



## SYLLABUS

Spring Session Only

### **EMPIRE: THE BRITISH EXPERIENCE, 1500-1960**

**Instructor: Dr. Lisa Bowers Isaacson**

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**Contact Hrs: 39**

**Language of Instruction: English**

**LONDON, ENGLAND (ILACA)**

Course texts: N. Ferguson, *Empire*  
L. M. Bowers Isaacson, ed., *Documents of the British Empire*  
[Documents packet]

#### *Additional readings from:*

D. Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: how the British saw their Empire*  
L. Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600–1850*  
D. Judd, *Empire: the British Imperial experience*  
J. Schneer, *London 1900*  
A. Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The impact of imperialism*  
J. Walvin, *Black Ivory: Slavery in the British Empire*

**Course overview:** At the death of Queen Victoria at the start of the twentieth century, Britain had an empire that stretched to every continent on earth and encompassed much of the earth's population. Britannia, and the British navy, did indeed 'rule the waves'. This course, as the title indicates, explores the history of the British experience of acquiring, keeping, and losing its empire; it covers some three hundred years, from its 16<sup>th</sup>-century origins to the 1950s foundation of a multi-cultural Britain through immigration from all parts of the Commonwealth. Among our topics, we shall consider how colonisation shaped consumer tastes in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and contributed to that most hideous legacy of Empire, slavery and the slave trade. We will also look at critical reaction to the Empire, including the struggle in Britain for the abolition of the slave trade and the Victorian reaction to its Empire. And finally we will consider the modern legacy of Empire, in terms of immigrant communities in London.

The readings for this course are a mixture of interpretations by modern historians and document sources. Informal lectures and discussions held at the site are mixed with illustrative walks in the city and informative visits to museums and galleries.

Walks and visits will take place on Thursdays. You will probably wish to bring a small notebook. On those dates please note where we meet and arrive promptly. The walks take place rain or shine, so be prepared.

**Course requirements:** There will be four graded assignments: two exams and two papers.

Exams: There will be a mid-term and final exam. One question on each exam will be on artefacts of history. These will require independent preparation, by visiting a designated museum and choosing objects to describe and discuss. Precise details will be given in good time for each exam.

Papers: Each student will also write two papers, and precise details will be given in class. The *first* will be a short paper (3 to 4 pages or approx. 1000 words) written in the voice of an 18<sup>th</sup>-century Londoner, arguing whether or not the costs of Empire outweigh its benefits.

The *second* project is to plan a walk to illustrate some aspect of the Empire's impact on London. It might be a walk around a neighbourhood associated with a particular immigrant community.

Other topics could be as diverse as the connection between Empire and London's museums; missionary societies; or some aspect of the medical and/or scientific legacy of Empire in London. The final product will be 5 to 7 pages (1500 words) of narrative and analysis, plus a map showing the locations. Those with cameras may wish to illustrate with photographs. More detail on this will be given after the midterm exam.

#### **Basis of Course grade:**

Mid-term exam	15%	1 <sup>st</sup> paper	20%
2 <sup>nd</sup> paper/project	25%	Final Exam	30%
Class participation**	10%		

\*\*Class participation means taking part in discussions and walks, paying attention and asking questions. In order to do so you must be there. Any absences therefore may result in the lowering of the final grade.

#### **Course Outline**

##### **Week 1**

TBA

##### **Week 2**

###### **Class 1**

Topic: The Map of the British Empire at its height

###### **Class 2**

Walk: Trade and Empire in the City: from the guildhall to the coffeehouse

Meet in the ticket office area of Moorgate Underground Station (*upstairs from the Metropolitan Line platforms*)

##### **Week 3**

###### **Class 1**

Topic: Plunder and Exploration: 16<sup>th</sup>-century origins

Reading: Ferguson, ch. 1  
Documents packet, ch. 1

###### **Class 2**

Topic: The East India Company and a Consumer Revolution

Reading: Colley, ch. 8  
Documents packet, ch. 2

##### **Week 4**

###### **Class 1**

Topic: Caribbean Sugar and the Slave Trade

Reading: Walvin, chs. 1, 3 & 6  
Documents packet, ch. 3

1<sup>st</sup> Paper Assignment to be handed out

###### **Class 2**

Walk: Warehouses of Empire: from St. Katherine's Dock to Cutler Square (meet just outside the exit of Tower Hill Underground Station)

## Week 5

### Class 1

Topic: Emigration and Plantation: the colonies of settlement

Reading: Ferguson, ch. 2  
Documents packet, ch. 4

### Class 2

Visit: Enlightenment Gallery at the British Museum (meet at the top of the front steps of the British Museum)

## Week 6

### Class 1

Topic: Emigration and Plantation (cont.)

Reading: as for Class 1, Week 5

### Class 2

Topic: Assessing the social and economic value of Empire: 18<sup>th</sup> century

Reading: Colley, ch. 6  
Documents packet, ch. 6

### First Paper Due

## Week 7

### Class 1

Topic: The Fight to Abolish of the Slave Trade

Reading: Ferguson, ch. 3 to p. 123  
Documents packet, ch. 7

### Class 2

Mid-term exam (one hour)

2<sup>nd</sup> Paper Assignment to be handed out and an informal discussion of paper topics

## Week 8

### Class 1

Topic: The Victorian Empire: the Raj

Reading: Ferguson, ch. 3, pp. 133–153 and ch. 4.  
Judd, ch. 7  
Documents packet, ch. 8

### Class 2

Visit: Nehru Gallery at the Victoria & Albert Museum (meet in the Ticket Office area at South Kensington Underground Station)

## Week 9

### Class 1 TBA

### Class 2

Topic: Mission to Africa

Reading: Ferguson, ch. 3, pp. 123-33, 153–62 and ch. 5 to p. 255.  
Judd, ch. 11  
Documents packet, ch. 9

## Week 10

### Class 1

Topic: Class, Race and Identity: the Victorian view of Empire

Schneer, ch. 3  
Cannadine, ch. 9  
Colley, pp. 366-74  
Documents packet, ch. 10

**Class 2**

Walk: London as an Imperial City (meet in the Ticket Office area at Embankment Underground Station)

**Class 3**

Field trip to Bristol and the Empire & Commonwealth Museum

**Week 11****Class 1**

Topic: A Boy's Own Empire: the colonies in the popular imagination

Reading: Ferguson, ch. 5 from p. 255.  
Schneer, ch. 5  
Judd, ch. 16 and 21  
Documents packet, ch. 11

**Class 2**

Topic: Questioning the Empire and the Empire in Decline

Reading: Ferguson, ch. 6  
Cannadine, ch. 11.  
Schneer, ch. 8  
Documents packet, ch. 12 and ch. 13

**Week 12****Class 1**

Topic: Multicultural Britain

Reading: Thompson, ch. 9, pp. 217–23,  
Documents packet, ch. 14

**Class 2**

Walk: Banglatown, an immigrant community (meet in *main* ticket office area at Liverpool Street Underground Station - *by entrance to the Circle/Metropolitan Line platforms*)

2<sup>nd</sup> Paper Due

**Week 13****Class 1**

Topic: The Final Balance Sheet

Reading: Ferguson, Conclusion  
Colley, pp. 374–9.  
Thompson, ch. 9, from p. 223.

**Class 2**

Final Exam (2 hours)