

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
Department of History  
Semester II, 1979-80

History 124

British History: 1688 to the Present

Mr. Donnelly

Course Description

History 124 is the second half of a two-semester sequence surveying the history of England and the British empire. The course extends from the "Bloodless Revolution" of 1688 to the "Welfare State" of the late 1960s.

History 124 is concerned with the transformation of England from a thinly settled, mainly rural, economically underdeveloped, and politically unstable nation in the late 17th century into a thickly peopled and heavily urbanized country renowned for political stability in the 19th and 20th centuries. One major objective of the course will be to illuminate the process by which England achieved stable constitutional monarchy, based on a powerful elite of landed and monied families, and the ways in which this form of government peacefully evolved into a parliamentary democracy controlled by the masses. A second goal will be to explain how England harnessed its modest economic resources in such a way as to give birth to the epoch-making Industrial Revolution, and how the new industrial society moved from private enterprise and laissez-faire to socialism and the welfare state. A third objective will be to draw meaning from Britain's great extension and exploitation of empire in the 18th and 19th centuries as well as from the collapse of the imperial edifice in the 20th.

Lectures

Lectures three days per week (MWF, 12:05 a.m.), supplemented by weekly discussion meetings and/or audio-visual presentations, including films, sound filmstrips, slides, and music.

Written Assignments and Examinations

Besides a final exam, there will be either one or two hour exams, depending upon the decision of the students during the first week of class. In addition, all students will be required to submit one 4-to-6 page essay on a topic relating to a major problem in modern British history. A list of topics will be distributed later. Those students who take the course for 4 credits will be asked to do a short essay (2,500 words) on some controverted issue relating to the subject matter of the course.

Grading System

If the students decide to have only one hour exam plus the final, the grade for the course will be determined on the following basis: regular participation in discussion, 10 percent; essay, 10 percent; hour exam, 30 percent; final exam, 50 percent. If on the other hand, the students decide to have two hour exams, plus the final, a number of grading options will be offered, allowing students to determine, within broad limits, how they wish their grade for the course to be determined.

Required Readings

The readings required for the course should as far as possible be completed in accordance with the schedule set out on a following page, as the weekly discussion topics will generally be arranged around the previous week's assigned reading.

Required Readings

R. K. Webb, Modern England: From the 18th Century to the Present (Dodd, Mead & Co.)

J. H. Plumb, The Growth of Political Stability in England, 1675-1725 (Penguin Books)

Douglas Hay, et. al., Albion's Fatal Tree (Pantheon Books, Random House)

Harold Perkin, The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780-1880 (University of Toronto Press)

Bernard Porter, The Lion's Share (Longman)

George Orwell, The Road to Wigan Pier (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich)