University of Birmingham

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About

I teach the history of religion and society in the early and central middle ages, and research on the cult of saints' relics, miracles and religious cultures from the tenth to the thirteenth century in England.

Biography

Simon read for his BA and MA in History at the University of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. He then moved to Oxford and read for a D.Phil. on saints' cults in twelfth century England (1995-1998). In 1999 he taught medieval history at St Mary's University College, Strawberry Hill, before teaching at Birkbeck College, University of London, for two years (2000-2002). In 2000 Simon was awarded the *Past and Present* Research Fellowship. He spent two rewarding years at Liverpool University (2002-2004), in an AHRC post-doctoral research fellowship, working with a team of young scholars on Anglo-Norman historiography, before taking his current post at Birmingham in the autumn of 2004.

Teaching

Undergraduate

First year:

- Medieval History, c.500-1500

Second year:

- Critical Analysis
- Dissertation Preparation
- Conquests and Identities: England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries; Before Globalization? Afro-Eurasian World History, 500-1800 (2nd/3rd year option)
- Before Globalization: Afro-Eurasian World History, 500-1800 (2nd/3rd year option)

Third year:

- Special Subject: The Making And Remaking of English History: 1066 to the Present
- Historical Reflections
- Conquests and Identities: England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries; Before Globalization? Afro-Eurasian World History, 500-1800 (2nd/3rd year option)
- Before Globalization: Afro-Eurasian World History, 500-1800 (2nd/3rd year option)
- Dissertations

Postgraduate

- Themes in Medieval History
- Approaches to Medieval History

Postgraduate supervision

I am interested to supervise postgraduate work on narrative sources, including histories and hagiographies, of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, in Northern France and England, with particular reference to elite political cultures and ideas of gender and other social identities.

Research

I am interested in religious cultures, beliefs and practices, and in the social history of small communities and institutions in the central middle ages, including saints' cults, monasteries, the aristocratic family, and court cultures. I am interested in anthropology and how its insights and approaches might be used in the study of medieval narrative sources. A third interest is in comparative world history, particularly between 500-1500 CE.

I am currently working on the material and religious culture of relics in twelfth and thirteenth century England. My particular interest is in the dynamic positions relics occupy in relation to what are traditionally categorized as economic and religious activities. The aim is to explore a history of the social evaluation of relics.

My book (see publications) on miracle narratives and the cult of saints in twelfth-century England was published early in 2006. It argues for the diffuse social importance of saints' cults, and for closer attention to be paid to the tensions contained in miracle narratives of religious practice.

Publications

Books

- ***Saints and Their Communities: Miracle Stories in Twelfth Century England*** **(http://www.oup.com/uk/catalogue/?ci=9780199283637)** (Oxford, 2006)

- *Saints: A Very Short Introduction* (OUP, forthcoming)

Articles and chapters

- ‘Men and Masculinities at the Courts of the Anglo-Norman kings in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Orderic Vitalis’ *Haskins Society Journal*, (forthcoming).
- 'Miracles, Belief and Christian Materiality: Reliquing in Twelfth-Century Miracle Narratives' in *Contextualizing Miracles in the Christian West 1100-1500: New Hsitorical Approaches,* ed. M. Mesley (London, 2014).
- 'Religion, Belief and Society: Anthropological Approaches', in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity* (OUP, forthcoming), and http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199582136.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199582136-e-003?rskey=RCwvPx&result=1
- 'The Invention of St Mildburg of Much Wenlock: Community and Cult in an Anglo-Norman Shropshire Town', *Midland History*, 38 (2013), 1-15.
- ‘Masculinity as a World Historical Category of Analysis’ in *What is Masculinity? Historical Dynamics from Antiquity to the Contemporary World*, eds. S. Brady and J. Arnold (London, May, 2011).
- ‘Prince Bohemond, Princess Melaz, and the Gendering of Religious Difference in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Orderic Vitalis’, in *Intersections of Gender, Religion and Ethnicity in the Middle Ages*, eds. C. Beattie, and K. Fenton (London, 2010).
- ‘Narrative, Audience and the Negotiation of Community in Twelfth Century English Miracle Collections’, in *Studies in Church History*, 42 (2006).
- Several reviews in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, *Early Medieval Europe*, *History Today*, and *Midland History*.

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