

**ANGLIA POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY**  
**BA (Hons) Art History (and combined)**  
**Level 3 Semester 1**  
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**SAH2034 KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL (ADVANCED SEMINAR)**

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## **SAH2034 KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL (ADVANCED SEMINAR)**

This module belongs to the Study of Art field's group of Advanced Seminar modules, which are designed to encourage group and individual research.

At this level, you are expected to work co-operatively but with a high degree of autonomy, establishing the principal lines of inquiry of your topic and defining their limits, deciding upon appropriate research methods, finding and evaluating relevant written and oral sources, investigating appropriate visual evidence at first hand and developing referenced, reasoned and critical arguments based upon your sources.

### **Learning outcomes**

By the completion of the module, you should be able to:

1. Identify the leading issues which a study of the Chapel gives rise to.
2. Critically evaluate a variety of sources in relation to the Chapel, from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the present.
3. Conduct a close visual analysis of the Chapel and of related buildings, in the context of European medieval and renaissance art.
4. Locate the Chapel within the contemporary cultures of the English university, the city of Cambridge, East Anglia, the Church and the Court.
5. Demonstrate a preliminary understanding of the Chapel in the broad context of the visual cultures of European Christendom and the Islamic world
6. Contribute constructively to the advancement of research within the seminar group

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### **Issues**

King's College Chapel is the most significant surviving English building of its time. The Chapel is remarkable for its scale, structural daring, decorative completeness and state of preservation; it occupies a central position at the confluence of the interests of the University, the Church and the Court; it manifests the development of the discourses which have come to be characterised as late medieval, renaissance, humanist and reformatory.

In this module, we shall be attempting to study the Chapel in as broad a context as we can establish. Our aim will be to pursue a series of investigations which lead us away from, and back towards, the chapel by a series of routes through the educational, theological, architectural and political histories of late medieval society. We shall be trying to reconstruct, as far as the evidence allows, the complex connections between this Chapel's visual appearances and the beliefs, aspirations and strategems of its patrons, builders, users and

critics. We shall also attempt to set the Chapel in the wider context of late medieval English piety, particularly as it was displayed in the popular culture of East Anglia.

The Chapel was built over a long period, between 1446 and 1545, a century which embraces the reigns of five kings, Henry VI, Edward IV, Richard III, Henry VII and Henry VIII. As a royal foundation, the Chapel is closely bound up with the policies and fortunes of these monarchs and their advisors, during the later stages of the Wars of the Roses and on through the troubled years of the early Tudor dynasty. The glazing and the furnishing of the Chapel was being carried out immediately before and during the first stages of the Reformation.

The Chapel survives as the most splendid example of the range of styles promoted by the English Court, styles which were formulated in St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster, further developed at the east end of Gloucester Cathedral and then elaborated in the royal chapels at Eton, Windsor and Westminster Abbey. We have the task before us of recognising which features of the Court styles were adopted at King's and of understanding the ways in which these styles served as visual emblems of changing monarchical doctrines. How were the ideas of the Court patrons and their intermediaries in the Church and University interpreted by the master masons and the other master craftsmen, such as the glaziers?

The notion of a Court style in the 15th and 16th centuries also raises the issue of English visual identity. King's can be situated within the broad late medieval Catholic culture of Europe and it is possible to relate it to buildings in France, Spain, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands. However, in many respects King's is quite unlike any building on the mainland of Europe. We shall have to try to establish what the signs of its distinctiveness might be and attempt to explain how they might have come about. Is there anything in the argument that the insular aspects of King's were an element in devising of a specifically English national identity in the later middle ages?

As a Cambridge building, the Chapel originally fell within the diocese of Ely and was related, more broadly, to the religious culture of East Anglia, one of the richest areas in England for the study of late medieval churches. An obvious point of reference for us is Ely cathedral itself, particularly the Lady Chapel and the two chantry chapels dedicated to Bishops Alcock and West. Peterborough cathedral is also associated with King's, as the fan vault of its retrochoir shares many of the features we find in the Cambridge Chapel. We shall also need to relate King's to the churches of other parts of East Anglia, including Norwich, Bury St Edmunds, Saffron Walden, Long Melford and Burwell.

