

MODERN BRITAIN AND THE EMPIRE

HIS 236-01, Spring 2017

MWF 8:00-8:50, JRC 209

Elizabeth Prevost

Mears 306, x4958

prevoste@grinnell.edu

Office hours: Mon & Tues, 2:00-4:00; Thurs, 1:00-3:00; and by appointment

For better or for worse, the history of Britain and the history of the wider world are intricately bound together. This class will explore how modern British politics, social and economic organization, and cultural identities developed in a global context, by looking both at how Britain exported its institutions and how it was itself “made” by contact with other states and societies. In particular, we will investigate how British citizens and subjects were impacted by larger political, economic, social, and ideological change; trace the relational formation of social categories like nation, class, gender, race, and religion; and consider how marginalized groups negotiated structures of power and lobbied for greater representation within an expanding and contracting imperial polity (with British India forming a particular focus of our study of empire). We will take a critical approach to these developments in British and colonial history by working intensively with primary sources, evaluating the scholarship of other historians, and re-enacting a crucial moment of transition in the British imperial world order.

Course objectives

Students in this class will:

- Develop a historical consciousness and critical awareness of some key issues and developments in the modern British world;
- Develop a historical empathy with a diversity of actors and voices of the past;
- Develop competencies in reading and interpreting primary sources;
- Develop competencies in reading and interpreting secondary sources;
- Strengthen their analytical writing skills;
- Strengthen their oral communication skills and ability to contribute to a collective dialogue.

Course requirements and evaluation

Contribution to class discussions: 30%

Although class days will occasionally include short lectures and group work, the vast majority of our time together will be devoted to collective discussion. History happens in dialogue; therefore, I evaluate class participation quite rigorously. If you do not participate regularly and substantively, you will receive a significantly lower grade for the course. For each day of discussion, you may earn four potential points: one for being there, two for making your voice heard, three for utilizing the text effectively in your comments, and four for responding to your peers in a way that advances the overall discussion. Note that this mode of evaluation assigns more worth to the quality than the quantity of your participation each day; offering one thoughtful, helpful, and well-substantiated comment will earn you more points than dominating the discussion with unfounded or tangential observations. Late arrivals, leaving the room during class time, and talking privately while someone else has the floor undermines a collective

atmosphere of mutual respect and commitment, and will be duly noted when assessing participation grades.

To prepare for discussion, you should engage in two layers of inquiry with the reading (or film viewing). The first is to understand what the texts are saying and doing. To that end, keep in mind the following questions about each source, making sure to mark where in the text you see each element at work:

I. For primary sources (texts produced during the period under investigation, i.e. pieces of the historical record):

- 1) What was the writer's (or filmmaker's, or artist's) intent in creating that text?
 - 2) Who or what is the subject of the piece? Whom does the author claim to represent or speak for?
 - 3) Who was the intended audience? How does the author attempt to connect with that audience?
 - 4) What kind of story is the author trying to tell, and how does he/she structure that narrative? What argument does the author seek to advance? Which passage best exemplifies the underlying point of the piece?
 - 5) What rationale or evidence does the author employ to make his/her case? Which elements of the story are factual, and which are subject to interpretation?
 - 6) What was the particular historical context in which the author was working?
 - 7) What kind of background or bias shaped the author's message?
- (Note: if any of above questions cannot be fully answered by the text itself, or if any textual references are unclear, do some googling!)*

II. For secondary sources (historians' surveys and analyses of the past):

- 1) What question or problem is the writer (or filmmaker) posing?
- 2) How does the author answer that question? Which sentence(s) best state the writer's overall argument?
- 3) What other interpretation(s) does the author appear to be arguing against?
- 4) How does the author develop the argument throughout the piece? What are the sub-arguments that bolster the main argument? What kind of story is the author trying to tell?
- 5) How does the author use evidence to prove the argument? (Note: you need to read footnotes in order to answer this question!)

The second level of inquiry in preparing for discussion involves extrapolating larger sets of implications from the readings and grappling with their significance. Ask yourself how the texts for the day relate to one another and to the larger themes and other readings you have encountered in the course – do they reinforce or complicate a particular angle of interpretation? What overlaps or discrepancies emerge when you hold up these texts next to each other? What kind of story do they tell about continuity and change over time?

I will usually circulate specific discussion questions in advance each day, which you should prepare in conjunction with the standard questions above. If you must miss class for illness or an off-campus commitment, you may make up the day's participation points by submitting a written response to the discussion questions.

****Always be sure to bring your own annotated copy of the assigned reading to class!****

I do understand that speaking up in class can be difficult. As in honing any critical skill, contribution to group discussions requires preparation, practice, and feedback. I will post weekly averages of your point score to give you a sense of how your participation is developing. Please come see me if you would like to talk further about strategizing your participation.

