



BRITAIN IN THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

HIS 235; Fall 2021
HSSC N3118
Mon, Wed, & Fri 3-3:50pm

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Fall Office Hours:
Tue: 10-11:30am,
Thur: 1-2:30pm
& by appointment

Virtual office hours: Wed, 10-11:30am
<https://grinnellcollege.webex.com/meet/guenthmb>

Course Overview

By the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, Britain had emerged as one of the most powerful and prosperous societies in history. Such an outcome would have surprised earlier generations of Europeans, who often held a dim view of the British Isles, with its small population, its geographic isolation, internal divisions, and marginal economy. In the sixteenth century, for example, the English crown did not even control the majority of territory on the British Isles, and there were actually more sheep than subjects. Yet by 1815, the United Kingdom of Great Britain had emerged as a powerful nation-state, with an impressive population, the first industrializing economy, and an enormous global empire that included forty-three colonies around the world. Underlying this tremendous expansion, moreover, were a series of pivotal transformations that ushered in new forms of family life and civil society, print culture and public debate, science and technological innovation, urbanization and class identity, administrative institutions and government power—in sum, many of the key elements of “modernity”. Indeed, scholars have increasingly focused on Britain’s “long” eighteenth-century (c. 1688-1815) to explain how the modern world was made, a tendency that seems all the more appropriate since Britain’s deep engagement with empire and globalization make it a model for understanding how these patterns have come to structure our contemporary world.

Over the course of the semester, we will explore how and why these surprising transformations occurred, focusing not only on the historical processes behind this tremendous growth and change, but also the complexities, contradictions and conflict that surrounded them. The reading material for this course—which includes a variety of historical documents, artifacts, and scholarly accounts—will therefore address the evolution of Britain and its empire from the late seventeenth century until

the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, focusing on how the modern British state, social and economic organization, and cultural identities developed in a global context. Such a focus entails not only examining how Britain exported its institutions abroad, but also how British society was itself “made” by contact with other cultures around the globe.

Another important theme of the course revolves around the importance (and challenge of) thinking in spatial terms about the history of 18th-century Britain, in particular, and any society, more broadly. Since Grinnell does not have a geography department, I use this course as an opportunity to introduce some of the concepts, questions, and perspectives that students would encounter if they were taking a course from a historical or cultural geographer. We will be exploring, therefore, how how particular spatial dynamics and cultural settings often play a key role in shaping the kind of historical action and change that unfold within them. This set of issues will become even more prominent in the second half of the semester, and will inform students’ final research project for the course.

Course Requirements

Course Material:

You do not need to purchase any textbooks or course readings. All the required material for the course will either be provided digitally through blackboard, distributed in class in print form, or will be available through databases that you can freely access through the college library. Two such databases that will be particularly important this semester are the *Eighteenth Century Collection Online* (ECCO) and the *Burney Newspapers Collection*.

Class Preparation & Participation (25%)

The vast majority of our time in class will be spent in group-discussion. It is crucial, therefore, that everyone comes to each class fully prepared to engage the issues at hand. This involves not only completing the assigned readings prior to class, but also taking the appropriate time to address discussion questions, to organize your notes accordingly, and to mark down specific examples and passages that you want to discuss in class. Remember that effective note taking and class participation will lay the foundation for a focused grasp of the material, and will also help you excel on the written assignments.

Since class participation accounts for 20% of your total grade, I take this evaluation seriously. I will record a participation grade for each class session—and for most exercises/activities—and will make these available to you on a daily basis so that you can track how you are doing in this aspect of the course. I will send an email at the beginning of the term explaining the logistics of this process (i.e. how students can access their participation grades). Please come see me early in the semester if you have concerns about participation, or if the discussion format is one you struggle with at times, so that we can discuss these issues.

Two Short Papers (40% of Total Grade), Sept 13 & Nov 1

Each student will write two concise essays (2-4 pages in length) that demonstrate your grasp of the material and your ability to develop sophisticated historical arguments about the core issues we

explore. Each individual essay will be worth 20% of your total grade; and you have the option to revise and resubmit any piece for a new grade.

