

HIST 381 Modern Britain, 1815–Present
 Harlaxton, Spring 2009, 1:10–2:00 MTuTh, Seminar Room 1
 Newton Key, Eastern Illinois University

Studies British politics and society during a period of remarkable change, as Britain acquired the biggest empire in human history and then lost it, while progressing from being a country that fought wars with its European neighbors to one that was close to the heart of the European Union. Covers religion, gender, race, sport, art, and literature.

This course provides a narrative of British history from the era of the British reaction to the French Revolution and Napoleon through the counter-revolution of Margaret Thatcher and beyond to the sunny vistas(?) of New Labour. It stresses the social, economic, and even religious bases of struggles about parliamentary democracy and imperial domination. It also provides a chance to understand the contemporary issues in Britain from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries by using primary documents. Prerequisite: sophomore standing or History 112 or 317 or permission of instructor. It presumes no previous background in English or British history.

Goals:

1. Develop an understanding of the basic narrative of modern British history (1815-2000)
2. Compare/contrast the British basic narrative to periods and concepts of modern European/World history: industrial revolution, political revolution and stability, parliamentary democracy, urbanization, social class, war, decolonialism
3. Discuss and write about the relation between ideas and action, between the intellectual elite and socio-economic realities
4. Understand and use some of the most interesting primary sources and secondary works on 19th and 20th century British history
5. Three themes:
 - a. **Industrious Britain and Social Class**
 - b. **The Rise and Fall of Imperial Britain**
 - c. **The Experience of War (the relation between the home front and the trenches)**



Victorian wallpaper featuring the Crystal Palace (post-1851)

Course outline:

week 1. Dickens's Britain

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|----|-------|----------------------------|
| M | 01/12 | Introduction |
| T | 01/13 | Dickens, Book 1, chs. I-IV |
| Th | 01/15 | Arnstein, ch. 1 |

week 2. Industrious Britain: The First Modern Society

M 01/19 Arnstein, ch. 2
 T 01/20 Dickens, Book 1, chs. V-X
 Th 01/22 Dickens, Book 1, chs. XI-XVI

week 3. Parliamentary Reform and Reformers, 1815-1840s

M 01/26 Arnstein, ch. 3
 T 01/27 Dickens, Book 2, chs. I-VI
 Th 01/29 Dickens, Book 2, chs. VII-XII

week 4. Age of Prosperity or Age of Gradgrind?

M 02/02 Arnstein, ch. 5
 T 02/03 Dickens, Book 3
 Th 02/05
 F 02/06 **Hard Times and Industrial Britain paper due**

week 5. "Gladstoneandisraeli": Victorian Social Consensus, 1850s-1880s

M 02/09 Arnstein, ch. 8
 T 02/10
 [W 02/11 British Studies Examinations; long weekend begins after Exam]

week 6. The Irish Question

M 02/16 Arnstein, ch. 9
 T 02/17
 Th 02/19

week 7. Victorian Empire

M 02/23 Arnstein, pp. 114-20 and ch. 10
 T 02/24
 Th 02/26 **Mid-Term Exam**

week 8. Liberalism *versus* Socialism, 1890s-1914

M 03/02 Arnstein, ch. 12
 T 03/03 Graves, chs. I-IX
 [W 03/04 British Studies Field Trip to Belvoir Castle and Southwell Workhouse]
 Th 03/05



Map of the British Empire (1886)

