Henry VIII and the Development of the Modern Common Law

IDH 2930, Section 08H5

Syllabus

Hume Hall 119

Wednesdays (period 9)

Professor Danaya Wright

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Office Hours:

Tuesday and Wednesdays, 1:00-2:00

This course will focus on pivotal legal changes that occurred during the reign of Henry VIII, a reign that saw the beginning of the modern bureaucratic state. We will read Alison Weir’s biography of Henry with an eye toward understanding how his reign, and the influence of his legal counselors, created an environment in which some of the most important legal changes to the common law would occur. The reign of Henry witnessed profound changes in property law, marriage and divorce law, labor law, treason, and the legal relationship between church and state.

Each student will choose a legal reform and do independent research on the subject, with guidance from UF Law students and law librarians. They will do a brief presentation of the reform and their research will form the basis of a paper discussing Henry’s role in the legal reform. We will discuss Henry’s life alongside the socio-legal changes of his day to understand the importance of his reign to the development of our modern legal system.

We will begin the semester by reading the first 150 or so pages of Weir’s biography and discussing them over three weeks. Then, we will have 1 or 2 presentations per day after that, along with additional reading in the biography. The presentations will coincide with discussions of those legal topics as they arise in Henry’s life. You will choose your presentation topic on the first day of class and meet with law students who will assist you in doing research on your topic.

Required Texts:

Alison Weir, *Henry VIII: The King and his Court*, Ballantine Books (2001, 2008).

Grades:

Your grade will be based on the following components: 1) class participation – 25%, 2) presentation – 25%, and 3) final paper – 50%. The full array of letter grades can be used, according to the UF undergraduate grading policy available at: https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx

Attendance:

I expect regular attendance in this course. If you miss more than three class periods I reserve the right to drop you from the class. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx

Accommodations:

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester

Evaluations:

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results.

Course Objectives:

At the end of the course I want you to understand how Henry’s reign ushered in major legal changes, many of which remain with us today. I also want to introduce you to legal research and the materials of legal history that are available to us today. Your presentation should explain the law you are researching, explain what Henry’s change did, who motivated it and why, and what legal impact the change had on the future. You will need to reference at least five reference sources, none of which are the Internet or Wikipedia. Your final paper needs to be at least ten pages long, double-spaced, in an appropriate academic font and margins, with proper blue-booked references.

Course Readings:

Until I know the number of students in the class, and what presentation topics you all choose, I cannot finalize each day’s reading and create a calendar of presentations. I will make that available on the second day of class. Until then, plan to read as follows:

1st Class – January 4th – read pp. 1-25

2nd Class- January 11th – read pp. 26-84

3rd Class January 18th – read pp. 85-142