As a university chapel, King's can be compared to the other medieval college chapels in Cambridge, such as St Mary the Less and St Michael's, as well as to the earlier chapels in Oxford, particularly Merton and New College. Its role as a college chapel raises questions

about the nature of the medieval university, its purposes, its organisation and its curriculum. What function did the chapel serve within the medieval university? How was it related to the development of the college system? As the leading studies in the medieval university were theological, ought we to be looking in King's College Chapel for evidence of an intellectual demonstration of orthodox belief at the time? One question we must pursue is whether the foundation of King's can be associated with the attempts by the church authorities and by the monarchy to fortify approved teaching in the universities in the face of the challenge of heresy.

Paradoxically, during the later stages of work on the Chapel, Cambridge was becoming a centre of the new learning, which was associated with the humanism of Erasmus, a scholar at Queens' College. By the 1520s, Cambridge was a hotbed of Lutheranism, propagated by teachers such as Richard Barnes and Hugh Latimer. One of the leading humanists, John Colet, had specifically objected to the typological interpretation of the Bible, which determines the programme of narratives in the King's windows. How are we to understand the Chapel in the context of these debates, which laid the intellectual foundations of the Reformation?

The new learning was related in complex ways to the visual renaissance in 15th and 16th century Europe. One avenue of inquiry we shall have to pursue is the use in the Chapel of designs, in the windows and in the pulpitum, which reveal an understanding of the Italian renaissance, as interpreted by North Italian, French and Netherlandish artists. The Chapel is one of the richest sites in which to study the use by the courts of Henry V11 and Henry V111 of the new visual forms. What were the origins of these new ways of seeing, why were they promoted and what meanings were assigned to them?

The decoration of the chapel raises another burning issue of the age, that of imagery and idolatry. John Wycliffe and his followers questioned, amongst other beliefs, the legitimacy of religious visual imagery and their misgivings were to be amplified by the 16th century reformers, German, Swiss and English. The Chapel's images, most spectacularly the windows, were being designed and installed at just the time when the debates about idolatry were being revived, especially in Cambridge itself. The man responsible for deciding the subjects of the windows was John Fisher, who would eventually accept martyrdom with Thomas More. One of the most hated targets for the Protestant iconophobes was the cult of the Virgin Mary, central to the King's system. This issue of the legitimacy of images will require us to look into the 17th century as well, where we shall need to examine the attitudes of the puritans and consider the visit to Cambridge of the iconoclast William Dowsing.

We shall also need to consider the Chapel in an even wider context. Its construction coincides with a period of renewed rivalry between Christendom and Islam. What can we

learn by comparing the Chapel and its college with the great mosques and seats of learning of contemporary Istanbul, Cairo, Damascus and Isfahan?

The Founder's Statutes of 1453 provided for ten chaplains, sixteen choristers and six clerks. This should remind us that the Chapel was intended, above all, as a place for religious services and that music lay at the heart of the daily ritual. In order to understand the ways in which the functional requirements of the Chapel influenced its appearances we shall have to consider the forms taken by the pre-Reformation services (remembering that at the time of the Chapel's completion these too were highly contentious). At times, in the 15th and 16th centuries, English church music was considered to be highly innovatory; is it possible to relate the history of music to the visual history of the Chapel?

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### **The module's method**

The module will set the broad parameters within which the group will be working but the ultimate product of the module will be the responsibility of both the individual and of the group. Regard the module leader as the editor of the project.

You are going to play a part in producing is a new 30,000-word guide to the construction and furnishing of the Chapel. Each member of the seminar group is to write one of the 13 sections, which are to be around 2000 words. In addition, all members of the group are to write an introduction to the guide, which is to be around 1000 words (see the more detailed brief below).

The guide is to be aimed at an educated readership, which will be receptive to trying to understand the appearances of the Chapel in the context of power and belief in the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. To write such a book, your editor believes that we shall need to consider Michael Baxandall's method of cultural history (see bibliography below), aspects of Erwin Panofsky's ideas about iconology and the views of Michel Foucault, on discursive formations, knowledge and power. (However, you may want to challenge the editor on these methodological preferences.)

