

**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 as 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](mailto: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

Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). On reserve at Graduate Center Library.

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.

Review of *Distant Strangers* by Timothy Alborn, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (on Blackboard).

Philippa Levine, *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2007), chs. 1-5, 9 (100 pp). 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

Kenneth O. Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Britain: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Available as an ebook using your CUNY barcode.

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

Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), introduction, chs. 1, 5, 10, conclusion (135 pp). On reserve at Graduate Center Library.

E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present* 38 (1967): 56-97. Available on Blackboard.

James Vernon, "The Ethics of Hunger and the Assembly of Society: The Techno-Politics of the School Meal in Modern Britain," *American Historical Review* 110 (2005): 693–725. Available on Blackboard.

**March 13:** between state and society

E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd," *Past and Present*, 50 (1971): 76-136. Available on Blackboard.

Douglas Hay, "Property, Authority, and the Criminal Law," in Hay et al. (eds.), *Albion's Fatal Tree* (New York: Pantheon, 1975), pp. 17-63. Available on Blackboard.

R.J. Morris, "Voluntary Societies and British Urban Elites 1780-1850: An Analysis," *Historical Journal* 26 (1983): 95-118. Available on Blackboard.

Timothy Alborn, "Senses of Belonging: the Politics of Working-Class Insurance in Britain, 1880-1914." *Journal of Modern History* 73 (2001): 561-602. Available on Blackboard.

Susan Pedersen, "Gender, Welfare and Citizenship in Britain during the Great War," *American Historical Review*, 95 (1990), 983-1006. Available on Blackboard.

**March 20:** colonial spaces

Kathleen Wilson, "Re-thinking the Colonial State: Gender and Governmentality in the Eighteenth Century British Empire," *American Historical Review* 116 (2011): 1294-1322. Available on Blackboard.

Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), introduction, chs. 2-4, 8 (160 pp). On reserve at Graduate Center Library.

**Things**

**March 27:** commodities

Jennifer L. Anderson, *Mahogany: The Costs of Luxury in Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), Introduction, chs. 1-5, 7 (220 pp). On reserve at Graduate Center Library.

Timothy Alborn, "An Irish El Dorado: Recovering Gold in County Wicklow," *Journal of British Studies* 50 (2011): 359-380. Read submitted draft, referee comments, and published version (all available on Blackboard).

Erika Rappaport, "Packaging China: Foreign Articles and Dangerous Tastes in the Mid-Victorian Tea Party," in Frank Trentmann (ed.), *The Making of the Consumer: Knowledge, Power and Identity in the Modern World* (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 125-146. Available on Blackboard.

**April 3:** globalization

Christine Kinealy, *The Great Irish Famine: Impact, Ideology, and Rebellion* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), chs. 2, 4 (60 pp). On reserve at Graduate Center Library.

Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London: Verso, 2001), 1-59, 141-175, 277-340. On reserve at Graduate Center Library.

Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2013), chs. 9-10 (60 pp). Available on Blackboard.

April 10-18: no cases (Spring Break)

## People

**April 20** capitalist subjects in Britain  
(NOTE: Thursday classes follow a Monday schedule)

Martin Wiener, "Market Culture, Reckless Passion and the Victorian Reconstruction of Punishment," in T.L. Haskell and R.F. Teichgraber III (eds) *The Culture of the Market: Historical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 136-160. Available on Blackboard.

Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001), entire. On reserve at Graduate Center Library.

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

David Northrup, *Indentured Labor in the Age of Imperialism, 1834-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), chs. 1-3 (80pp). On reserve at Graduate Center Library.

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.

Thomas Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832-1938* (Johns Hopkins, 1992), ch. 10 and epilogue (60 pp). On reserve at Graduate Center Library.

**May 1:** settlers

Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), ch. 5. Available on Blackboard.

Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Postwar Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), ch. 2 (40 pp). Available on Blackboard.

James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 1-24, 106-218, 456-501. Available as an ebook using your Graduate Center barcode.

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

Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), chs. 5, 7, conclusion (70 pp). On reserve at Graduate Center Library. Also available as an ebook using your Graduate Center barcode.

C.K. Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman* (London: Virago, 1986). On reserve at Graduate Center Library.

**May 15: gender and empire**

Mrinalini Sinha, *Spectres of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), introduction, chapters 1-2, 5, epilogue (170 pp). On reserve at Graduate Center Library.

John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-class Home in Victorian England* (Yale, 1999), ch. 8 (25 pp). Available on Blackboard.

Jordanna Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), ch. 2 (40 pp). Available on Blackboard.