

V&A Academy

A HISTORY OF
LONDON 1066-1666:
FLOWER OF
CITIES ALL

Wednesdays

30 September – 2 December 2026





Introduction

Medieval London was a walled city of crowded streets and lanes, open air markets and wooden and stone houses, its inhabitants living perilously and piously amid a skyline of a hundred church spires. With the V&A's collections and curators for inspiration, on this ten-week course we will explore its dynamic and fascinating history from the Norman Conquest to the Great Fire. A city of learning and richly skilled crafts, during this period London went from being the prosperous capital of an emerging kingdom on the periphery of Christendom to being one of the greatest cities of Europe, the centre of a growing mercantile empire which looked outward to the Atlantic and beyond. Already an ancient city at the dawn of the first millennium, London was firmly locked into a nexus of trade centering on the North Sea, with links to varied lands and peoples of Scandinavia and north-west Europe.

Information

Wednesday, 30 September to 2 December 2026 (online/in person).

Watch lecture recordings on demand, available at the end of each day, until 10 February 2027.

Your course leader

Mike Berlin is a Lecturer at Birkbeck College, University of London. He is a specialist in the social history of early modern London and has published extensively on the history of London's guilds. Before joining Birkbeck, he was a research officer at the Centre for Metropolitan History, Institute of Historical Research.

Your course series

This course is part of the *A History of London 1066 to 2020* course series, which spans 3 terms running from September through June. To find out more about the other courses in this series, [take a look at our course listings](#) or speak to your course leader.

Note: V&A Academy programmes are subject to change without notice.

Week 1 – Wednesday 30 September 2026

Capital and Kingdom

- 10.45 Introduction
- 11.00 London and the Conquest **Mike Berlin**
- 12.30 Mapping London and its Environs **Peter Barber**
- 13.30 In-Person Learners Meet up (*bring your packed lunch)
- 14.30 Westminster Abbey and Westminster Hall **Sally Dormer**
- 15.40 Online Live Discussion **Mike Berlin**

Week 2 – Wednesday 7 October 2026

‘The Pious City’

- 10.00 Gallery tour Medieval Gallery (Group A), **Mike Berlin**
*In Person learners only
- 11.00 St. Paul’s and London’s Churches **John Schofield**
- 12.30 The King’s Chamber: London and the Kingdom **Mike Berlin**
- 14.30 Chaucer and London **Marion Turner**
- 15.30 Gallery tour Medieval Gallery (Group B), **Mike Berlin**
*In Person learners only

Week 3 – Wednesday 14 October 2026

The ‘Splendour of its Citizens’

- 11.00 London and the Black Death **Barney Sloane**
- 12.30 Crafts and Guilds **Matthew Davies**
- 14.30 Immigrant Communities in Late Medieval and Early Modern London **Mike Berlin**

Week 4 – Wednesday 21 October 2026

‘Flower of Cities All’: Renaissance London

- 10.00 Gallery tour British Galleries (Group A), **Mike Berlin**
**In Person learners only*
- 11.00 Holbein and the Tudor Court **Charlotte Bolland**
- 12.30 Tudor Royal Palaces **Caroline Knight**
- 14.30 Ceremony and the City: Royal Entries and Lord Mayor’s Shows
Mike Berlin
- 15.30 Gallery tour British Galleries (Group B), **Mike Berlin**
**In Person learners only*

Week 5 – Wednesday 28 October 2026

‘The unquiet city’: London and the Reformation

- 11.00 London and the Reformation **Mike Berlin**
- 12.30 The Strand Palaces **Paula Henderson**
- 14.30 London Gardens in the 17th Century **Paula Henderson**

Week 6 – Wednesday 4 November 2026

Tudor and Stuart London: Court and City

- 10.00 Gallery Tour Ceramic and Glass (Group A), **Mike Berlin**
**In Person learners only*
- 11.00 The Early West End **Mike Berlin**
- 12.30 Shakespeare and the origins of the public theatre **Anouska Lester**
- 14.30 Van Dyck and the Stuart Court **Catharine MacLeod**
- 15.30 Gallery tour Ceramic and Glass (Group B), **Mike Berlin**
**In Person learners only*

Week 7 – Wednesday 11 November 2026

Famous and goodly citadel: London's Tower and Port

- 10.00 Gallery tour British Galleries (Group A), **Mike Berlin**
**In Person learners only*
- 11.00 The Tower of London **Tracy Borman**
- 12.30 The Growth of the East End as a Maritime Suburb **Mike Berlin**
- 14.30 The Pasfield Jewel **Mike Berlin**
- 15.30 Gallery tour British Galleries (Group B), **Mike Berlin**
**In Person learners only*

Week 8 – Wednesday 18 November 2026

London as a Centre of Conspicuous Consumption

- 10.00 Prints & Drawings Study Room visit (Group A), **Mike Berlin**
**In Person learners only*
- 11.00 London Furniture 1570-1640: a New Marketplace of Imports and Immigrants **Nick Humphrey**
- 12.30 Re-discovering the Cheapside Hoard **Hazel Forsyth** (recorded)
- 14.30 Textiles in Early Modern London **Jennifer Wearden**
- 15.30 Prints & Drawings Study Room visit (Group B), **Mike Berlin**
**In Person learners only*

Week 9 – Wednesday 25 November 2026

'Sink of Ill humours': London and the Kingdom

- 10.00 Prints & Drawings Study Room visit (Group A), **Mike Berlin**
**In Person learners only*
- 11.00 London and the Civil War **Mike Berlin**
- 12.30 Cheapside Cross **Christine Stevenson**
- 14.30 Temple Bar **Emily Mann**
- 15.30 Prints & Drawings Study Room visit (Group B), **Mike Berlin**
**In Person learners only*

Week 10 – Wednesday 2 December 2026

Death, Disaster and Recovery

11.00 Church Monuments, Effigies and Death TBC

12.30 Plague and Fire **Vanessa Harding**

14.30 Resurgam: the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire **Mike Berlin**

15.30 Performance by Passamezzo (Group A & B), **Mike Berlin**

**In Person learners only*