As your editor, I have drawn up a preliminary list of areas that might be covered in our contextual analysis of the Chapel, though, ultimately, it will be for the group to decide which to include, whether the titles should be modified or elided and how they might be sequenced.

1. *The design and function of college chapels in the medieval Oxford and Cambridge*
2. *Patronage and the genesis of the late medieval building*
3. *Henry V1's foundation of King's and Queens' Colleges*
4. *Evidence of the role of the masons, carpenters and other craftsmen*

5. *The material evidence for the building history of the Chapel*
6. *Royal chapels in England and France in relation to the Chapel at King's.*
7. *The Chapel in the context of the City of Cambridge and East Anglia*
8. *The relevance of notions of heresy and orthodoxy in the appearances of the Chapel*
9. *Images in wood and stone (and painted panels?)*
10. *The Chapel and medieval aesthetic theory*
11. *The Chapel in the context of Yorkist and Lancastrian rivalries*
12. *The Chapel and Anglo-French, Anglo-Spanish and Anglo-Imperial history*
13. *Comparisons with Islamic institutions and architecture of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, (Istanbul, Cairo, Isfahan and Damascus?) (editor's note: this topic needs to be dealt with in the guide)*
14. *The imprint of Tudor hegemony; Henry V11 and Henry V111*
15. *The validity of the terms 'late medieval' and 'renaissance' in the analysis of the Chapel*
16. *The iconography and style of the windows*
17. *The significance of music in the design and organisation of the Chapel*
18. *The relevance for the Chapel of the New Learning*
19. *The Reformation and the Chapel*
20. *Alterations and conservation since the 17<sup>th</sup> century*

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### **Schedule**

The seminar group will meet on the following dates (n.b. there are no classes between weeks 7 and 10).

#### **Week 1 Thurs. 10-12, 26 September (PS)**

- Preliminary discussion of the possible lines of inquiry which an investigation of the Chapel might suggest.
- Preliminary discussion of bibliography
- Consideration of relevance of methodology of Baxandall, Panofsky and Foucault.

#### **Week 2 Thurs. 10-12, 3 October (Dr F. Woodman)**

- Visit to King's College Chapel
- Examination of the plan of the Chapel
- The building history
- Questions raised by the fabric and elevations

#### **Week 3 Thurs, 10-12, 7 October (PS)**

- Second visit to King's College Chapel
- Examination of the windows

- The iconographic programme
- Netherlandish designers and glaziers

**Week 5 Thurs 10-12, 24 October (Dr F. Woodman)**

- Patronage and the genesis of architectural ideas

**Week 6 Visits' week, Thurs 31 October**

- St George's Windsor
- Eton College Chapel

**Week 7 Thurs, 10-12, Thurs 7 November (PS)**

- Confirmation of the lines of inquiry
- Assignment of topics to seminar members
- Discussion of the method and direction
- Agreement about order and format

**Week 10 Thurs 9-12, 28 November (PS)**

- Individual tutorials in preparation for the presentations (10-minutes); (you will need to bring your bibliography)

**Week 11 Thurs, 10-12, 5 December (PS and another)**

- First set of presentations

**Week 12, Thurs, 10-12, 12 December (PS and another)**

- Second set of presentations

**Visits**

Besides the arranged visits, you should try to visit some of the following:

Cambridge

Little St Mary's

Great St Mary's

St Bene't's

St Edwards

Holy Trinity

The Chapels of Trinity Hall, Trinity and Magdalene Colleges

The old court of Queens' College and the chapel (altarpiece of the Master of St Gudule)

Cambridgeshire

Burwell, St Mary's parish church

### Essex

St Mary's, Saffron Walden

*Suffolk,*

Holy Trinity, Long Melford (Lady Chapel)

St Nicholas, Denton

### Norwich

St Peter Mancroft

### Ely

Ely Cathedral – the Lady Chapel; Bishop West's and Alcock's Chapel

### Peterborough

Peterborough Cathedral - the retrochoir (though when I was there last, post-fire restoration was going on; best phone in advance).

