

History 564, Spring 2006
Instructor: Kaarin Michaelsen

TuTh, 2:00-3:15 p.m.
222 McIver

“Rule Britannia” to “Cool Britannia”: Britain in the Twentieth Century

In 1901, Britain was the world’s sole great power, both literally – at that juncture, it ruled over nearly 400 million people on five continents – and figuratively, as a center of global finance and culture. One hundred years later, however, the picture appeared vastly different. Though Prime Minister Tony Blair and “New” Labour attempted to frame Britain as “Cool Britannia,” the epitome of post-modern cultural hipness, in reality, Britain’s place in the world had altered markedly -- the empire had all but evaporated, it had relinquished its place as the dominant global power to its former colony-turned-ally across the pond, and its society exhibited sharp cleavages along racial and class lines. Yet, in 2001 Britons still had much of which to be proud – a resurgent National Health Service, an increasingly influential role within the EU, and its status as one of the world’s oldest surviving democracies. In this course, students will examine how Britons managed – though not always successfully – to navigate the tumultuous twentieth century, focusing on how the social, political, gender, and racial boundaries established during the Victorian period were radically re-shaped by the events of the years 1901-2001.

The basic format of this course will consist of group discussions of assigned readings drawn from the work of historians (e.g. Angus Calder, Kathleen Paul), along with a variety of primary source documents written by Britons themselves (e.g. Churchill’s speeches, Beatles lyrics). Students will be expected to participate extensively in the discussions, debates, and other in-class activities throughout the semester. Assignments will consist of three short (5-7 pages for undergraduates; 8-10 pages for graduate students) essays and weekly “responses” (2 pages max) to the assigned readings.

This seminar is intended for junior and senior History majors, but individuals from other years and disciplines are very welcome to participate. While students aren’t required to have had any previous course work in British history prior to taking this class, they’ll find it useful to have a basic working knowledge (equivalent to History 223) of 20th century European history.

Required Readings

The following books are required for this course and are available for purchase at the UNCG Bookstore in Elliot University Center and at Addams Bookstore. Copies of the books will also be placed on reserve in Jackson Library.

Brittain, Vera. *Testament of Youth* (Penguin Classics)
Churchill, Caryl. *Serious Money* (Methuen)
Conroy, John. *Belfast Diary* (Beacon)
Orwell, George. *The Road to Wigan Pier* (Harvest)
Roberts, Robert. *The Classic Slum* (Penguin)

Other required reading for this class will be in the form of journal articles and short selections from other primary sources. Xerox copies of these items will be distributed in class.

Grading

Grades for this course will be assigned according to the following scheme:

- 25% -- Participation
- 20% -- Paper Assignment 1
- 20% -- Paper Assignment 2
- 20% -- Paper Assignment 3
- 10% -- Written Responses
- 5% -- Attendance

Weather Information

On days when the weather looks “iffy,” please be sure to call the UNCG Adverse Weather Line (336) 334-4000 or look on the UNCG home page (www.uncg.edu) for updates. I will also be posting notices regarding class scheduling on the course Blackboard site. If there is a delayed opening of campus that runs into our normal class time, please come to class **as soon as** the delay is over; our class meetings will run through the end of the regularly scheduled period.

Plagiarism Policy

UNCG takes the Academic Integrity Policy extremely seriously, as do I. Any work submitted that is found to contain plagiarized material will immediately receive a failing grade, and disciplinary action will be taken forthwith in accordance with the University’s policies.

Syllabus

- January 10: Introduction: From “Rule Britannia” to “Cool Britannia”
- January 12: “Land of Hope and Glory”?: Britain’s Twentieth Century

Plus Ca Change...?: Late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain, 1901-1914

- January 17: Death of a Queen, Death of an Era: Britain in 1901
- January 19: “The Sun Never Sets....”: The Empire at the Fin-de-Siecle

Reading: Langland, “Nation and Nationality: Queen Victoria in the Developing Narrative of Englishness.” In *Remaking Queen Victoria*, ed. Margaret Homans and Adrienne Munich, pp. 13-32.
Excerpts from the *Times* and *Illustrated London News* on the death of Queen Victoria (1901)
Imperialism Documents Collection, 1872-1902

