

HSTR 420: Plots, Anti-Catholicism and Conspiratorial Politics in England, 1588-1688, Fall 2019

Subject to change

Instructor: Andrea McKenzie

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Anonymous, The Double Deliverance: 1588, 1605 (1625), British Library

Course description:

An introduction to the anti-Catholic prejudices and phobic discourses (“antippery”) that fundamentally transformed English national identity and politics from the reign of Elizabeth I to the so-called “Glorious Revolution” of 1688/9. Seventeenth-century moral panics about real and imagined “popish” plots and assassinations not only resulted in the persecution of hundreds of Catholic priests and laypeople, but played a pivotal role in the outbreak of Civil War in 1642, the execution of Charles I in 1649, the Exclusion Crisis of 1679-81 and the deposition of the last Catholic monarch, James II, in 1688. Anti-Catholicism was also an important, if often unacknowledged, strand in rise of Parliamentary opposition to the crown and the beginnings of modern party politics in the late seventeenth century. Legal discrimination and populist violence against British Catholics persisted well into the nineteenth century and helps explain the roots of modern-day tensions in Northern Ireland, as well as presenting some striking analogies to the Cold War and fears of communism and the more recent War on Terror and Islamophobia.

Proposed assignments:

2 four to five double-spaced page (1,000-1,250 words) seminar papers: 50% of course grade

Seminar participation: 10% of course grade

Take-home examination: 40% of course grade

Proposed reading list:

Select readings posted on Coursespaces.