

## DECOLONIZATION



HIS 334  
Spring 2018  
Mears 217

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Spring '18 office hours: Mon & Tues, 2:00-4:00 pm., & by appointment

Contrary to popular assumption, the empire of *Pax Britannica* was no more peaceful or orderly at its end than at any of its stages along the way. Indeed, the demise of empire arguably created as divided and inequitable a world as the one governed by colonial rule. In this seminar, we will examine the causes, character, and consequences of the disintegration of the British imperial world order after the Second World War, by considering some of the most engaging recent studies and historiographical debates about how decolonization unfolded in South Asia, East Africa, and the British metropole. In the second half of the semester, students will build on this framework and on the historical surveys of colonialism and postcolonialism they have encountered at the 200 level, by developing a research project on one specific aspect of decolonization.

### ***Course objectives***

Students in this course will learn to engage with and produce original historical knowledge, by:

- Identifying and analyzing a body of primary sources
- Synthesizing and critiquing a body of secondary sources
- Establishing the larger significance of an argument, whether contextual, theoretical or interpretive
- Framing and developing a sustained analytical progression through clear prose and logical organization
- Workshopping and presenting their findings within a peer community

**Course texts** (available in the college bookstore or through other sellers, or on reserve in Burling)

- Nicholas J. White, *Decolonisation: The British Experience since 1945* (Routledge, 2014)
- Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India & Pakistan* (Yale, 2017)
- Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* (Holt, 2005)

Other required readings will be available on Pweb or online. You must always make sure to always bring your own, annotated, hard copy of the readings to class each day.

### **Course requirements**

#### Class participation and citizenship:

Each of you is responsible for doing your part to make our class discussions and research group meetings productive and provocative. This means engaging closely with the assigned texts, thinking carefully about the assigned questions in advance, sharing your responses to the texts and questions in class, and building on your peers' perspectives to develop an interesting discussion. For every secondary source (i.e. scholarly treatment of history in a book, article, or lecture), you should address the following questions:

- 1) Who is the author?
- 2) What is the historical question/problem the author is posing?
- 3) What is the answer to that question? Where does the author state his/her thesis?
- 4) What previous and/or dominant views on this topic is the author adding to or arguing against? What is the larger significance of the revised, "correct" interpretation?
- 5) What is the broader interpretive and historical context in which the author is working? How does the author's particular story shed light on a larger story?
- 6) What sources & methods of reading them does the author employ as evidence? Are any key terms and concepts used to frame the analysis?
- 7) How does the author organize the discussion and develop the argument throughout the article or book? What is the "road map" of the study?
- 8) What points of overlap or conflict emerge when you hold this piece up to other readings assigned for that day, and/or to other readings we have encountered in the course?

Additionally, each of you will be responsible for crafting specific discussion questions about one of the scholarly books we are reading as a group, to be assigned in the first week of class. These questions should be vetted with me in advance and posted on the P-web discussion board by 7 pm the night before the class when we will be discussing the book.

#### Research project:

You will use the majority of the semester to develop a paper of original research, during which time group meetings will center on the craft of historical writing through various stages of scaffolding. The outcome of this project should be a critical, article-length essay (6000 words, 20-25 pages), which uses primary sources to develop a historical argument and secondary sources to situate this argument in a larger historical context and field of scholarly inquiry.

Final grades will be evaluated according to the following distribution:

- Participation (class preparation & contribution, discussion questions, and peer review feedback): 40%
- Stages of the research paper, including proposals, bibliographies, partial and full drafts, & presentation: 30%
- Final draft: 30%

***Disabilities***

Grinnell College makes reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students need to provide documentation to the Coordinator for Student Disability Resources, John Hirschman, located on the 3rd floor of the Rosenfield Center (x3089) and discuss your needs. Students should then notify me within the first few days of classes so that we can discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course and coordinate your accommodations.

***Policy on electronic devices***

Please refrain from using all electronic devices in class unless you have been given explicit permission to do so (e.g. for purposes of accommodation), except during research group meetings. If you have any questions about whether/how this policy applies to you, please feel free to come talk with me.

***Religious observance***

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.

### ***Schedule of Class Meetings and Assignments***

*Note: class begins at 8:30 am unless otherwise noted below*

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#### **Contextualizing & conceptualizing the end of empire**

Mon, Jan 22

Course intro

Wed, Jan 24

Martin J. Wiener, "The Idea of 'Colonial Legacy' and the Historiography of Empire," *Journal of the Historical Society* 13:1 (2013), 1-32—Pweb.