- January 24, 26: Class in Edwardian Britain
- Reading:** *The Classic Slum* (1925), Chapters 1-3, 5-8
- January 31:
February 2: “Deeds, Not Words!”: The Edwardian Suffrage Movement
Votes for Women – Yes or No? In-class debate.
- Reading:** Excerpts from speeches by pro- and anti-suffragists, 1890-1913
- The Great War and the “Dark Valley,” 1914-1939***
- February 7, 9: “Goodbye to all that”: Britons and the Great War
- Reading:** Poems by Brooke, Owen, and Kipling, 1914-1918
Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (1933), Chapters TBA in class
- February 14, 16: “Puny limbs and sickly faces”: The Politics of the Hungry Thirties
- Reading:** Political manifestos by Chamberlain, Strachey, and Moseley, 1924-1932
Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), Chapters 1, 4, 5, 8, 11-13.
- February 17: **Paper 1 Due in my box in 221 McIver by 4 p.m.** (Note: This is a Friday.)
- February 21:
February 23: “Peace for our time”?: The Road to the Second World War
“Peace with honour”?: The Debate over Appeasement.
- Reading:** Excerpts from speeches by Neville Chamberlain and Winston Churchill, 1938
- “Their Finest Hour”?: Britons and the Second World War, 1939-1945***
- February 28: “The biggest mess since the Battle of Hastings!”: 1939-1941
- Reading:** Speeches by Winston Churchill on the retreat from Dunkirk and
the Battle of Britain (1940)
Orwell, “England Your England,” from *The Lion and the Unicorn*
(1941), pp. 9-55
- March 2: **Kaarin’s out of town! No Class!**
- March 7, 9: **Spring Break! No Class!**
- March 14, 16: “The People’s War”: Living Through the Blitz
- Reading:** Excerpts from *Mr. Brown’s War: A Diary of the Second World War*
(1939-1945)
Rose, “Good Time Girls and Quintessential Aliens.” In *Which People’s*

War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Britain, 1939-1945, pp. 71-106.
Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz*, Chapters 1-3, 5, and 6.

“You’ve Never Had It So Good”?: Post-War Britain, 1945-1979

March 21: “Let Us Face the Future!”: Building the “New Jerusalem”
March 23: “Defying this nuclear madness”: Britain and the Cold War

Reading: Beveridge, “The Report on Social Insurance” (1942)
Labour Party, “Let Us Face the Future: A Declaration of Labour Policy for the Consideration of the Nation” (1945)
Priestley, “Britain and the Nuclear Bombs,” *New Statesman* 54:1390 (2 November 1957)
Russell, *Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare* (1955), pp. 29-58, 65-92

March 24: **Paper 2 Due in my box in 221 McIver by 4 p.m.** (Note: This is a Friday.)

March 28, 30: Imperial Legacies: De-Colonization, Immigration, and Racism

Reading: Powell, “Rivers of Blood Speech” (1968)
Paul, “Communities of Britishness: Migration in the Last Gasp of Empire.” In *British Culture and the End of Empire*, Ed. Stuart Ward, pp. 180-199
Lahiri, “South Asians in Post-Imperial Britain: De-Colonization and Imperial Legacy.” In *British Culture and the End of Empire*, pp. 200-214
Churchill, “A Protest Against Britain’s ‘Shameful Flight’ from India” (1947)
Cripps, “Statement on India” (1942)
Attlee, “Policy in India” (1946)

April 4: “Anarchy in the UK”: Punks, Hooligans, and Social Unrest in the 1970s
April 6: “Sunday Bloody Sunday”: The Intractable Problem of Northern Ireland

Reading: Lyrics from the Sex Pistols, Clash, Kinks, and Beatles (1968-1979)
Buford, “Dusseldorf,” from *Among the Thugs* (1992)
Conroy, *Belfast Diary* (1987)

Britain in a Post-Modern World, 1979-2001

April 11, 13: The Thatcher Revolution, “New” Labour, and “Cool Britannia”

Reading: Thatcher, “Speech to the Conservative Party Conference, 1975”
Blair, “Speech to the Labour Party Conference, 1997”
Churchill, *Serious Money* (1987)

April 18, 20: Imagining the “New,” Multi-cultural, Multi-ethnic Britain

Reading: Kureishi, "My Son the Fanatic"
Moore, "Time for a more liberal and 'racist' immigration policy," *The Spectator* (19 October 1991)
Waldman, "Seething Unease Shaped British Bombers' Newfound Zeal," *The New York Times* (31 July 2005)
Rushdie, "The new empire within Britain," *New Society* (December 1984)
Alibhai-Brown, *Imagining the New Britain*. Introduction and Chapters 1, 4, and 5

April 25: Britain and "Britishness" in the 21st Century

Reading: Excerpts from *Cool Britannia?: What Britishness Means to Me*

April 28: **Final Paper Due in my box in 221 McIver by 4 p.m.**