



History 248: Modern Britain, 1867-Present
Spring 2018, Boston University
 T TH, 9:30-10:45, CAS 216

Professor: Arianne Chernock

Office: Rm. 410, 226 Bay State Road

Office Phone: (617) 353-8315

Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:30-2:30 and Thursdays 3:15-4:15 and by appointment

Email: chernock@bu.edu

Teaching Fellow: Arthur Kamya (email agkamya@bu.edu); Office Hours: Tuesdays 11.00 -1: 00 and Thursdays 11:00-12:00 and by appointment

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 we 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 (including devolution and Brexit). This course assumes no prior knowledge; curiosity is the only pre-requisite.

Throughout this course, we will focus on close reading of primary and secondary sources, as well as on careful analysis of visual images and historical films. Assessments will include weekly in-class discussions, semi-weekly discussion board postings, an analytical essay (5-7 pages) on a selected course text (Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth*, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, or George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier*), and two exams (comprised of identifications and essays).

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, you will no longer be puzzled or surprised when you see a headline about the rise of the Scottish National Party, the intensification of xenophobia in Britain, tensions between urban and rural England, or the Brexit phenomenon. Instead, you will be able to fit this news into a basic narrative of modern British history that will emerge from our weekly readings and vigorous class discussions. You will be able to distinguish key developments and turning points in 20th-century British history, identify the central challenges and questions that Britons have wrestled with, and understand the often fraught relationship between Britain and its empire (as well as between England, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland). Additionally, through close reading of primary and secondary sources, you will gain knowledge of modern British history as understood *both* by those who lived through it *and* by those who currently write about it. In this way, the course will also help you learn how to think like historians. In our weekly class discussions (both in the classroom and online), you will adjudicate between different historical perspectives and weigh the merits of different historical interpretations. The exams and paper, meanwhile, will give you the opportunity to flex your own muscles as historians. For the exams and papers, you will work on developing strong analytical claims and supporting those claims with convincing and wide-ranging evidence. My hope is that you will come away from this course appreciating that the past rarely lends itself to easy answers.

Course Texts (required):

- Thomas Heyck, *The Peoples of the British Isles from 1870 to the present* (Lyceum, 3rd or 4th edition)
- M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* (Cambridge)
- Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (Penguin)
- Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (Houghton Mifflin)
- George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (Houghton Mifflin)
- John Lukacs, *Five Days in London* (Yale)
- Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Faber and Faber)

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

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 Learn. 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 two exams. 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%

Exam I: 25%

Exam II: 30%

Major Deadlines:

March 15: Exam I

April 5: Paper Due

May 1: Exam II

Film Series and Extra Credit Opportunity: We have noted optional films that we encourage you to view independently throughout the semester. Should you view any of these films, you have the option of writing a short (1-page) response to the film in order to receive extra credit. This credit will count towards your final grade in the course. Responses must be submitted by the last day of class.

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: <https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/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**

1/18: The Rise and Demise of Modern Britain?

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

1/23: Liberalism and its Critics

1/25: Insiders and Outsiders/Discussion

Reading due:

- Thomas Heyck, *The Peoples of the British Isles*, Chapters 1, 2 and 4 [for Thursday, 1/25]

- Walter Arnstein, *The Past Speaks*, Ch. 10 (pp. 223-242), on Blackboard Learn [**for Tuesday, 1/23**]
- Judith Walkowitz, selection from *City of Dreadful Delight*, on Blackboard Learn [for Thursday, 1/25]

* Discussion board posting required

Optional film: *Topsy-Turvy* (Mike Leigh, 1999)

WEEK THREE: The High Noon of Empire*

1/30: Proponents of Empire

2/1: Empire's Detractors/Discussion

Reading due:

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

*Discussion board posting required

WEEK FOUR: The Question of Home Rule*

2/6: India and Ireland, and the Edwardian Crisis

2/8: *Hind Swaraj* Discussion

Reading due:

- Heyck, Chapter 3
- Arnstein, Chapter 11 (pp. 243-261), on Blackboard Learn
- M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*

*Discussion board posting required

Optional film: *Gandhi* (Richard Attenborough, 1982)

WEEK FIVE: WWI: Ideals and Realities of War

2/13: A Great War?

2/15: Dulce et Decorum Est: The War in the Trenches and Beyond/Discussion

Reading due:

- Heyck, Chapter 6
- Arnstein, Chapter 14 (pp. 307-330), on Blackboard Learn

WEEK SIX: WWI at Home*

2/20: NO CLASS (MONDAY SCHEDULE)

2/22: The Great War and the Transformation of the Homefront

Reading due:

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

* Discussion board posting required

WEEK SEVEN: The Legacies of the Great War: Political, Cultural, Social*

2/27: The Treaty of Versailles and the Political Consequences of the Great War

3/1: Sexual Politics and Literary Modernism

Reading due: Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

*Discussion board posting required

WEEK EIGHT: SPRING BREAK

3/6: No Class

3/8: No Class

WEEK NINE: Exam

3/13: Exam Review

3/15: Exam I (in-class)

WEEK TEN: Interwar Britain: Crisis at Home and Abroad*

3/20: Imperial Crises

3/22: Economic and Political Crises/ Discussion

Reading due:

- Heyck, Chapters 7 and 8
- George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*

* Discussion board posting required

WEEK ELEVEN: The People's War

3/27: WWII: Appeasement and Intervention

3/29: The War at Home/ Discussion

Reading due:

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

Optional film: *Mrs. Miniver* (William Wyler, 1942)

WEEK TWELVE: The End of Empire and Rise of the Welfare State: Britain in the 1940s and 50s

4/3: The Strange Death of Imperial Britain

4/5: The Welfare State and the Reconfiguration of Britain

Reading due:

- Arnstein, Chapter 17 (pp. 379-400), on Blackboard
- Heyck, Chapter 11
- The Beveridge Report at <http://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1942beveridge.html>

Essays due at the start of class on 4/5

WEEK THIRTEEN: "Britons have never had it so good": Culture and Politics in the 1960s and 70s

4/10: James Bond and the Paradoxes of Postwar Culture

4/12: British Culture and Politics in the 1970s

Reading due:

- Heyck, Chapter 12
- 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
- Enoch Powell, "Rivers of Blood" speech at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/3643823/Enoch-Powells-Rivers-of-Blood-speech.html>

Optional film: *From Russia with Love* (Terence Young, 1963)

WEEK FOURTEEN: The Thatcherite Revolution

4/17: *The Buddha of Suburbia*

4/19: The Thatcherite Revolution

Reading due:

- *The Buddha of Suburbia* (for Tuesday, 4/17)
- Heyck, Chapter 14 (for Thursday, 4/19)
- Arnstein, Chapter 19 (pp. 427-444), on Blackboard Learn (for Thursday, 4/19)

WEEK FIFTEEN: Multicultural Britain and the Reinvention of Britishness?

4/24: Blair's Britain

Evening of 4/24: *'Top Girls' at the Huntington Repertory Theater (contact: Victoria Swindle)*

4/26: Rethinking Britain's Long 20th Century in the Shadow of Brexit

Reading due:

- Heyck, Chapter 15
- Zadie Smith, "Fences," *New York Review of Books*, at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2016/08/18/fences-brexite-diary/>
- Peter Mandler, "Britain's EU Problem is a London Problem," at <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/blog/britains-eu-problem-london-problem>

Optional Film: *Bend It Like Beckham* (Gurinder Chadha, 2002)

WEEK SIXTEEN: COURSE CONCLUSIONS

5/1: **EXAM II**