In-class exam (March 17): 15%

This exam will test your grasp of the material we have covered in weeks 1 through 8 of the semester. More specific guidelines will be circulated closer to the exam.

Two short papers (Feb 10 & Mar 3): 12% each

These 2-3-page essays will require you to engage critically with a specific historical issue or problem by synthesizing and analyzing primary and secondary sources to create a compelling argument. I will post the specific topics and instructions on Pweb about two weeks before each deadline. You have the option of revising one of these two papers (your choice), based on my comments, for a new grade. If you choose this option, you must track changes, append a brief summary of your revisions, and submit it no later than one week after the initial paper was returned.

Simla position papers (due in April): 13% total

You will submit two short assignments during the historical roleplay, weeks 9-12; specific deadlines and instructions will vary by role.

Final paper (due May 17): 18%

This 6-7-page essay is a more sustained synthesis and analysis of a broader issue, which will focus in particular on the material we have examined in the weeks since the exam, but will also ask you to incorporate some of the themes and sources we have used throughout the semester. I will distribute the essay topics and instructions about two weeks before the deadline.

Format:

All written work must be typed and double-spaced, using 12-pt font and 1-inch margins. Citations must be in footnotes or endnotes using Chicago (or Turabian) Style.

Please feel free to come talk to me about your ideas at any stage of the paper-writing process! I also encourage you to make use of the Writing Lab.

Policy on late assignments:

Each of you may take a free 48-hour extension on one writing assignment (with the exception of the Simla position papers in April). Remember, however, that you are still responsible for preparing the class reading or other assignments that may coincide with your revised paper deadline. If choosing this option, you must notify me of your intent to take the extension no later than 24 hours before the deadline. Otherwise, late submissions will receive a grade deduction. Exceptions may be made for serious health or personal issues, if accompanied by documentation from the appropriate office (Health Services or Student Affairs).

Note: absolutely NO written work will be accepted after Friday, May 19, at 5:00. The college requires that ALL coursework be submitted by the end of exam week unless you are taking an incomplete in the class.

Policy on electronic devices

I ask that you refrain from using all electronic devices in class (including phones, laptops, and tablets) unless you have been given explicit permission to do so, e.g. for purposes of accommodation. Occasionally I may suspend this policy for a particular day's activity, in which case I will notify you in advance. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Disabilities

Grinnell College makes reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students need to provide documentation to the Coordinator for Disability Resources, Autumn Wilke, located on the 3rd floor of the Rosenfield Center (x3702) and discuss your needs with her. Students should then speak with me as early as possible in the semester so that we can discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course and coordinate your accommodations.

Religious observation

Grinnell College offers alternative options to complete academic work for students who observe religious holy days. Please contact me within the first three weeks of the semester if you would like to discuss a specific instance that applies to you.

Course texts

The following texts are required and can be obtained at the college bookstore, through online sellers, or on reserve. They are listed here in the order in which you will need them.

- Philippa Levine, *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset* (Routledge, 2nd ed)
- Walter Arnstein, ed., *The Past Speaks: Sources and Problems in British History, Vol. II: Since 1688* (D. C. Heath & Co, 2nd ed.)
- Stephen Hay, ed., *Sources of Indian Tradition, Vol 2: Modern India and Pakistan* (Columbia, 2nd ed)
- Kenneth O. Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Britain: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford)
- George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (Harcourt)
- Ainslie R. Embree & Mark C. Carnes, *Defining a Nation: India on the Eve of Independence* (Pearson/Longman). Note: not available on reserve.

Other readings will be available online or on Pweb (as noted below). These should be printed out and brought to class as hard copies. For assignments that include films, screening times will be announced in advance.

Course meetings and assignments

Note: please do each day's readings in the order they are listed

PART I: THE AGE OF REFORM

Week 1: The British world in transition

Mon, Jan 23: Uniting Britain, becoming British

- Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation*, introduction – Pweb
- Philippa Levine, *The British Empire*, chapter 1

Wed, Jan 25: Industrialization

- T.W. Heyck & M. Veldman, “The Triple Revolution,” in *The Peoples of the British Isles* – Pweb
- Walter Arnstein, ed., *The Past Speaks*, chaps. 2 & 7

Fri, Jan 27: Slavery

- Levine, chap. 2
- Legacies of British Slave Ownership database: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/>

Week 2: Class, race, and gender in early Victorian Britain

Mon: Jan 30: Class society

- Harold Perkin, “The Birth of Class,” from *Origins of Modern English Society* – Pweb
- Heyck & Veldman, “The Emerging Class Society” – Pweb

