

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
Department of History
Semester I, 1983-84

HISTORY 757

MR. FRYKENBERG

Proseminar: The East India Company

Mainly for graduate students; but two or three select seniors who are majors and who have a GPA of 3.5 or above may be admitted.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Among the early "private" ventures of corporate enterprise in modern history, the East India Company must be seen as one of the largest and most successful. It grew from a mere handful of London merchants into a far-flung maritime empire which stretched from home offices in Threadneedle Street and warehouses on the Thames to docks and godowns and palaces on the Pearl River in Canton (the forerunner settlements to Hong Kong). It helped to transform habits of dress and food tastes in Europe. Many of our names for cotton fabrics (calico, chintz, muslin, batik, dungaree, etc.), for colours (khaki, etc.), and garments (pajama, jodhpur, etc.), not to mention our common daily beverages (tea and coffee), and the kinds of porcelain ("china") dishes upon which we prefer to eat, are consequences of this enterprise. Most important of all, the Company's enterprise in India enabled it to grow from modest positions of rulership over tiny coastal "enclaves" or "city-states" until it became the imperial successor to the Mughals. It became, in effect, a "corporate" dynasty in India. It expanded its sway over India until the shadow of its authority (its "great umbrella" or mahchhatra) not only reached the farthest corners of the subcontinent but fell across all the perimeters of the Indian Ocean itself. Indeed, the foundations for what is now India (as also Pakistan, Bangladesh, Burma, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong) were laid by the East India Company. The story of the rise of its Raj as an Indo-British amalgam is both amazing and fascinating.

LECTURES

Introductory and Occasional.

Mainly discussions on seminar papers.

WA No examination

Two Essays of Ten Pages or One Research Paper (on consultation)

GRADING SYSTEM

Traditional

REQUIRED READINGS

Only as related to specific papers and discussions.

Bibliography and chronology to be given (to members only).