Revised: 3 January 2006

Eco. 301Y1: Economic History of Late-Medieval and Early Modern Europe


READINGS:

A. The Original Debate about the ‘Rise of the Gentry’


**3.** H.J. Habakkuk, ‘English Landownership, 1680-1740’, Economic History Review, 1st ser., 10:1 (Feb. 1940), 2 - 17. Provides the mirror image of Tawney’s analysis, for the post 1660 period; and note that it was published in the year preceding the publication of Tawney’s famous essay.


Part II consists of ‘Select Documents’ from Tudor-Stuart England

B. The Subsequent Literature on the ‘Rise of the Gentry, 1540 - 1640’


QUESTIONS:

1. Who were the English ‘gentry’: how were they distinguished from the aristocracy and the ordinary commoners?

2. Discuss the Tawney-Trevor Roper debate. Were the English gentry ‘rising’ or ‘falling’ in the century 1540 - 1640; and why? When did the English gentry first emerge as a distinct social grouping? When did they achieve their major gains in economic, social, and political power? Is a purely economic interpretation possible?

3. What major changes occurred in English landholding in the 16th and 17th centuries in terms of: aristocracy, crown, Church, gentry, yeomanry?

4. Did the English aristocracy (titled nobility) make a ‘comeback’, particularly in landed economic power after the 1660s? Discuss the Habakkuk thesis.