



**Course Title and Number:** History of Britain 1815- present

**Instructor:** Mike Berlin

**Course Objectives:**

The last two hundred years have seen one of the most dramatic rises and falls in the fortunes of any nation. That nation is the United Kingdom of Great Britain. In 1815 Europe was reeling from the aftermath of the largest military power struggle the Continent had ever seen. The revolutionary forces of France, under the dictatorial leadership of Napoleon, had almost succeeded in crushing all opposition. British sea power was crucial in finally defeating the French and it was to buttress the ensuing world-wide imperial expansion of Britain which was to leave London as the ruler of a quarter of the world's population by the end of the nineteenth century. Since then, two world wars and the end of empire have left Britain as a medium-sized state torn between allegiance to its former colonies, America and the expanding European Union. This course will examine the key political, social and cultural developments that make up this remarkable story.

**Course Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of course students should have gained

- An overview of events in Britain from 1815-2010
- An awareness of the main and evolving frameworks of British society
- An understanding on Britain's changing place in the world
- An ability to critically analyse simple primary historical sources

**Required Text:**

Simon Schama, *A History of Britain 3: 1776-2000*.

**Further readings will include:**

**General Texts**

J. Black & D. Macrauld, *Nineteenth Century Britain*  
 I. Christie, *Wars And Revolutions: Britain 1760-1815*  
 N. Gash, *Aristocracy And People: Britain 1815-1865*  
 R. Ensor, *England 1870-1914*  
 G. Young, *Victorian England*  
 T. Lloyd, *From Empire To Welfare State: Britain 1906 To 1995*

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T. Lloyd, *The British Empire*  
 M. Daunton, *Progress And Poverty: An Economic And Social History Of Modern Britain*

### **Religion**

D. Hempton, *Religion And Political Culture In Britain And Ireland*  
 S. Greene, *Religion In The Age Of Decline, 1870-1920*  
 J. Pocock, *Barbarism And Religion, V. 2*

### **Economic And Social History**

H. Perkin, *The Origins Of Modern English Society 1780-1880*  
 L. Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880*  
 D. Canadine, *Decline And Fall Of The British Aristocracy*  
 P. Earle, *The Making Of The English Middle Class*  
 E. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men & The Making of the English Working Class*  
 E. Wrigley, *People, Cities And Wealth*  
 D. Levine, *Reproducing Families: Political Economy Of English Population Growth*  
 N. Crafts, *British Economic Growth In The Industrial Revolution*  
 P. Mathias, *The First Industrial Nation*  
 D. Landes, *Unbound Prometheus*  
 J. Yelling, *Common Field And Enclosure In England 1450-1850*  
 M. Overton, *The Agricultural Revolution In England*  
 A. Taylor, Ed., *The Standard Of Living In England In The Industrial Revolution*  
 G. Boyer, *An Economic History Of The New Poor Law*  
 G. Stedman-Jones, *Outcast London*

### **Politics And Cultural History**

J. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution And The Feudal Law*  
 G. Himmelfarb, *The Idea Of Poverty*  
 M. Wiener, *English Culture And The Decline Of The Industrial Spirit*  
 J. Smail, *The Origins Of Middle Class Culture*  
 P. Fussell, *The Great War In Modern Memory*  
 D. Thompson, *The Chartists*  
 G. Rude, *The Crowd In History*  
 P. Stansky, *The Victorian Revolution In Government*  
 D. Read, *The Age Of Urban Democracy 1868-1914*  
 J. Vincent, *The Birth Of The Liberal Party*  
 P. Levine, *Victorian Feminism*  
 G. Dangerfield, *The Strange Death Of Liberal England*  
 H. Pelling, *The Origins Of The Labour Party*  
 J. Hinton, *Labour And Socialism*  
 P. Clarke, *The Making Of The Keynesian Revolution*  
 P. Jenkins, *Mrs Thatcher's Revolution*

### **Topics covered will include:**

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- Introduction, from medieval England to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland
- The impact of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars
- The Industrial Revolution
- London: the world's largest city
- Moral values
- The British empire
- Reform movements: women's rights
- World War One
  
- The Inter-War years
- World War Two
- End of Empire
- Socialism
- The Swinging Sixties
- Thatcherism, Britain and the USA
- Devolution and Europe: the future for Britain?

**Co-curricular activities will include:**

- **Imperial War Museum or Cabinet War Rooms**  
A field trip to follow on from a 20 min DVD on the Blitz of London in WWII. Main purpose of the visit is **not** to bang the drum for Britain and "its finest hour" but to open eyes to war as part of the European historical legacy to the world. More specifically, industrial war in its nation state form which has now spread to other parts of the world on the back of Europe's empires. It prepares students for the session on Britain and Europe: Britain's view of itself as not really part of Europe, a place where foreigners lure us to our peril. Also raises the issue of the use of war as an instrument of foreign policy, something which the European Union considered incorporating in its founding charter. And who really won WWII – USA, USSR or Britain?
- **National Portrait Gallery**  
The brief of this important collection is to represent important Britons rather than the work of great artists, although the two aren't mutually exclusive. Very useful as it enables students to put faces to people they are reading and learning about.
- **City Finance walk**  
A walking tour with a professional guide which centres on the financial district of the City, explaining the importance of commerce and trade to the Square Mile from its earliest days to its present position as a global leader.
- **Docklands Walking tour**  
Docklands is the area of the old Port of London which closed in the early 70's, leaving 8 sq miles of land for re-development, chiefly as an overflow for financial services from the nearby City. Much modern architecture, the UK's tallest building and lots of landscaped waterside developments.

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**Instructional Methods:**

There will be several visits. Some of these are to be arranged in the light of changing developments in exhibitions in London and, therefore, the syllabus will be amended with specific visits when dates can be confirmed.

**Assessment Plan:**

- 30% half-term test, choice of questions on the first half of the course
- 30% 1500 word essay to be handed in by the end of the semester. Students should write an analysis in depth on three of the sources in the reading pack. This should include an introduction to key issues in the topic, explaining the strengths and weaknesses of the source and what it light it sheds on that topic or period.
- 30% final exam, choice of questions on the second half of the course
- 10% participation and attendance

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