The kings of England from Henry II to Henry III. Henry II, Richard I and John were also dukes of Normandy, dukes of Aquitaine and counts of Anjou and Maine. Henry III still claimed those continental titles as his, as will his successors. (Matthew Paris, *Historia Anglorum*, BL Royal MS 14 C VII, f. 9r, 1250s)
This Special Subject investigates the constitution, development and eventual demise of the aggregate of lands brought together by King Henry II of England, son of the count of Anjou (hence the use of ‘Angevin’) and grandson of King Henry I. The starting point will be 1154 when Henry, already count of Anjou and of Maine, duke of Normandy and by marriage duke of Aquitaine, became king of England and put an end to two decades of civil war. Until 1204 and the loss of Normandy and Anjou, the Angevin kings - who are also called Plantagenet after the nickname of Geoffrey of Anjou, Henry II’s father - controlled over half the French kingdom. Old-fashioned maps used to show this cross-Channel ‘empire’ as one red entity, which is deeply misleading as there was no political or administrative unity. The course will finish in the early 1230s, just after Henry’s grandson, Henry III, tried and failed to reconquer Poitou and the rest of the ‘empire with no name’, as John Gillingham called it. The phrase ‘Angevin Empire’ has been discussed ever since Kate Norgate first used it in 1887; its descriptive and analytical value is indeed problematic, and will be questioned during the classes.

Students will encounter three of the most famous English kings: the authoritarian lawmaker Henry II and his sons, Richard, the knightly crusader, and John, the classic embodiment of bad kingship. Some received opinions about those kings will be challenged, particularly because, although they were English kings, they were possibly even more French princes. Among their titles the English crown was by far the most prestigious, but in many ways the centre of gravity of their activities and of their identities was on the Continent.

The emphasis will be on the ‘Empire’ itself, its parts and its local and structural developments. Not all aspects of English political, social and cultural history will be expected to be covered, although many will be touched on. Primary sources will be at the core of the classes. There is a striking imbalance in volume and diversity between the sources produced in England and their continental counterparts; the discrepancy deepened over the period as the enrolment of administrative documents underwent a spectacular growth on this side of the Channel. However, it will be possible to present to the students with continental sources, notably from cartularies, French historians and chroniclers and letter collections, which will provide a welcome counterpoint. Many of these sources will be translated in English for the first time.

Over Michaelmas, Lent and the beginning of Easter Term teaching is organised in 19 two-hour classes, with an added three one-hour methodology classes in Lent. Most classes are structured around student presentations and discussion of primary sources. The first few classes will include lectures intended to give a general introduction to the course. There will be, for instance an outline the past and present historiographies of the Angevin Empire on both sides of the Channel; particular attention will be given to French historians whose work has not been translated into English.

The structure will be partly chronological and partly thematic. Important issues will be, for instance, how diverse the Angevins’ rule in England and in their continental dominions was, their expansionist ambitions in Wales and Ireland, and the roles of aristocracies and the Church in that political assemblage. Key figures such as Eleanor of Aquitaine (duchess of Aquitaine and political player in her own right as well as wife of Henry and mother of Richard and John), Thomas Becket and William Marshal will be assessed. The course will also explore relationships with the Capetian kings of France, the nature and status of borders, the development of common law and
of royal administration in England (and the existence or not of similar changes in the French dominions), castles and warfare, and queenship. Rebellions and power shifts will be also looked at, from the rebellion of Henry II’s sons in 1173 to the great baronial revolt that led to Magna Carta in 1215. The Plantagenet continued presence in Western France after the debacles of 1203-04 and 1214 will be examined afresh; recent scholarship based on ongoing archaeological campaigns suggests that there is more to tell than a tale of unavoidable decline and eventual failure.

