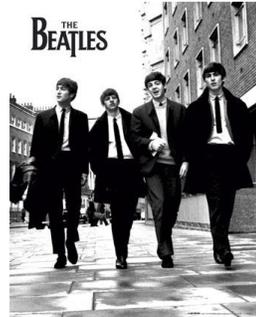
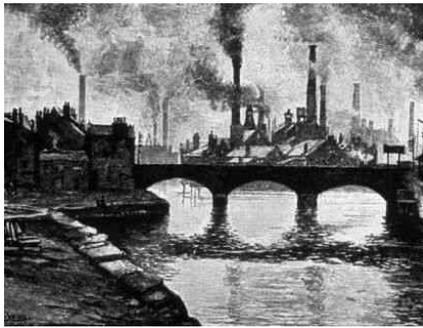


**History 051:  
Modern Britain, 1700–2015: Empire, Industry, Democracy  
University of Pennsylvania  
Spring 2017  
Prof. Alex Chase-Levenson**



In this course, we will investigate the extraordinary story of Britain’s rise to global predominance and the question of its “decline” in the twentieth century. Our readings and discussions will engage with dominant ideas, social processes, and popular beliefs; we will look at the structure of government and the texture of everyday lives. We will encounter Britons in all corners of the world even as we explore the complexities of metropolitan British history. Big ideas were born there: industrial capitalism, political liberalism, and scientific racism. Britain’s political system, with its early form of (limited) democracy, gave shape to party politics around the world.

We begin in the early eighteenth century—focusing on the agricultural and social changes that accompanied the onset of the industrial Revolution. We’ll examine the rise of the Hanoverian fiscal-military state, and its consolidation and transformation in the course of the Napoleonic Wars. We end in the present day, looking at a Britain which may have lost an Empire, but which retains a strong welfare state, a global cultural presence, and a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Should we understand its rise and subsequent retraction as a story of an ascent and a decline? We will interrogate that narrative throughout the semester. The course moves roughly chronologically, but by way of discrete units that provide different perspectives on British politics, economics, and culture.

Ellis Wasson’s *A History of Modern Britain: 1714 to the Present* will serve as our course textbook. The remainder of the reading will be a **combination** of primary and secondary sources. The reading each week will be roughly 100 pages; in return, you are expected to read thoroughly and come to class prepared to discuss all of the authors we encounter.

**Requirements:** Three “thought papers” (15%); 5 page paper on a novel (15%); midterm exam (20%), final exam (30%), and participation in discussions (20%).

The **thought papers** will be in response to a question posed at the end of each of our eight units. For whichever three units you choose, you will write a 3–4 page response to this question, integrating both primary and secondary readings from the previous week.

The **paper on a novel** will be due on the last day of class. You will be asked to closely read a novel or major intellectual work that illustrates significant themes in modern British history. You will write a review paper that connects it to broader narratives within the course. You can suggest your own idea for a book, but you should vet it with your TA. Otherwise, you should choose one of these:

Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South*  
Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*  
H. Rider Haggard, *She or King Solomon's Mines*

Evelyn Waugh, *A Handful of Dust*  
E.M. Forster, *Howard's End*  
Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*

## British News

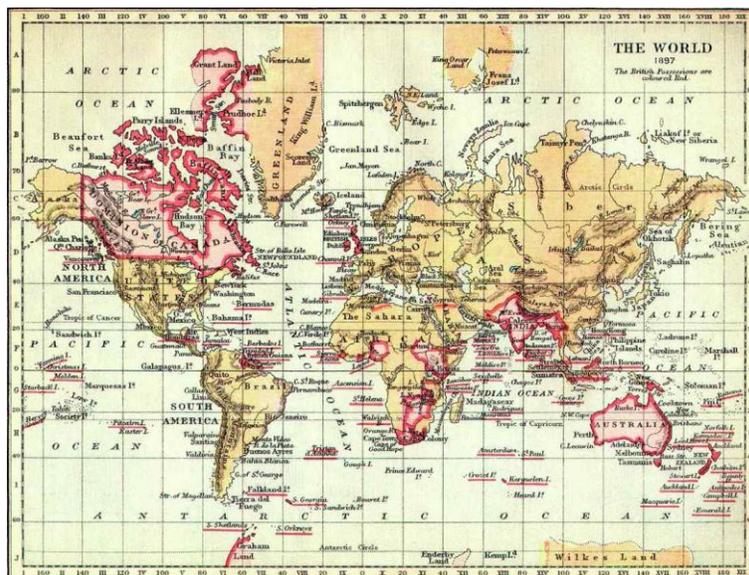
In surveying British history from the eighteenth century to the present, this course aims to connect students to modern Britain as it exists today. You are encouraged to read British newspapers (such as the *Guardian*, the *Daily Telegraph*, or the website of the BBC) that are available online. As part of your participation grade, once in the course of the semester you must bring in a news story about modern Britain that you think relates to one of the big themes of the class (for example, class, the evolution of party politics, changing meanings of Britishness, or the legacy of the Empire) and talk about it for five minutes.

