



SYLLABUS

Spring Semester

BRITAIN IN THE AGE OF REVOLUTION AND REFORM: 1783-1846

Instructor: Keith Surridge

Contact Hrs: 45

Language of Instruction: English

LONDON, ENGLAND

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine a period of great change in British politics, society, and in the economy. In an age greatly influenced by the revolutions in America and France, Britain itself underwent its own revolutions – the industrial and agricultural. The period covered will show how by the end Britain was on its way to becoming the economic powerhouse of the world, with a changing landscape of growing cities, enclosed fields and factories.

Politically, the system was challenged by radicalism and social unrest throughout this period. Britain had to recover from the loss of the 13 colonies, fight its last great war with France (1793-1815), and then begin to contemplate the repercussions of that war, of industrialisation and urban growth. All this culminated in the first great change to the political system in 1832. Not long after, following more social unrest owing to growing economic problems, the last major act of Robert Peel changed the economic system from mercantilism to free trade. Everywhere challenges to the accepted order were underway and this also included the area of religion. The Oxford Movement, for example, would question the right of the government to interfere in the administration of the Church of England.

Whatever the scale of these changes they were clearly perceived by contemporaries. The idea of ‘two nations’ – urban and rural; north and south – began to emerge. For some it was a time of pessimism as the urban world was unknown and unrecognised; for others, a time of optimism, of progress and improvement. Britain was set on the path that would make the country the ‘workshop of the world’.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To investigate the political, social, economic and military history of Britain between 1783 and 1832.
- To assess the impact of war and the Industrial Revolution on the British economy and society.
- To understand how British politics changed under the influence of revolution abroad.
- To appreciate how Britain’s imperial outlook changed during these times.
- To introduce new research and developments in historiography.

- To develop your skills in critical analysis through discussion in class and by written work.

Student Outcomes:

By the end of the course students are expected to:

- know the main political and social outlines and chronology of the period.
- have developed an understanding of the ways in which governments, political parties and society responded to both internal and external pressures.
- have demonstrated knowledge, skills of analysis, and communication by completing a presentation, a multiple-choice quiz, an essay, and a written examination.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY

The course will be taught by lectures, during which students will be invited to ask questions and make comments. Students will make individual class presentations on topics agreed upon earlier. DVDs will be used on occasions and the course will be complemented by experiential educational visits to museums and houses.

METHOD OF EVALUATION (GRADING)

Presentation – 15%

Mid-term biographical essay – 20%

Multiple-choice quiz – 15%

Essay – 20%

Exam – 25%

Participation – 5%

CONTRIBUTION TO DISCUSSION & PUNCTUALITY – 5% Tutor allocated. **THIS IS NOT AN ATTENDANCE MARK – THAT IS ASSUMED.**

UNEXPLAINED ABSENCES ARE NOT PERMITTED. This mark reflects the contribution you have made to class discussion. The highest grades will go to those who volunteer contributions, who help the discussions to progress fruitfully and who raise critical questions and issues. Poor punctuality will also be taken into account when assigning this grade.

PRESENTATIONS Date - by arrangement - 15%

You should give a 10-15 minute presentation on a topic agreed with the tutor. These should be on a topic of your choice that is relevant to the course. Please agree the topic and date with me in advance. Presentation choice WILL be agreed during the introductory class ... - it is in your interest to offer earlier dates so as to spread your workload. However, the topic and date are flexible and I will not hold you to your original choice. Just make sure you discuss any changes with me as soon as possible.

Marking criteria: The following are considered in awarding marks:

1. Suitability and originality of choice of topic.
2. Engagement with topic. I want to see that you have really become involved with the subject, researching its context as well as the topic itself.
3. Quality of academic content and argument. Clarity of argument is important- I recognise that you do not have much time and therefore you will have to be selective, but it what you select that matters.

4. Liveliness of presentation- informing but also engaging the audience- A style that directly communicates with your audience (eye contact) is preferred rather than something read from notes.
5. Appropriate use of visual aids and supporting material. For example, if you are talking about a geographical area that will not be familiar to people, you should try to give a map- single handouts can be passed around the group, if necessary. This supporting material should be relevant and necessary to what you are doing- for instance a film clip you choose should illustrate your argument not just be chosen randomly.

Please do not simply read off bullet points on your power point presentations!!

MID-TERM PAPER: 20%. For this you should choose a prominent figure from the first half of the course and write 5 pages about why the person you have chosen was important to the history of Britain. Students will find **The New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (New Oxford DNB)** very useful. This can be accessed on-line.

ESSAYS – 20%. This can be based on your presentation, but you will need to have a word with me about the question to consider. Alternatively, if you do not want to develop your presentation, you can write an essay on a topic agreed with me. The essay must be at least 5 sides in length and I don't mind if you go over that limit to about 7.

The sooner you can decide your essay topic the better and I will endeavour to help you with sources from my own collection. The secret is to give me plenty of notice so that I can bring in books for you.

Also, sites such as JSTOR will give you access to journal articles.