Mon, Jan 29

Nicholas White, *Decolonisation* (chapters 1-7)

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#### **The partitioned nation in South Asia**

Wed, Jan 31

Ranajit Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India," *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 37-44—Pweb

Mon, Feb 5

Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition* (all)

Wed, Feb 7

Class meets in Burling. We will be working with the *Transfer of Power* collection to test Khan's and Guha's theses against primary sources.

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#### **Insurgency & counter-insurgency in East Africa**

Mon, Feb 12

Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning* (all)

Wed, Feb 14

*Assignment: Research the initial reception of Elkins's book around the intellectual community. Please locate and critique at least two reviews of the book: one in a scholarly historical journal, and the other in a broader venue (such as the New York Review of Books, Times Literary Supplement, etc; if the review includes a subsequent blog discussion, so much the better). The main questions you are trying to answer are: What has been the main source of controversy about Elkins's study? Which criticisms do you find fair or compelling, and which strike you as unreasonable or unjustified?*

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## Decolonization “at home”

Mon, Feb 19

- Stephen Howe, “Flakking the Mau Mau Catchers,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 39, no. 5 (2011), 695–697; David M. Anderson, “Mau Mau in the High Court and the ‘Lost’ British Empire Archives: Colonial Conspiracy or Bureaucratic Bungle?,” *Ibid.*, 699–716; Caroline Elkins, “Alchemy of Evidence: Mau Mau, the British Empire, and the High Court of Justice,” *Ibid.*, 731–748;—Pweb
- “Roundtable: Archives of Decolonization,” *American Historical Review* 120, no. 3 (June 2015). Please focus on the Elkins article—find & print.

Note: Class meets in Burling. We will be working with the *British Documents on the End of Empire* series and considering whether the Hanslope archive revelations and the high court case vindicated Elkins of her critics’ charges.

Wed, Feb 20

For this class you will need to read critically one of the following articles (to be assigned):

- Marc Matera, “Colonial Subjects: Black Intellectuals and the Development of Colonial Studies in Britain.” *Journal of British Studies* 49:2 (2010), 388-418—find & print
- Chris Waters, “Dark Strangers in our Midst: Discourses of Race and Nation in Britain, 1947-1965.” *Journal of British Studies*, 35:2 (1997), 207-238—find & print
- Wendy Webster, “‘There’ll Always Be an England’: Representations of Colonial Wars and Immigration, 1948-68.” *Journal of British Studies* 40:4 (2001), 557-584—find & print
- Jordanna Bailkin, “The Postcolonial Family? West African Children, Private Fostering, and the British State,” *Journal of Modern History* 81.1 (2009): 87-121—find & print.

In class, you will work in groups to articulate what, together, these articles show and what tensions and debates they prompt.

## Gendering decolonization

Mon, Feb 26

- Philippa Levine talk: <http://histoire-politique.fr/index.php?numero=11&rub=autres-articles&item=53>
- Urvashi Butalia, “Legacies of Departure: Decolonization, Nation-Making, and Gender,” in Philippa Levine, ed., *Gender and Empire* (Oxford, 2004), 203-219—Pweb

## Research & source analysis (I)

Assignment: Please write a (roughly) one-page **preliminary proposal** identifying your topic and research question, and the main primary source base you will use to answer the question. The proposal must demonstrate your access to the chosen primary sources. Email your proposal as a Word document to the rest of the class by noon on Tuesday Mar 6. Then read and reflect on all the other proposals in preparation for Wednesday, and be prepared to offer constructive comments and questions.

Wed, Feb 28 & Mon, Mar 5

Individual research tutorials in Burling.

Wed, Mar 7

Discuss preliminary proposals; research groups assigned.

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## Research & source analysis (II)

*Assignment:* Email your **bibliography of secondary sources** to me and your group members by noon the day before your group is meeting. Put a star next to the most important sources and briefly annotate them. At the start of your bibliography, please include a 1-2 paragraph introduction that addresses the following: What have the secondary sources already shown about your topic, what kind of debate or discrepancy do they reveal, and what questions, problems, gaps, or angles do they offer for further investigation and analysis? How will you test out certain premises against your primary source base? Please bring a copy of each bibliography in the group, including your own, to the meeting.

Mon, Mar 12

8:00-8:55 Research group A meets in my office to discuss secondary sources

8:55-9:50 Research group B meets in my office to discuss secondary sources

Wed, Mar 14

8:00-8:55 Research group C meets in my office to discuss secondary sources

8:55-9:50 Research group D meets in my office to discuss secondary sources

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## SPRING BREAK

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## Conceptualizing & framing

*Assignment:* Your **expanded proposal** (3-4 pp) should address the following questions:

- 1) What is the research question and historical problem?
- 2) How do your primary sources and method of reading them address this question?
- 3) How is the argument shaping up? (i.e. how will you answer the research question and resolve the problem?)
- 4) How is your investigation situated within the relevant historiography? Who/what are you responding to, adding to, or arguing against? What is the complicating factor or counterargument?
- 5) "Who cares?": i.e., what is the larger significance of this investigation? How will your focused study help tell a larger story?
- 6) Your paper should have 2-4 subsections. What will each section accomplish, and how will it help answer the larger question?

