HIST 73900
Britain and the World, 1750- Present

Timothy Alborn
Mondays 6:30-8:30

This course explores different channels of intercourse between Great Britain and the rest of the world between 1750 and the present. It opens with surveys of Britain's ambivalent location between America and Europe, its status an imperial power in the nineteenth century, and its changing role in the world since then. It then discusses spaces, goods, and people that have travelled, framed, and settled in and among British territories and trade partners: including colonial America and the US, India, Ireland, Jamaica, and Canada.

Learning objectives: Each unit in the course will enable students to draw connections between colonial practices and policies and their counterparts in the British Isles. Each of the three assignments accompanying the three final units (described below) will enable students to learn and apply a specific skill to the study of British history: historiography, fluency with primary-source databases, and constructive criticism.

1 (due March 6; ungraded): submit a sample syllabus for an undergraduate course on the history of modern Britain, including paper assignments and exam questions.

2 (due April 3): compare and contrast two different readings from the “Spaces” unit, either within the same week or from different weeks.

3 (due May 1): pick a commodity (e.g., gold, linen, hoop skirts, umbrellas) that possesses a cultural resonance of interest to you. Using available electronic primary-source databases (including ARTstor, Google Books, ECCO, The Economist, and the Making of the Modern World), collect at least ten documents from each of four different decades (i.e. at least forty in all) that refer in an historically interesting and coherent way to this commodity. Besides submitting your documents, you will write two short papers: one outlining why you chose your commodity, and the other sketching out how you might go about writing a paper based on these sources.

4 (due May 22): Using Dissertation Abstracts and EThOS (Electronic Thesis Online Service, available through the British Library), find a chapter from a recent Ph.D. thesis on British history. Pretend it was submitted to a journal for publication, and that the journal asked you to be a referee, and submit your referee report.

The final grade in the course will consist of assignments 2-4, and class participation, in equal proportion (25% each).

All books and articles will either be available on reserve at the Graduate Center Library or on Blackboard. My office hours will be Wednesdays from 5:00 to 6:30. I will also be free to meet with students after class or at Lehman College by appointment. The best way to reach me is by email, at timothy.alborn@lehman.cuny.edu, and my phone number during the week is 718-960-2267.
Course Schedule

January 30: introduction

February 6: Between Europe and America


Brendan Simms, Britain’s Europe: A Thousand Years of Conflict and Cooperation (London: Penguin, 2016), chs. 4-5 (40pp)

February 15: Britain and its empire in the 19th century
(NOTE: Wednesday classes follow a Monday schedule)

James Vernon, Distant Strangers How Britain Became Modern( (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2014), entire (166pp). On reserve at Graduate Center Library.


Simms, Britain’s Europe, ch. 6 (30 pp.)

February 20: No classes (President’s Day)

February 27: Britain and the world in the 20th century


Simms, Britain’s Europe, chs. 7-10 (100 pp)

Levine, The British Empire, chs. 10-11 (45 pp) plus my filled-in Routledge questionnaire (on Blackboard)

Spaces

March 6: creating the social in Britain


**March 13:** between state and society


**March 20:** colonial spaces


**Things**

**March 27:** commodities


**April 3:** globalization


April 10-18: no cases (Spring Break)

**People**

**April 20** capitalist subjects in Britain

(NOTE: Thursday classes follow a Monday schedule)


**April 24**: capitalist subjects in the colonies


Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (London: Routledge, 1992), chs. 9-10 (90 pp). On reserve at Graduate Center Library.


**May 1**: settlers


**May 8**: gender, society and the state


**May 15: gender and empire**

