



History 248: Modern Britain, 1867-Present
Spring 2014, Boston University
T TH, 9:30-11:00, GCB 207

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Course Description:

Over the course of the twentieth century, Britain abandoned her empire and ceded political, economic and military control to the United States. But Britain also demonstrated strong leadership in the World Wars, pioneered an innovative Welfare State, and evolved into a vibrant (even if at times highly fraught) multicultural society. To what extent, then, should modern British history be regarded as a story of decline? In answering this question, this lecture course will give particular consideration to the tensions already present in Britain during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods (involving the rights of workers and women, the burdens of empire, and the Irish question), and the ways in which these tensions sowed the seeds for twentieth- and twenty-first-century developments.

Emphasis throughout will be on close reading of primary and secondary sources, as well as on careful analysis of visual images and historical films. Assignments will include semi-weekly discussion board postings, an analytical essay (5-7 pages), a mid-term and a final.

Course Texts (required):

- Thomas Heyck, *The Peoples of the British Isles from 1870 to the present*
- Walter Arnstein, *The Past Speaks*
- M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*
- Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth*
- Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

- George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*
- John Lukacs, *Five Days in London*
- Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia*

In addition to the above texts, a number of readings will be available through the web and through Blackboard.

Course Requirements:

- **Attendance.** Course attendance is required. (See below for specifics regarding attendance policy.)
- **Class Participation.** Most Thursdays, we will devote some of our class time to discussion of the course materials. It is essential that you come to class on Thursdays ready to discuss the assigned readings. To help prepare you for this, I will often require you to post comments on a discussion board located on Blackboard. On designated weeks, you must post at least one ****substantive**** comment in response to the week's readings. *I will read these comments carefully, and the successful completion of these responses will factor into your class participation grade.*
- **Exams.** You will be assigned a mid-term and final exam. The exams will consist of identifications and short essays. Review sheets will be distributed in advance.
- **Writing Assignments.** You will be assigned 1 major essay (5-7 pp. in length), designed to help you develop your writing skills and think critically about the course materials. The assignment will be distributed in class well in advance of the due date. I will be available to read drafts, provided they are submitted to me in a timely fashion.

Grading Breakdown:

Class participation, Blackboard responses, and attendance: 20%

Paper (5-7 pages): 25%

Mid-Term Exam: 25%

Final Exam: 30%

Major Deadlines:

February 18: Mid-Term Exam

April 8: Paper Due

TBA: Final Exam

Late Assignments:

Please contact me well in advance of an assignment's due date if you think that you will have difficulty meeting a particular deadline. *All papers submitted late without my permission will automatically be marked down one half grade per day.*

Attendance Policy:

Class attendance is required. Please notify me in advance (if possible) if you know that you will need to be absent from class. *After two unexcused absences, I will begin deducting 1/3 of a letter grade off your final grade for every missed class.*

Plagiarism Policy:

This course is designed to encourage critical thinking and writing. In order to become critical thinkers and writers, you must complete all stages of the work yourself: taking the words of others, or presenting the ideas of others as your own not only prohibits you from learning the skills of academic research, it also is a violation of Boston University's academic conduct

code. *The minimum penalty for such offenses is to fail the assignment; the more common penalty is to fail the course.*

Special Circumstances:

If you have a disability registered with Disability Support Services or some other special circumstance that might affect your work this semester, please let me know both verbally and in writing as soon as possible, so I can make appropriate accommodations.

Course Schedule:

WEEK ONE: Introductory

1/16: The Rise and Demise of Modern Britain?

WEEK TWO: An Age of Primal Innocence? Britain, 1870-1914*

1/21: "We Moderns"

1/23: Liberalism and its Critics/Discussion

Reading due:

- Thomas Heyck, *The Peoples of the British Isles*, Chapters 1 and 4
- Walter Arnstein, *The Past Speaks*, Ch. 10 (pp. 223-242)
- Victorian legislation timeline at <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/legistl.html>

* Discussion board posting required

WEEK THREE: Late Victorian Politics and Culture*

1/28: Insiders and Outsiders

1/30: Gender and Sexuality/ Discussion

Reading due:

- Thomas Heyck, Chapter 2
- Judith Walkowitz, selection from *City of Dreadful Delight*, on Blackboard
- Andrew Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* at <http://www.attackingthediabol.co.uk/related/outcast.php>

* Discussion board posting required

Optional: evening screening of *Topsy-Turvy* (details TBA)