## Books Available for Purchase at the Penn Book Center (34<sup>th</sup> and Sansom)

Ellis Wasson, *A History of Modern Britain: 1714 to the Present*  
Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*  
George Orwell, *Road to Wigan Pier*  
John Osborne, *Look Back in Anger*

## Disability Policy:

If you have a disability that will affect your performance in the course in some way please let me know at the beginning of the semester.



## Unit 1: The “Old Regime” and the Growth of Industry

### Jan. 12<sup>th</sup>: Course Introduction

### Jan. 17<sup>th</sup>: Britain’s “Old Regime”: From the Act of Union to the American Revolution

Reading: Wasson, Chs. 1 and 2  
Voltaire, *Letters from England* (Letters 5, 9, 10, and 11)  
Donald Macleod, “Gloomy Memories” of the Highland Clearances  
(Selections)

### Jan. 19<sup>th</sup>: From Fiscal-Military State to the Birth of Industry

Reading: Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (Pt. 1, “Of the Division of Labor”)  
David Ricardo, *On the Principles of Political Economy* (Ch. 5: “On Wages”)  
Thomas Malthus, *Essay on the Principle of Population* (Selections)

### Jan. 24<sup>th</sup>: The City: Culture, Industry, and Radicalism

Reading: James Boswell, *London Journal* (Selections)  
John Wilkes, *North Briton* 45 (Selections)  
Friedrich Engels, *Condition of the Working-Class in England* (Selections)

### Jan. 26<sup>th</sup>: Industry, Class, and The Birth of Consumer Culture

Reading: Neil McKendrick, “Josiah Wedgwood and the Commercialization of the Potteries” in McKendrick, Brewer, and Plumb, eds. *Birth of a Consumer Society* [1982]

**Unit 1 Response Question:** To what extent did industrial capitalism exacerbate existing tensions and reconfigure social classes in this society?

## Unit 2: Political Reform

### Jan. 31<sup>st</sup>: The War with Napoleon

Reading: Wasson, Ch. 3  
James Gilray Political Cartoons (See Canvas site)

### Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup>: Emancipations: Slaves, Catholics, Jews, and Early Victorian Moral Politics

Reading: British Library Abolitionism Primary Sources Archive  
(<http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/campaignforabolition/sources/antislavery/antislaverysources.html>)

**Feb. 7<sup>th</sup>: 1832 and its Chartist Discontents: The Revolution that Never Was**

Reading: Wasson, Ch. 5  
Thomas Carlyle, *Chartism*, (Chs. 1, 3, 6–9)  
T.B. Macaulay, *Parliamentary Speeches on Reform* (1831)

**Feb. 9<sup>th</sup>: Utilitarianism, The Poor Law, and the Condition of England Question**

Reading: Harriet Martineau's *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated* (Selections)  
J.S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, (Selections)

**Feb. 14<sup>th</sup>: Liberalism and “The Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government”**

Reading: Wasson, Ch. 6  
Oliver MacDonagh, “The Nineteenth Century Revolution in Government: A Reappraisal” *Historical Journal* 1 (1958)  
Richard Cobden “Speech on the Repeal of the Corn Laws” Feb. 8<sup>th</sup>, 1844

**Feb. 16<sup>th</sup>: Gladstone and Disraeli**

Reading: Benjamin Disraeli, “Crystal Palace Speech” (1872)

**Unit 2 Response Question:** The historian Michael Bentley has controversially suggested that “at no time during this period [the 19th century] did Britain experience democracy.” What do you think he means by this? Do you agree or disagree? What drove political change in Victorian Britain: individual ideas, intolerable conditions, or party ideologies?

**Unit 3: Empire**

**Feb. 21<sup>st</sup>: The Imperialism of Free Trade and the “Pax Britannica”**

Reading: R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, “The Imperialism of Free Trade” *Economic History Review* (1953) (pp. 1–15)  
Lord Palmerston, “Civis Romanus Sum” Speech  
T.B. Macaulay, “Minute on Indian Education”

**Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup>: Imperial Resistance**

Reading: Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (“The End of General Gordon”)

*(Continued...)*

## Feb. 28<sup>th</sup>: Emigration and the Idea of “Greater Britain”

No reading this week

## March 2<sup>nd</sup>: MIDTERM EXAM

**Unit 3 Response Question:** Characterize the relationship between the metropole and the colonies in nineteenth-century Britain. What were the most important factors, in your opinion, that drove the steady expansion of the Empire in this period?

