
the Problem of Mary Queen Scots.
- 9 Mar The Armada, Myth of the Sea: The Queen's Last Decade.
- 16 Mar Elizabeth at the Movies: Reel versus Real Elizabeth.
Student progress reports.
- Essays (35%) due to Brightspace Friday 20 March accepted without penalty
until 22 March at 11:50pm. Identical paper copy 23 March in class.***
- 23 Mar The Uses of Elizabeth in Myth & Memory.
Student progress reports
- 30 Mar ***Final Reflections Journal due 30 March (20%)***
- 6 April Living like a Tudor: Queen Elizabeth and her Tudor World.

A full list of readings will be available in the Final Syllabus

Additional Statements

Communication policies: Contact Details: Email is the best way to contact me: smorri5@uwo.ca. Please make use of office hours to discuss your ideas for the final essay.

Use of electronic devices: No use of audio or video recording devices in class.

Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI): You may not make any use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, in this course. Any use of such tools for assignments in this course may be considered a form of academic misconduct.

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.

1 June 2025