At the core of the course will be the nature of the control exercised by the Angevin kings over what Henry II described as ‘our kingdom and everything subject to our rule wherever it may be’. The scale of their lands had one particularly interesting consequence - absentee kingship. The issue of the legacy - particularly legal and administrative - left by those kings once their ‘empire’ had crumbled will be at the core of this course, as well as the question of national identities, and more generally of the cultural and linguistic diversity of those assembled territories and the social and political consequences of that diversity.

The bibliography on this topic is considerable; it has been thoroughly renewed over the last two decades, as British historians are increasingly interested in the French side of things and collaboration with French academics has grown. A strong emphasis will be put on the wealth of available translated sources, from plenty of chronicles, letters and charters (and Magna Carta) to legal treatises, saints’ lives, satires, and governmental memoranda, such as a list of aristocratic widows and orphans. The spectacular growth of English administration, itself a fundamental issue, explains why there are more sources about England than about the continental lands. As much as possible will be made of French sources, some of them translated by the course convener. Many manuscripts kept in Cambridge libraries and at the British Library are highly relevant for this course and visits will be organised.

The ‘Angevin Empire’ is a very distinctive moment of English history, different in essence from the Anglo-Norman period that preceded it and from the more Anglo-centred kingdom that followed. The overarching question will be whether it was doomed to fail, as the idea of French and English national kingdoms would have us take for granted.

*Students will NOT be expected to have taken Paper 3 in Part I.*
CLASS PROGRAMME

Michaelmas Term: The setting up of a cross-Channel political conglomerate

1. Welcome, general presentation of the course and allocation of presentations
   
   *Introductory lecture:* The ‘Angevin Empire’ as seen by historians on both sides of the Channel

2. *Introductory lecture:* twelfth-century England and Normandy until 1154
3. *Introductory lecture:* twelfth-century Anjou and Aquitaine until 1154
4. Accession of Henry II and constitution of the ‘Empire’
5. Social elites and politics in England
6. Social elites and politics on the continent
7. Women and matrimonial strategies across the Channel; Eleanor of Aquitaine
8. The ‘war without love’ of 1173-1174 – the ‘Empire’ put to the test

Lent Term: Rebellions, consolidation, dismantlement

In weeks 1 and 3 of LT, extra one-hour classes will focus on gobbet work.
In week 5 of LT, an extra one-hour class will be devoted to a Long Essay Q&A session.

1. The Angevin ‘Empire’ from a Capetian perspective (*plus gobbet class*)
2. Legal and administrative reforms – also on the continent?
3. Henry II, John and the British Isles – the other side of Angevin expansionism (*plus gobbet class*)
4. Richard as duke of Aquitaine – a case study in Angevin rule
5. Absentee kingship - Philip Augustus and Richard (*plus Long Essay Q&A*)
6. The struggle for Normandy
7. Towards an acceptance of the continental losses?
8. Henry III and the continent

Easter Term

1. A reassessment of the ‘empire with no name’
2. Gobbet work
3. Gobbet work

Total: 19 two-hour classes and 3 one-hour classes.
LONG ESSAY – SPECIMEN QUESTIONS

Can historians overcome the imbalance in the quantity and nature of sources between the English and overseas parts of the ‘Angevin Empire’ in their assessment of the way these different dominions were ruled?

What were the consequences for the aristocracy of Aquitaine and Anjou of living under the rule of the king of England?

Did rebellion become meaningless when it was endemic?

Why was the second half of the twelfth century the second golden age of castle building in Western France (the first one being the first half of the 11th century)?

Did Normandy have for the Angevin kings the role and importance it had between 1066 and 1154?

Did Henry II endeavour to reform the government of his continental dominions as he did that of England?

What can be learned from a study of the continental borders of the ‘Angevin Empire’?

How French were the Angevin kings?

How English were the Angevin kings?

The Angevin Empire: a land of new opportunities or a place of constant dilemma for clerics?

What were the main influences on Henry II's style of kingship?

Did the invasion of Ireland strengthen or weaken the ‘Empire’ as a whole?