## March 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> (Spring Break)

### Unit 4: The Victorian World Picture

## March 14<sup>th</sup>: The World on Show: 1851 and Spectacle Culture

Reading: John Cole, *The Life and Theatrical Times of Charles Kean, F.S.A.* Vol. II (Ch. 1)  
John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (Ch. 6—“The Lamp of Memory”)  
Images from the Great Exhibition

## March 16<sup>th</sup>: Deep Time and Evolution

Reading: Jonathan Smith, “Huxley-Wilberforce Debate” Branch Online Collective  
([http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps\\_articles=jonathan-smith-the-huxley-wilberforce-debate-on-evolution-30-june-1860](http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=jonathan-smith-the-huxley-wilberforce-debate-on-evolution-30-june-1860)) (2013)  
Charles Darwin, *An Essay on the Origin of Species* (Selections)  
Dante Gabriel Rossetti, “The Burden of Nineveh” (1850)

## March 21<sup>st</sup>: Gender and Evangelicalism

Reading: Leonore Davidoff, “Class and Gender in Victorian England: The Diaries of Arthur J. Munby and Hannah Cullwick” in *Feminist Studies* (1979)  
Emily Patmore, *The Servant’s Behaviour Book* (Selections)

**Unit 4 Response Question:** Evaluate the role of the Church of England in Victorian culture. How did religion shape global divisions and domestic distinctions?

(Continued...)

## Unit 5: Britain and Europe

### **March 23<sup>rd</sup>: Mr. Podsnap's Complaint: Little Englanders vs. Cosmopolitans**

Reading: Bernard Porter, "Bureau and Barrack: Early Victorian Attitudes Towards the Continent" *Victorian Studies* (1984)  
Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (Selections)

### **March 28<sup>th</sup>: Great Power Politics/Diplomacy from Crimea to World War I**

Reading: Crimean War News Reports (*Illustrated London News* and *Morning Chronicle*)  
Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (Florence Nightingale chapter)

**Unit 5 Response Question:** Is it right to consider nineteenth-century Britain a European power?

## Unit 6: The Strange Death of Liberal England

### **March 30<sup>th</sup>: The Rise of Labour and the Reconfiguration of Party Politics**

Reading: Wasson, Ch. 7  
George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (Part 1)  
J. Keir Hardie, *From Serfdom to Socialism* (Selections)

### **April 4<sup>th</sup>: World War I and Irish Finale**

Reading: Wasson, Ch. 9  
David Omissi, ed., *Indian Voices from the Great War* (1999) (Letters 100, 153, 156, 209, 388, and 529)  
World War I Poems ("Break of Day in the Trenches," "Dulce et Decorum Est," "The Soldier")

### **April 6<sup>th</sup>: The Swinging '20s**

### **April 11<sup>th</sup>: The Great Depression in Britain and the Politics of Appeasement**

Reading: George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (Entire)

**Unit 6 Response Question:** Was the reconfiguration of British politics in the 1910s the inevitable result of mass enfranchisement? Did the end of the Liberal Party signify the end of nineteenth-century liberalism? If not, explain how and why.

(Continued...)

## Unit 7: The Question of Decline

### **April 13<sup>th</sup>: Churchill and World War II**

Reading: Wasson, Ch. 10

### **April 18<sup>th</sup>: The “New Jerusalem”: Building the British Welfare State**

Reading: John Osborne, *Look Back in Anger* (Entire)  
1945 Labour Party Election Manifesto “Let Us Face the Future”

Film: “7 Up” Episode 1

### **April 20<sup>th</sup>: The End of Empire: Bangs and Whimpers**

Reading: Wasson, Ch. 11  
BBC “Empire Windrush” stories  
([http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/arrival\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/arrival_01.shtml))

### **April 25<sup>th</sup>: Making “Cool Britannia”**

Reading: Michael White, “Blair Defines the New Labour” *Guardian* (Oct. 5<sup>th</sup>, 1994)  
Stryker McGuire, “This Time I’ve Come to Bury Cool Britannia,” *Guardian*  
(March 28th, 2009)

Film: *A Hard Day’s Night* (dir. Richard Lester, 1964)

**Unit 7 Response Question:** Evaluate the role of nostalgia in post-war British politics.