WEEK FOUR: The High Noon of Empire*

2/4: Proponents of Empire

2/6: Empire's Detractors/ Discussion

Reading due:

- Heyck, Chapter 5 (pp. 85-105)
- Arnstein, Chapter 12 (pp. 263-287)
- Jonathan Schnerer, "Popular culture in the Imperial Metropolis," on Blackboard
- George Orwell, "Shooting an Elephant" at http://www.george-orwell.org/Shooting_an_Elephant/0.html

*Discussion board posting required

WEEK FIVE: The Question of Home Rule *

2/11: India and Ireland

2/13: *Hind Swaraj* Discussion

Reading due:

- Heyck, Chapter 3 (pp. 43-59)
- Arnstein, Chapter 11 (pp. 243-261)
- M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*

*Discussion board posting required

WEEK SIX: Mid-Term Exam and the Edwardian Crisis

2/18: Mid-Term Exam

2/20: The Edwardian Crisis

WEEK SEVEN: WWI: Ideals and Realities of War*

2/25: A Great War?

2/27: Dulce et Decorum Est: The War in the Trenches and Beyond/ Discussion

Reading due:

- Heyck, Chapter 6 (pp. 109-131)
- Arnstein, Chapter 14 (pp. 307-330)

* Discussion board posting required

WEEK EIGHT: The Great War at Home and its Legacies*

3/4: The Great War and the Transformation of the Homefront

3/6: The Treaty of Versailles and the Consequences of the Great War/ Discussion

Reading due:

- Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (part I required, the rest recommended)

* Discussion board posting required

WEEK NINE: SPRING BREAK

3/11: No Class

3/13: No Class

WEEK TEN: Interwar Years I: Sexual Politics and Literary Modernism*

3/18: Gender Trouble and Literary Modernism

3/20: Elite and Mass Cultures in the Interwar Period/ *Mrs. Dalloway* discussion

Reading due:

- Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*
- Discussion board posting required

*Discussion board posting required

Optional: evening screening of *Rebecca* (details TBA)

WEEK ELEVEN: Interwar Years II: Crisis at Home and Abroad*

3/25: Imperial Crises

3/27: Economic and Political Crises/ Discussion

Reading due:

- Heyck, Chapters 7 and 8 (pp. 133-169)
- George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*

* Discussion board posting required

WEEK TWELVE: The People's War

4/1: WWII: Appeasement and Intervention

4/1: *Special evening event: TC Squared Theater Company presents The Great War Theatre Project: Messengers of a Bitter Truth, details TBA*

4/3: The War at Home/ Discussion

Reading due:

- Heyck, Chapters 9 and 10 (pp. 171-212)
- Lukacs, *Five Days in London* (pp. 1-38 and 187-219 [required]; the rest of the book is recommended)

Optional: evening screening of *Mrs. Miniver* (details TBA)

WEEK THIRTEEN: After Empire I: Post-War Politics and Economics*

4/8: The Strange Death of Imperial Britain

Paper Due at start of class on April 8

4/10: The Reconfiguration of Britain

Reading due:

- Arnstein, Chapter 17 (pp. 379-400)
- Heyck, Chapters 11 (pp. 215-238) and 12 (pp. 241-264)
- David Kynaston, "Broad Vistas and All That," on Blackboard
- The Beveridge Report at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1942beveridge.html>

WEEK FOURTEEN: After Empire II: Post-War Culture and the Reinvention of Britishness

4/15: James Bond and the Paradoxes of Postwar Culture

4/17: British Culture and Politics in the 1970s and the Thatcher Revolution

Reading due:

- Arnstein, Chapter 19 (pp. 427-444)
- Heyck, Chapter 14 (pp. 285-307)
- Enoch Powell, "Rivers of Blood" speech at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/3643823/Enoch-Powells-Rivers-of-Blood-speech.html>
- Harold MacMillan, "Britons have never had it so good" at http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/july/20/newsid_3728000/3728225.stm

WEEK FIFTEEN: Multicultural Britain and the Reinvention of Britishness*

4/22: In-class screening of *From Russia with Love*

4/24: No class (Monday schedule)

WEEK SIXTEEN: The Recent History of Britain

4/29: *Buddha of Suburbia* Discussion

5/1: From Rule Britannia to Cool Britannia? Rethinking Decline and Course Conclusions

Reading due (for April 30):

- Heyck, Chapter 15 (pp.309-322)
- Hanif Kureishi, *Buddha of Suburbia*

Optional: evening screening of *The Queen* (details TBA)

Final Exam: TBA