Henry the Young King, Richard the Lionheart: assess the importance of the figure of the ‘knight king’ between 1154 and 1216.

Did Eleanor of Aquitaine have realistic political ambitions?

Absentee kingship: strength or weakness?

What role did the Crusades play in English politics between 1154 and 1216?

Was Richard I's matrimonial strategy any better than John's?

'The king's wrath is like a lion's roar': what can historians do with Henry II's notorious fits of anger?

How easily could people understand each other across the territories under Plantagenet rule?
**SET TEXTS AND OTHER PRIMARY SOURCES**

Set texts are marked with an asterisk

*English Historical Documents, vol. 2, 1042-1189, ed. D. C. Douglas & G. Greenaway, 1953 (2nd ed. 1981) [a list of the – many – set texts from this will be provided; students will be encouraged to read all documents relevant to the period covered by the course]

*English Historical Documents, vol. 3, 1189-1307, ed. H. Rothwell, 1976 [a list of the – many – set texts from this will be provided; students will be encouraged to read all documents relevant to the period covered by the course]

English Lawsuits from William I to Richard I, ed. R.C. van Caenegem, Selden Society, vols 106 and 107, 1990-1 (translations of key documents will be provided).


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The Letters of Arnulf of Lisieux, ed. F. Barlow, 1939 [in Latin; a handful of letters may be translated]


*John of Salisbury, Historia Pontificalis, ed. M. Chibnall, Oxford 1986


*Dialogus de Scaccario and Constitutio Domus Regis, ed. E. Amt and S. D. Church, Oxford 2007


‘The Barnwell Chronicle’, in *Memoriale Fratris Walteri de Coventria*, 2 vols, ed. W. Stubbs, RS LVII, 1872-3, vol 2, pp. 196-279. [extremely valuable for John’s reign for which it is independent of all other sources; a translation of important passages will be provided]


*Radulphi de Coggeshall Chronicon Anglicanum*, ed. J. Stevenson, RS 66, London, 1875 [a translation of extracts will be provided]


* Roger of Wendover's Flowers of history, Comprising the history of England from the descent of the Saxons to A.D. 1235; formerly ascribed to Matthew Paris*, trans. J.A. Giles, London 1849. The two volumes are accessible online: [https://archive.org/stream/rogerofwendovers01rogemiss#page/n7/mode/2up](https://archive.org/stream/rogerofwendovers01rogemiss#page/n7/mode/2up); [https://archive.org/stream/rogerwendoversf01rogegoog#page/n6/mode/2up](https://archive.org/stream/rogerwendoversf01rogegoog#page/n6/mode/2up)

Two Medieval Outlaws: The Romances of Eustace the Monk and Foulke fitz Waryn*, trans G.S. Burgess, Woodbridge 1997

Appendix of eleven documents attached at pp. 443-452 to N. Vincent, ‘The Plantagenets and the Agenais’, in *Les seigneuries dans l'espace Plantagenêt (c.1150-c.1250)*, Bordeaux 2009, pp. 417-56 [translations will be provided].

**Visual material.**

Will be included: pictures and maps of buildings (castles mostly, but also churches), Plantagenet tomb effigies in Fontevraud, manuscript illustrations, other artefacts such as coins. The fullest use possible will be made during classes of visual online resources that will allow students to get a direct sense of original sources.
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Abbreviations

BIHR: Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research.
BJRL: Bulletin of the John Ryland’s Library
HR: Historical Research. (formerly BIHR).
EHD: English Historical Documents (Vols 2 and 3 for us)
EHR: The English Historical Review
HSJ: Haskins Society Journal
PP: Past and Present.
TRHS: Transactions of the Royal Historical Society

Where the ‘Angevin Empire’ was born:
Norgate, K, England under the Angevin Kings, 2 vol., London, 1887
See also E.A. Freeman’s review of Norgate’s book and his scathing comments on the phrase ‘Angevin Empire’ in EHR, 2:8, 1887, pp. 774-780

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