You will be able to choose from multiple prompts, which will be posted under the “Assignment” tab on Blackboard, along with additional guidelines about writing and revising pieces. Each student will submit their essays as an MS Word or Adobe Pdf file electronically through the drop-box function located in the Assignment section.

Midterm Exam (15% of Total Grade), Oct 4

This in-class exam will be comprised of historical identifications and the explication of selected passages from the reading. I will discuss what these will look like, provide examples, and what is expected of students in an exam guide (which will be posted at least 10 days in advance in Assignment section of blackboard).

Final Project (20% of Total Grade) Dec 14

The final project allows students to select a particular topic related to 18th-century Britain (including its imperial dimensions) to research on their own in greater depth. While students are free to choose almost any topic they are interested in, I will ask that you use themes of space and place as an important lens through which to research your topic. You will have a choice about how you would like to translate your research into a finished product: ranging from a traditional academic paper (4-6 pages) to some other (more mixed-media) options that I will spell out in the guidelines posted by Fall break.

Grades

Assignment	Date	Percentage of Total Grade
Midterm Exam	Oct 4	15%
Class Participation	***	25%

I employ the following alpha-numeric grading scale:

94-100: A
90-93: A-
87-89: B+

83-86: B
80-82: B-
76-79: C+

70-75: C
60-69: D
Below 60:

Course & College-wide Policies

Class Attendance

If you are unable to attend a class because of sickness or for other legitimate reasons, please let me know as soon as possible. Depending on the circumstance, I may allow students to write a short response essay (to that day's readings) which can count as participation for the day. If you need to miss longer stretches of time, I will work with you to develop a plan to accommodate your needs.

Recorded Class Sessions

There may be times when I will need to record our class sessions for pedagogical reasons (I want us to be able to refer back to, or analyze, a recording of our discussion for particular pedagogical reasons) or for accessibility reasons (i.e. if one or more of us are unable to attend class because we need to be in isolation because of Covid-19 it may become important to have recordings of our classes). I will make sure to announce when a session is being recorded, and the recording will only be used for these two reasons (and all recordings will be erased at the end of the semester).

Electronics Policy

You are welcome to use personal electronic devices to access notes, readings, and other course material. But please put your laptop, tablet or phone in airplane mode, unless you have a particular accommodation requiring internet access. It can be highly distracting (to the individual and to others) if you are accessing email, websites, or databases during class (even if they are course-related).

Late assignments

Late assignments will receive a deduction of 2 points per day. Exceptions may be made for extraordinary medical or personal issues. But please note that no final projects will be accepted after 5pm on Friday, December 17th, since the college requires that ALL coursework be submitted by the end of exam week (unless you have received permission to take an incomplete in the class).

Religious Observance Policy

The following statement on religious observation policies comes from the Academic Handbook:

Grinnell College acknowledges and embraces the religious diversity of its faculty, students and staff. Faculty and students share responsibility to support members of our community who observe religious holidays. Students will provide faculty members with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which they will be absent, and this notice would be expected to occur no later than the third week of the term. Faculty members will make reasonable efforts to accommodate students who need to be absent from examinations or class due to religious observance. Students are responsible for completing any part of the course work, including examinations, they have missed due to religious observance, and faculty members are responsible for giving them the opportunity to do so. (Approved by the Faculty, September 21, 2009)

There is a more descriptive list of the holy days available on our website:

<http://www.grinnell.edu/about/offices-services/crssj/calendars>

Writing, Reading, and Speaking Center

You are encouraged to work with the Writing lab on any of your written assignments. If you are unfamiliar with this program, here is their welcome/introduction to students:

Grinnell's Writing, Reading, and Speaking Center supports students working on papers, projects, and presentations, as well as applications for internships, fellowships, and graduate school. In one-on-one sessions, students work with professional instructors to interpret readings, talk through ideas, choose and analyze evidence, develop and organize arguments, craft introductions and conclusions, organize and revise whole drafts, rewrite sentences and paragraphs, plan presentations, and more. Instructors do not proofread papers, but they can teach you how to edit your own work effectively. For a link to the schedule and appointment system, visit <http://mywco.com/grinnell> or search for "Writing Center" on grinnell.edu or GrinnellShare.

