THE BRITISH EMPIRE
(History 2760, Spring 2017)

Lecture times:
TR 1.25-2.15
Rockefeller Hall, 104

Instructor:
Professor Robert Travers
Email: trt5@cornell.edu
Office hours: McGraw 345, Thursday 3.30-5.30pm.

Teaching Assistant:
Lauren Jackson
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Office hours: McGraw B41, Tuesday 10:00-12:00p.m.

This course offers a survey of British imperialism from its origins to the era of decolonization in the twentieth century. How did Britain, a small northern European country, conquer, settle and rule an empire that spanned the globe? Why did the empire expand so rapidly in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and why did it decline so suddenly after 1945? Who profited from imperial rule, and who did not? What did British people think about their empire, and how did having an empire change Britain? How did colonized peoples view the empire, and how were different regions of the world affected by imperial rule? These are some of the questions we will address during lectures, sections and in our readings this term. Above all, we will keep in mind the question: why might the history of the British Empire still matter to us today?

Learning Objectives

1. Developing skills necessary for historical research and analysis, including:
   - close reading of primary and secondary sources
   - identifying the argument of a text and summarizing it in your own words
   - thinking critically about historical sources and arguments
   - writing an historical essay with a strong argument

2. Becoming well informed about the history of the British Empire, including:
   - the different phases and causes of imperial expansion and decline
   - the varied forms of imperial rule in different regions of the world
   - political philosophies of imperialism, and anti-imperialism
   - the cultural effects of imperialism, including on race and gender relations
Requirements:

Students must come to lectures and sections prepared for active participation – ready to ask questions, and to argue about the issues raised in the course; required readings listed on the syllabus must be completed before each week’s section discussion. For the mid-term and final exams, you will need to read the set texts carefully, take detailed notes on lectures and readings, and be ready to answer questions about the history of the British Empire in essay form. Attendance at lectures and sections is mandatory. The final grade will be awarded on the basis of section participation (10%), two writing assignments during the semester (40%), the mid-term (20%) and final (30%). Grades will be subject to penalties if work is submitted late, or after more than three unexcused absence from lectures and sections.

Writing Assignments

Apart from the mid-term and final, there will be two writing assignments during the term. The instructor will provide detailed instructions for both these assignments. All written work should be in twelve-point font, double-spaced, with one inch margins. All sources and references to other texts should be acknowledged using the Chicago Manual of Style, ‘notes and bibliography’ system. All students must consult the online guide to this system at: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html.

Paper one:
For the first assignment, a 4-5 page paper due on Monday 27 February by 5:00pm, you will write a report on an eighteenth century printed pamphlet relating to the British empire (using the library data-base, Eighteenth Century Collections Online). Choosing one text from a list provided by the instructor, you will need to analyze the political message and opinions about empire conveyed in your chosen source.

Paper two:
The second (final) paper will be an extended, analytical book review of a significant recent work on the history of the British Empire (from a list provided). In your review, you should both summarize the argument of your chosen text, and also develop a critical analysis, evaluating its strengths and weaknesses as a work of history. The final paper should be 6-8 pages long, and will be due on 10 May by 5.00pm.

Readings:

Readings marked with a single asterisk (*) are available for purchase in the Campus Store, and on reserve in the Uris library. Other readings are available as electronic resources through the Cornell Library website or on Blackboard. Please note: there is no textbook for this class. So that you are aware of key dates, background information, and the changing geography of empire, you are recommended to consult Nigel Dalziel, Penguin Historical Atlas of the British Empire (Penguin, 2006) – available at the Campus store.
Schedule of Lectures and Readings

1. Thursday 26 January: Introductions

Week 1
2. Tuesday 31 January: Empire in the News
3. Thursday 2 February: Kipling’s Empire

R. Kipling, ‘The Man Who Would be King’ (1888): N.B. this short story is available, with explanatory notes, through Literature Online via the Cornell Library Website.

Week 2
4. Tuesday 7 February: Making Empire, Making Britain
5. Thursday 9 February: The Early Modern World of Empires


Exercise: students will bring copies of their notes on The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh to section.

Week 3
6. Tuesday 14 February: Consolidation and Expansion, c. 1707-1763
7. Thursday 16 February: Traders as Conquerors: the Rise of British India

*Colley, The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh, 134-303

Exercise: students will bring a copy of a published review of ‘The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh’ to section.

FEBRUARY BREAK

Week 4
8. Thursday 23 February: Imperial Crisis: 1765-1783

Section this week: discussion of primary sources for 1st written assignment.

Paper (15% of final grade): 4-5 page essay analyzing an eighteenth century text about empire. (Due on Monday 27 February by 5.00pm.)

Week 5
9. Tuesday 28 February: The Growth of Imperial Liberalism c. 1780-1830
10. Thursday 2 March: Anti-Slavery and Imperial Politics

*Mary Prince, The History of Mary Prince, (1831) (Penguin, 2004), entire
Week 6
11. Tuesday 7 March: The Empire of Settlement
12. Thursday 9 March: The Age of Reform in India

Lata Mani, ‘Contentious Traditions: the Debate on Sati in Colonial India’, Cultural Critique, 7, 1987, pp. 119-56, available on Cornell Library Website, or as a ereserve on Blackboard

Week 7
13. Tuesday 14 March: Mid-Nineteenth Century Rebellions
14. Thursday 16 March: Midterm exam in class (20% of final grade)

No section

Week 8
15. Tuesday 21 March: The British Empire in the First Age of Globalization
16. Thursday 23 March: The New Imperialism and the Scramble for Africa


Week 9
17. Tuesday 28 March: Imperialism and Economic Development

*Dane Kennedy, The Highly Civilized Man. Richard Burton and the Victorian World, pp. 131-end
Benjamin Disraeli, ‘Crystal Palace Speech’ or ‘Conservative and Liberal Principles’, 1872, available via Empire Online on Cornell Library Website

SPRING BREAK

Week 10
19. Tuesday 11 April: The New Imperialism and New Anti-imperialism
20. Thursday 13 April: The First World War as an Imperial War

Sayer, ‘British Reactions to the Amritsar Massacre’, Past and Present, 131, pp. 130-164, available through Cornell Library website, or on ereserve on Blackboard

One page proposal for final paper due in class on 13 April.
Week 11
21. Tuesday 18 April: Reconfiguring Empire, 1918-39
22. Thursday 20 April: The British Empire in the Middle East


Week 12
23. Tuesday 25 April: The Second World War and Decolonization
24. Thursday 27 April: Empire and Counter-insurgency

*Compulsory movie showing: Wednesday 26 April: 7.30 pm: Black Man’s Land Trilogy (1973)*

Week 13
25. Tuesday 2 May: Late Imperial Britain
26. Thursday 4 May: The Ends of Empire

*Compulsory movie showing: Wednesday 3 May 7.30 pm: The Man Who Would be King (1975)*
Harold Macmillan, ‘Wind of Change Speech’ (1960), available via *Empire Online* on Cornell Library Website

Week 14
27. Tuesday 9 May: Imperial Legacies – a discussion

Paper 2: Final Paper (6-8 pages, 25% of final grade) due on Wednesday 10 May, by 5.00pm

**FINAL EXAM (30% final grade)**

*Statement on University Policies and Regulations:*
This instructor respects and upholds University Policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired student; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor

All the work you submit in this course must have been written for this course and not another, and must originate with you in form and content with all contributory sources fully and specifically acknowledged. Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.