

End-of-Course Reflections

Course: FWS 1101.102 – *The Briton's Britain: Constructing Medieval England*

Semester: Spring, 2017

Institution: Cornell University

Overall Impressions / Takeaways

- This class had less patience with Bede than the previous class, but liked Geoffrey much more.
 - Both sets of students found Gerald's *History and Top. Of Ireland* strange and offensive
- This was a highly engaged group of students, despite being a Spring semester class
- Most of my comments about the Fall 2016 version of this class apply to this semester, as well.

Things That Went Well

- Using *Transition to College Writing* worked well as a way to focus attention on issues of writing. These were not popular readings, but they provided students with a common vocabulary and a useful overview of writing for college
- Teaching Zotero instead of citation was, again, highly successful. Students gained a tool that they can actually use in future non-humanities classes, and I got a semester of perfectly citations
- I made more explicit connections between modern uses of historical narratives and those of Bede etc. than in the previous semester. Drawing these kinds of connections helps students to see the texts as existing in a lived world, and gives them points where they can access the material

Things That Need Improvement

- I need to sell a bit harder the value of using a book like *Transition to College Writing* in the students' second semester of a writing course
 - Towards this goal, in spring semester classes I should probably skip the first chapter about the differences between high school and college. There is some useful stuff in there, but the chapter colored the students' reception of the rest of the book as being too elementary
- There was not enough kinetic learning this semester...too much sitting and talking
- I only had one lecture day, giving a background of English history from the Romans conquest through the Anarchy. The Fall semester class demonstrated a need for this information, which is useful for sorting through Bede and Geoffrey. So the info in the lecture is important, and I cannot expect them to read about it outside of class. However, I'd like to find a more interesting and dynamic way of presenting the material.

Problems

- No major problems

Thoughts on Specific Lessons

- I very much like the lesson that I stole from Anna Waymack on developing a process for finding a good research question. It combines active learning with an easy-to-use cascade of decision