Disability Resources

I will make every effort to work with students to implement accommodations that are presented to me through the College process (as outlined in the Student Handbook and the Office of Accessibility and Disability Services). To learn more about this process, and the rights and responsibilities of students in this area, please consult:

<https://www.grinnell.edu/about/offices-services/accessibility-disability/students>

CLASS SCHEDULE & READING ASSIGNMENTS

Note: The schedule of readings for the first two weeks is complete (below), and I will finalize the remaining portions in the coming days. I will post that online as well as provide a print copy of the entire schedule in class (that you can attach to this syllabus)

- Please read the assignments in the order in which they are listed each day.

Fri (Aug 27th): **Introductions & Overview**

Mon (Aug. 30th): **Course Themes: An Opening Case Study**

Reading Due: Guenther, “John Almon’s Web: Networks of Print, Politics, and Place in Revolutionary London, 1760-1780.”
Almon’s Web Image Gallery

Week 2 Beginning Points: 1688

Wed (Sept. 1st): **The Glorious Revolution**

Reading Due: T.W. Heyck, *The Peoples of the British Isle*, ch. 2. (ch. 1 is *optional*)
Document Set (*The Past Speaks: Sources and Problems in British History*)

Fri (Sept. 3rd): **Imperial Reverberations of 1688**

Reading Due: Owen Stanwood, “The Protestant Moment: Antipopery, the Revolution of 1688–1689, and the Making of an Anglo-American Empire.”

Week 3 Identity and the Nation-State

Mon (Sept. 6th): **The Birth of British Nationalism**

Reading Due: Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, pp. 1-54.

Wed (Sept. 8th): **Commercial Ties & Interests**

Reading Due: Colley, *Britons*, pp. 55-101.

Fri (Sept. 10th): **Vulnerabilities**

Reading Due: Linda Colley, *Captives*, selections

Mon (Sept. 13th): **War & Taxes**

Lecture (No Reading Due)

- First Short Essay due 5pm, Monday Sept 13th

- Wed (Sept. 15th): **Bureaucratic Webs**
 Reading Due: Miles Ogborn, “Excise Geographies.”
- Fri (Sept. 17th): **Vulnerabilities**
 Reading Due: Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850*, 1-12, 17-8, 23-32, 43-54, 65-72.

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- Mon (Sept. 20th): **Buying into the Empire**
 Reading Due: H.V. Bowen, *Elites, Enterprise, and the Making of the British Overseas Empire*, excerpts.
- Wed (Sept. 22nd): **The Mindset of Mercantilism**
 Reading Due: Malachy Postlethwayt, *The African Trade* (1745).
 Postlethwayt, *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce* (1774).
- Fri (Sept. 24th): **The British-Atlantic Slave Trade**
 Reading Due: David Richardson, “The British Empire and the Atlantic Slave Trade.”

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- Mon (Sept. 27th): **Black Britons**
 Reading Due: Philip D. Morgan “The Black Experience in the British Empire.”
 Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail*, excerpts.
- Wed (Sept. 29th): **The Interesting Narrative**
 Reading Due: Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself*, 3rd ed. (1790), iii-29.
 Robin Blackburn, “The True Story of Equiano.”
- Fri (Oct. 1st): **Slavers and the Middle Passage**
 Reading Due: Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative*, ch. 3.

Week 7 Equiano's World (cont.)

- Mon (Oct. 4th): **In-Class Midterm**
- Wed (Oct. 6th): **Slavery and War: Equiano's Maritime World**
 Reading Due: Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative*, ch. 3-4.
- Fri (Oct. 8th): **The Plantation Complex in the West Indies**
 Reading Due: Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative*, ch. 5.

Week 8 Equiano's World (cont.)