Essays based on websites are unacceptable. **DO NOT USE WEBSITES UNLESS YOU FIND ONE THAT HAS PRIMARY DOCUMENTS. YOU MUST THEN INFORM ME TO MAKE SURE IT IS ACCEPTABLE.**

QUIZ – 20%. This will be based on notes taken in class from the lectures and presentations during the course, and will be multiple-choice.

FINAL EXAMINATION. – 25%

This is a seen exam- you have the questions in advance and should be able to prepare more thoughtful and well-evidenced answers. You may not use notes in the exam. You must answer two questions within the one and a half hour period. The same essay criteria apply but you do not need to give a bibliography. **Answer two questions.**

COURSE OUTLINE

Topics are generally covered over the course of one-two weeks.

Introduction: In this first class will briefly consider the early years of the reign, those between 1760 and 1783 in order to provide context for what is to come.

Age of Pitt: 1783-1800. William Pitt the Younger became prime minister at the age of 24 and was to be the most important of the king's reign. His first task was to clear

up the economic mess left by the American Revolution, which he did, and then ensure the country was able to fight Revolutionary France. The war with France saw a major realignment of British politics and a harsh suppression of radicals who wanted to see political and social reforms implemented in England.

The Industrial Revolution: 1783-1830.

Britain was the first major power to industrialise but how far did it change the British way of life? We will examine why the industrial revolution happened; where it took place, and what this meant particularly for those people who were employed in industrial enterprises. The consequences of industrialisation, such the growth of towns and cities, will be looked at.

The Age of Nelson and Wellington: Britain at war with Napoleon: 1798-1815.

Two of Britain's greatest heroes fought the French during this period. Nelson achieved a great naval victory at Trafalgar in 1805; while Wellington fought the French in Portugal and Spain, and then defeated Napoleon at the last great battle of the wars – Waterloo. We will examine how Britain, at times alone, coped with a war that was also having a great impact on British politics and society.

Politics and war: 1806-1815.

Following Pitt's death in 1806, his successors battled with the repercussions of war and the impact of social and economic change. They also battled with each other to secure Pitt's legacy.

Ireland and Catholic Emancipation: 1783-1830.

The majority Catholic population in Ireland was downtrodden to say the least and rose in revolt in 1798. In the struggle against revolutionary and Napoleonic France, Pitt felt that Irish Catholics should be given full civil-rights to prevent them turning to France. He faced much opposition and was unable to achieve this, although Ireland did join the union and become part of the United Kingdom. The issue of Catholic emancipation remained a live issue in British politics, causing great divisions until the campaign of Daniel O'Connell, with a little help from the reactionary Duke of Wellington, finally achieved civil rights for Catholics.

Post-War politics 1815-1832.

In the aftermath of war and continuing social and economic change, political radicals protested against government policies and met with vicious reprisals. The various governments during this period had to cope with these challenges, as well as calls for Catholic emancipation and general political reforms. The economy lurched from depression, to boom, to depression again; while technological changes saw the introduction of the first passenger railway by the end of the period. We will end when the newly elected government of Earl Grey brought in great measure of political reform and quickly abolished slavery within the British Empire as well.

The Reforms of the Whigs.

The Whig governments of Earl Grey and Lord Melbourne not only changed the political system they began to change society. The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act would be a controversial response to growing problems of poverty and state handouts. The introduction of the Factory Act would see the start of government interference in economic matters, as well as social welfare.

Chartism.

The political response by those who felt the 1832 Reform Act had not gone far enough. The Chartist protests would provide the backdrop to the economic and social troubles of the 1830s and 1840s, but were they a political response, or simply about 'bread and butter' issues?

Peel and Free Trade.

The government of Robert Peel in the 1840s sought to address the issues of that decade, known to contemporaries as 'the hungry forties'. His solution was abolish the Corn Laws and usher in the age of free trade. He did this in the face of his own party's hostility leading to a split that condemned the Conservatives, as the Tories were now known, to twenty years in the political wilderness.

VISITS:

The Science Museum: this visit will provide the students with an introduction to the great technological changes that took place during the period covered. Apart from seeing one of the first steam trains ever built, they will be introduced to the main aspects of the industrial and agricultural revolutions, as well as the scientific progress of the times.

The Victoria and Albert Museum: here students will get a feel for the changes in taste and décor that the growing wealth of the upper and middle-classes could afford. The development of consumer goods reflects Britain's enormous overseas trade, which would have profound affects on the tastes of the wealthy.

Apsley House: the home of the Duke of Wellington. This visit will provide students with insights into the great man's military career, as well as his importance as a political figure and art collector.

The Historic Portsmouth Naval Base: the home of *HMS Victory*, Nelson's flagship. Nelson, the other great hero of the age, was killed on the ship during his greatest triumph, the victory over the French and Spanish fleets at Cape Trafalgar. The museum here provides a good account of Britain's naval heritage, the basis upon which Britain's economic supremacy stemmed.

Kew Palace: the last home of the mad King George III will provide students with an insight into royal life. Kew Gardens were founded during his reign and indicate Britain's increasing interest in the world's flora as new colonies, such as Australia, were established during this period.

COURSE TEXT

Hilton, Boyd (2006). *A Mad, Bad, & Dangerous People? England 1783-1846*. Oxford University Press.