*Note:* this proposal will serve as the basis for writing your paper introduction.

Mon, April 2: Seminar breakfast!

Wed, April 4: Individual meetings (appointment times TBA).

Expanded proposal is due at your meeting – please bring copies for both of us (or email it to me beforehand).

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## Drafting (I)

### Assignment:

- I. Email your **introduction** (2-4 pp) to me and your group members by noon the day before your group is meeting. The introduction should articulate all of the issues you included in your revised proposal: research question, argument, historiography/counterargument, sources/methodology, larger significance, and road map. Although you may find you need to revise the introduction as you write the rest of the paper, you should use these opening paragraphs to lay out the interpretive and organizational framework of the project. Citations should be in footnotes or endnotes using Chicago Style.
- II. Group members are responsible for giving feedback to each person during our meeting. In preparation: For each paper in your group, underline and label where the author articulates the research question, thesis, historiography/counterargument, sources/methodology, larger significance, and road map. Then, evaluate the effectiveness of each component and the effectiveness of the larger progression. Please bring a copy of each introduction in the group, including your own, to the meeting.

Mon, April 9

8:00-8:55 Research group A meets in my office to discuss introduction

8:55-9:50 Research group B meets in my office to discuss introduction

Wed, April 11

8:00-8:55 Research group C meets in my office to discuss introduction

8:55-9:50 Research group D meets in my office to discuss introduction

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## Drafting (II)

### Assignment:

- I. Email **one complete section of the body of your paper** to me and your group members by noon the day before your group is meeting. Make sure it has an introductory paragraph to frame the section and a concluding one that sums it up and transitions to the next section. Citations should be in footnotes or endnotes using Chicago style.
- II. Group members are then responsible for giving feedback to each person during our meeting. How effectively does the section develop a piece of the paper's central argument? Please bring a copy of each paper in the group, including your own, to the meeting.

Mon, April 16

8:00-8:55 Research group A meets in my office to discuss body section

8:55-9:50 Research group B meets in my office to discuss body section

Wed, April 18

8:00-8:55 Research group C meets in my office to discuss body section

8:55-9:50 Research group D meets in my office to discuss body section

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**Drafting (III)**Assignment:

- I. *Email the **next complete section of the body of your paper** to me and your group members by noon the day before your group is meeting. Make sure it has an introductory paragraph to frame the section and a concluding one that sums it up and transitions to the next section. Citations should be in footnotes or endnotes using Chicago style.*
- II. *Group members are then responsible for giving feedback to each person during our meeting. How effectively does the section develop a piece of the paper's central argument? Please bring a copy of each paper in the group, including your own, to the meeting.*

Wed, April 23

8:00-8:55 Research group A meets in my office to discuss body section

8:55-9:50 Research group B meets in my office to discuss body section

Wed, April 25

8:00-8:55 Research group C meets in my office to discuss body section

8:55-9:50 Research group D meets in my office to discuss body section

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**Drafting (IV)**Mon, April 30. No group meetings. I will be available for consultation in my office during class time.Wed, May 2. No group meetings. **\*Complete draft due to me via email by noon.\****I will be evaluating your draft on the following criteria:*

- 1) Argument: *Is the thesis stated clearly and persuasively?*
  - 2) Framework: *Does your introduction situate this argument in a compelling research question, historical context, historiographical dialogue, primary source base, and "road map" of the body of the paper?*
  - 3) Organization and prose: *Do you develop the argument clearly and cohesively throughout the paper, through a logical progression of ideas and evidence, effective transitions, and a clear and error-free use of language?*
  - 4) Evidence: *Are the different components of the argument convincingly borne out by your use of sources, properly cited in footnotes using Chicago style? Do any components need to be developed further?*
  - 5) Broader significance: *Is it clear why the reader should care about your study? What does your individual angle reveal about some broader aspect of decolonization?*
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**Revising & presenting**

Mon, May 7: Presentations (Research Groups A & B will present to the full class) – starts at 8:00 am

Wed, May 9: Presentations (Research Groups C & D will present to the full class) – starts at 8:00 am

Thurs, May 19: **\*Final paper due via email by 5:00.\***

Remember that your final draft document must include tracked changes!!