- Mon (Oct. 11th): **Navigating the Worlds of Commerce & Unfreedom**
 Reading Due: Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative*, ch. 6-8.
- Wed (Oct. 13th): **Worlds of Enlightenment**
 Reading Due: Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative*, ch. 9-10.
- Fri (Oct. 15th): **Equiano's Mission**
 Reading Due: Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative*, ch. 11-12.

Fall Break October 16th-24th

Week 9

- Mon (Oct 25th): **No Class**
- Wed (Oct 27th): **Historicizing the Place of Knowledge**
 Reading Due: Steven Shapin, "The House of Experiment in Seventeenth-Century England," *Isis* 79:3 (1988), 373-404.
 Optional: C.W.J. Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason* (Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 1-22.

Fri (Oct 29th): **The Trials of Inoculation**

Reading Due: Spencer J. Weinreich, "Unaccountable Subjects: Contracting Legal and Medical Authority in the Newgate Smallpox Experiment (1721)," *History Workshop Journal* 89 (Spring 2020), 22-44.

Burney Newspaper Collection Exercise (Blackboard)

- **Second Short Essay due 5pm, Monday November 1st**

Mon (Nov 1st): **Science in the British Enlightenment**

Lecture (please look at the posted image gallery before class)

Wed (Nov 3rd): **The Augustan Coffee House**

Reading Due: "Rules and Orders of the Coffee-House" (1674)
 John Macky, *A Journey Through England* (1714)
The Censor, no. 61 (1717)
The Case of the Coffee-men of London & Westminster (1728)
 Image Gallery

Fri (Nov 5th): **The Age of Projects**

Reading Due: Daniel Defoe, *An Essay Upon Projects* (1697)
 [Samuel Madden] *A Letter to the Dublin-Society...*(1739).

Mon (Nov 8th): **Public Spaces & Urban Improvements**

Reading Due: Miles Ogborn, "The Street," in his *Spaces of Modernity: London's Geographies, 1680-1780* (New York & London: The Guilford Press, 1998), ch. 3.

Optional: Henry Fielding, *An Inquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase in Robbers* (1751).

Wed (Nov 10th): **The Sociable Enlightenment**

Reading Due: Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000), 33-47.

Selections from *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*.

Fri (Nov 12th): **Domestic Life**
 Reading Due: Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), excerpts.

Mon (Nov 15th): **Gendered Spheres**
 Reading Due: Lisa Cody, “The politics of reproduction: From midwives' alternative public sphere to the public spectacle of man-midwifery,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, no. 4 (1999): 477-495.

Wed (Nov 17th): **Women and the Enlightenment**
 Reading Due: Porter, *The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment*, ch. 14.
 ECCO Exercise

Fri (Nov 19th): **Print Culture (Class will be held in Special Collections, Burling Library)**
 Reading Due: Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), ch. 4.
 Optional: Lucia Dacome, “Noting the Mind: Commonplace Books and the Pursuit of the Self in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65, no. 4 (2004): 603–25.

Mon (Nov 22nd): **Spaces of Pleasure**
 Reading Due: Ogborn, “The Pleasure Garden” in *Spaces of Modernity*, ch. 4.

Wed (Nov 24th): **No Class**
 Watch: “Rule Britannia! Music, Mischief and Morals in the 18th Century.” (BBC Documentary, 2014)

Thanksgiving Break (Nov 25th-27th)

Week 14

- Mon (Nov 29th): **The Politics of Connoisseurship in South Asia**
 Reading Due: Maya Jasanoff, "Collectors of Empire: Objects, Conquests and Imperial Self-Fashioning," *Past & Present* 184 (2004), 109-135.
- Wed (Dec 1st): **Navigating the World of Goods**
 Reading Due: Thomas Bridge, *The Adventures of a Bank-Note...* (1771).
- Fri (Dec 3rd): **Religion in an Age of Reason**
 Reading Due: Document Set

- Mon (Dec 6th): **American and French Revolutions**
- Wed (Dec 8th): **India and the Birth of the Second British Empire**
- Fri (Dec 10th): **The Industrial Revolution**

Final Project Due Tuesday, December 14th (7pm)