Wed, Feb 1: Women in the middle and working classes

- *The Past Speaks*, ch. 8

Fri, Feb 3: Abolitionism

- *The History of Mary Prince* – <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/prince/prince.html>

Week 3: Liberalism, evangelicalism, and politics

Mon, Feb 6: The imperial dimensions of political reform

- Catherine Hall, “The Rule of Difference: Gender, Class, and Empire in the Making of the 1832 Reform Act,” in *Gendered Nations: Nationalism and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century* – Pweb
- C. Hall, “Rethinking Imperial Histories: The Reform Act of 1867” *New Left Review* I:208 (1994) – Pweb
- *The Past Speaks*, ch. 10

Wed, Feb 8: Commerce and Christianity

- Brian Stanley, “‘Commerce and Christianity’: Providence Theory, the Missionary Movement, and the Imperialism of Free Trade, 1842-1860” – JSTOR link: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2638849>

Fri, Feb 10: Assessing the Victorian era

Paper 1 due on Pweb by 4:30

Week 4: From Company to Crown rule in India

Mon, Feb 13: Liberal dilemmas

- Levine, chap 5
- Documents on the campaign to abolish *sati* – Pweb
- Stephen Hay, ed., *Sources of Indian Tradition*, pp. 25-29

Wed, Feb 15: Reporting the 1857 rebellion in India

- Documents from *The 1857 Reader* – Pweb
- *Sources of Indian Tradition*, pp. 177-186

Fri, Feb 17: Reporting the 1857 rebellion in Britain

- British sermons – Pweb
- Documents from *1857 Reader* – Pweb

PART II: THE AGE OF ANXIETY

Week 5: Imperial culture

Mon, Feb 20: The mechanics of imperialism

- Levine, chaps 6-8
- Recommended: *The Past Speaks*, chap. 12

Wed, Feb 22: Narratives of conquest

- H. Rider Haggard, *King Solomon's Mines* (entire) – available on reserve or electronically through Burling catalog and Empire Online

Friday, Feb 24: Gender and sexuality

- Levine, chap 9
- Anne McClintock, introduction to *Imperial Leather* – Pweb

Week 6: The Great War

Mon, Feb 27: Preludes to war

- Selections from Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* – Pweb
- Kenneth O. Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Britain*, chap 1

Wed, Mar 1: The war in the trenches and the home front

- *The Past Speaks*, chap. 14
- Vera Brittain & Roland Leighton letters – Pweb
- Indian soldiers' letters – Pweb

Fri, Mar 3: The war in memory

Paper 2 due on Pweb by 4:30

Week 7: The Great Depression and the interwar empire

Mon, Mar 6: Social change and tension

- Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier*, Part I
- Morgan, chaps 2 & 3 (up to p. 39)

Wed, Mar 8: Critics of empire

- Levine, chap 10
- *Sources of Indian Tradition*, pp. 84-96; 128-148 & 159-172; & all of chap. 6

Fri, Mar 10: The European Civil War

- Orwell, Part II
- Recommended: *The Past Speaks*, chap. 15

Week 8: Britain at war (again)

Mon, Mar 13: Appeasement

- Morgan, pp. 39-44
- *The Past Speaks*, chap. 16

Wed, Mar 15: WWII

- Morgan, chap 4

Fri, Mar 17:

In-class exam

SPRING BREAK

PART III: THE AGE OF DISSOLUTION

Weeks 9-12: Decolonization

From April 3 to 28, we will engage in a historical simulation of the 1945 Simla negotiations that ultimately led to the independence and partition of India and Pakistan. Separate instructions and materials are available in your course texts and will be assigned in advance, but know that you will be required to do regular reading and group work and to do two short writing assignments (deadlines will vary by role).

Week 13: Postwar Britain

Mon, May 1: From austerity to affluence

- Morgan, chap. 5
- *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (film – screening TBA)

Wed, May 3: Living the welfare state

- *The Past Speaks*, pp. 351-353 & 403-407
- *7-up!* (short film – screening TBA)

Fri, May 5: From empire to EU

- *The Past Speaks*, chap. 17

Week 14: Wrestling with multiculturalism

Mon, May 8: Immigration and politics

- Morgan, chap. 6
- Hanif Kureishi, “The Rainbow Sign” – Pweb

Wed, May 10: Northern Ireland

- *Bloody Sunday* (film – screening TBA)

Fri, May 12: Cool Britannia or Small Island?

- Morgan, chap 7
- Linda Colley, “Britishness in the 21st Century,” (Downing Street Millennium Lectures, 1999) – Pweb
- Brexit articles – Pweb

Exam Week

Wed, May 17:

Final paper due on Pweb by 4:30