Revisions March 23, 2009

week 9. The Killing Front, 1914-1918

- M 03/09 Arnstein, ch. 13
- T 03/10 Graves, chs. X-XV
- Th 03/12 Arnstein, ch. 14; Graves **pre-assignment due**

week 10. The Long-Weekend and the Slump, 1919-1935

- M 03/16 Arnstein, ch. 15
- T 03/17 Graves, chs. XVI-XXIV
- Th 03/19 Arnstein, ch. 16

week 11. Storm Clouds

- M 03/23 Handout on appeasement [all days for which there are no readings: work on presentations, papers, and *Our Longest Days* by Mass Observation]
- T 03/24 Arnstein, ch. 17; Mass Observation, 1939

week 12. Britain's War, 1935-1945

- M 03/30
- T 03/31 Arnstein, ch. 18 [Graves and *The Times* **presentation**; Ms. Sokol]
- Th 04/02 Home Front
- F 04/03 [Graves and *The Times* **paper due**; Ms. Sokol]

week 13. The People's Peace and *I'm all Right Jack*, 1945-1960s

- M 04/06 Mass Observation, 1945
- T 04/07 Arnstein, ch. 19; **Mass Observation presentations** [Mr. Presley, 1942, Ms. Wise, 1944]
- Th 04/09 Arnstein, ch. 20; **Mass Observation presentations** [Ms. Boehm, 1940, Lindahl, 1941, Sokol, 1943; **MO papers due**, all]

week 14. Devolution and a not so united kingdom?

- M 04/13 Arnstein, pp. 425-429, 457-459, 471-474 [**Post-1945 presentations**: Mr. Presley, Ms. Wise, Boehm, Lindahl]
- T 04/14 Arnstein, pp. 436-455 [**Post-1945 papers due**: Mr. Presley, Ms. Wise, Boehm, Lindahl]
- Th 04/16 Conclusion and Review

Final Exam

- Su 04/19, 1pm-3pm



Grading:

Everyone will write three typed, double-spaced essays: (1) one contextualizing Dickens's *Hard Times* in mid-19th century Britain (5 page, 15%); (2) a research/analysis paper using *Good-Bye to All That: An Autobiography* by Robert Graves and *The Times* (6-7 page, 25%); and (3) an analysis of Britain's wartime experience focusing on one year between 1939-1945 (4 page and presentation, 10%). The essays should be typed, double-spaced, and use a clear and consistent form of referencing (see preferred citation guide, <http://ux1.eiu.edu/~nekey/citate.htm>). The essays are relatively brief, but should be focused and thoughtful.

There will be a mid-term (15%) and a final exam (20%). The mid-term and final will consist of mapping, multiple-choice, short-answer, and/or analysis of excerpts from the assigned primary sources. Quizzes may be included as part of your participation grade (notice and particulars will be given). There will be a longer essay on the final.

Participation (based on occasional in-class writing, contribution to discussions, and presentation) is required (15%). There is a Harlaxton attendance policy: "Students are allowed a maximum of three unexcused absences during the course of the semester which incur no grade penalty.... Additional unexcused absences will attract a grade penalty, namely the lowering of the student's final grade for each absence in excess of the permitted quota."

An online enhanced syllabus should soon be available (with due dates, readings, review sheets), <http://ux1.eiu.edu/~nekey/syllabi/modbrit.htm>. Any revisions to the syllabus will be limited, will be for pedagogical reasons, and will be announced in class in advance and posted on the web.

Textbooks:

Britain Yesterday and Today: 4 (History of England) by Walter L. Arnstein (2000)

Hard Times by Charles Dickens (1854)

Good-Bye to All That: An Autobiography by Robert Graves (1929, 1958)

Our Longest Days: A People's History of the Second World War by the writers of Mass Observation and Sandra Koa Wing (1939-1945, 2008)

Advising times:

M, T 9:40-10:40; and by appointment (Visiting Faculty Office; and Library). I will talk about history virtually anytime.



Honor/Honour Code:

All students have agreed to support the University of Evansville Honor Code. Students will be dealt with accordingly, if they hand in the same work to two different faculty members or hand in essays that are not their own work. The latter includes but is not limited to, the use of others' work and representing it as their own, copying or only offering slight modifications of others published work and again representing it as their own work (plagiarism) and the failure to indicate quoted materials or offer the relevant citations. Cheating on exams will not be tolerated.