*Westminster Abbey*

Henry V11's Chapel (you could visit this on one of the London trips in visits' weeks)

And, on the off-chance, if you are in Oxfordshire or Gloucestershire for any reason, visit:

### Oxford

Merton College and New College Chapels

### Gloucester

The cathedral – choir, transepts and Lady Chapel

### Fairford

St Mary's parish church (for the windows)

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## **Bibliography**

One of the most important objectives of the module is to encourage you to develop your bibliographical skills. The bibliography below simply lists the key works on the Chapel itself; it will be for you, individually and as a member of the group, to develop the bibliography.

The Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (1955), *City of Cambridge, Parts 1 & 11*, London.

Wayment, H. (1976), *Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi: King's College Chapel, Supp. Vol. 1*, Cambridge.

Willis, R. (1886, reprinted 1988), *The Architectural History of the University of Cambridge*, Cambridge.

Woodman, F. (1985), *The Architectural History of King's College Chapel*, Cambridge.

All of these books are in the APU library; none are still in print. Besides the APU library, you should use the Cambridgeshire Collection of the Cambridge Central Library in Lion Yard.

As for method, you should look particularly at:

Baxandall, M. (1972), *Painting and Experience in 15<sup>th</sup> Century Italy*, Oxford

Baxandall, M. (1980), *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany*, Yale

Panofsky, E. (1972), *Studies in Iconology*, Princeton

Rabinow, P. (1991), *The Foucault Reader*, London.

Danaker, G., Schirato, T., Webb, J. (2000), *Understanding Foucault*, London.

Rode, G. (2001), *Visual Methodologies*, London (especially chapter 6, Discourse Analysis 1 & chapter 7, Discourse Analysis 11).

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## Assessment

There are two component to the assessment.

### 1. Seminar contribution 30%

In all of the Advanced Seminars, there is a 30% allocation to oral contributions. The mark will be awarded for two oral elements: your **contributions to seminar discussions** in the seminars and your **presentation** in weeks 11 or 12.

In this module, your **contribution to seminar discussions** is vital to the success of the project. This aspect accounts for **10%** of the marks and the allocation will be left to the group to decide. You should attempt to ensure that your own efforts further the learning and achievement of the whole group. Your visual observations and reflections upon reading should feed in to the seminar discussions. You will also be expected to offer your views about which topics should be covered in the guide and who should do what. You will need to discuss issues of method, direction and format. Bibliographic information is to be shared and you should inform other members of the group about reading that might be helpful for their particular topic.

Your **presentation** will take place in week 11 or 12 and will be allocated **20%** of the marks.

You will be allocated 15 minutes in which to explain to the group:

*The issues your topic has raised*

*The method you are adopting*

*The visual evidence you are examining*

*The reading you have done/intend to do*

## **The argument you are developing**

*The conclusions you think you may reach*

It is understood that your research is not yet concluded, yet by this stage of the semester, you should be well on the way to shaping your topic.

The group will be invited to offer constructively critical comments. The tutor will include comments on your progress on the returned coversheet. Your mark will be decided according to the assessment criteria on the attached Study of Art coversheet.

## 2. The written assignment 70%

The presentation topic is to be written up as an **illustrated essay (3000-word maximum)**.

This essay is to take its place in the notional guide to the Chapel and so should conform to the common brief. In effect, your essay will be one chapter in the guide, the remaining chapters being written by the other twelve members of the group.

The essay should include a bibliography, referenced using the Harvard method. It should contain at least six illustrations, integrated in the text. The essay's argument should demonstrate your close familiarity with your sources, both written and visual. The manner should be independent, critical, resourceful and thought-provoking. The essay should show evidence of your constructive response to suggestions made by members of the group, including your tutor.

The essay will be marked using the marking criteria on the Study of Art assignment coversheet, together with the learning outcomes at the top of this handout.

Deadline for the submission of the written work: **1 p.m., Wednesday, 8 January**

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