

**HIS 709-01 INTRODUCTORY RESEARCH SEMINAR:  
THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH EMPIRE**  
Tuesdays, 3:30-6:20 p.m., MHRA 3209

**PROFESSOR:** Dr. Jill Bender

**OFFICE:** MHRA 2111

**OFFICE HOURS:** Tuesdays, 11:00-12:30; Wednesdays, 1:00-2:30; and by appointment

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Historians have acknowledged the nineteenth century to be Britain's "imperial century," when the island country emerged as the world's preeminent imperial power. This position of dominance was neither static nor assumed, however. From the abolition of slavery during the 1830s to the internal conflicts of the midcentury to the rise of new imperialism during the final quarter of the nineteenth century, the British imperial experience underwent significant changes and faced considerable challenges. In this introductory seminar, we will examine how other historians have explained this expansion and its impact on both Britain and its colonies. In particular, we will explore questions of power and resistance as students prepare their own research projects based on primary source analysis.

**Student Learning Objectives:**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify an appropriate research topic and relevant primary and secondary sources.
2. Critically analyze various primary sources within their historical context.
3. Evaluate historiographical debates within the field of imperial history.
4. Conduct independent historical research and communicate the findings.
5. Develop and support an original written argument.

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**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

**Attendance and Participation:** The basic format of this course will consist of four weeks of group meetings during which we will discuss assigned readings on the British Empire. After these first few weeks, students will meet individually (and sometimes collectively) with the professor to discuss and assist their progress on independent research projects. Attendance at and participation in both class and individual meetings is essential.

**Writing Assignments:** The primary purpose of this course is to guide students as they write a 25-30 page, research paper. Writing a solid research paper takes time, planning, and rewriting (among other things). This is not a project that can be completed the night before it is due. In order to emphasize the importance of planning and editing, I have developed a number of short assignments that will walk you through the many steps involved in producing a research paper. Below I have identified these steps and provided brief descriptions of each assignment. More information will be provided as the semester progresses.

### **Step 1: Identify a research question**

Identifying a research topic often begins with a question. Not a question that can be answered with a short yes or no or even a simple sentence. Instead, you want to ask a question that will provide deeper insight into the past. As you read the assigned readings during the first weeks of the semester, think about the questions that historians are asking about Britain and its nineteenth-century empire. How do they answer these questions? What sources do they use to answer these questions? What is their argument? What questions are left unanswered? This final question—what questions are left unanswered—will point you in the direction of your own research question.

**Assignment #1 Paragraph:** Write a short paragraph (4-5 sentences) explaining your proposed topic and include a related research question. (SLO 1)

### **Step 2: Building a research topic**

Once you have a question in mind, you will want to start to find answers. The first step is to identify possible sources. What have historians already written about this topic? What sources have they used? What sources would allow you to find answers to your own question and are these sources available at Jackson Library, through appropriate internet archives, or via Interlibrary Loan?

**Assignment #2 Historiography Paper:** Historiography is the history of history – the way in which history has been interpreted and written about over time. Your historiographical essay should provide a critical overview of a variety of historical perspectives and scholarly interpretations of your proposed topic. Please include a bibliography of secondary sources. (SLO 1, 3)

**Assignment #3 Research Proposal:** Your research proposal should identify 1) your topic and its significance 2) the historiographical discussion with which you plan to engage and how you position yourself in the discussion 3) the primary sources most relevant to your research. (SLO 1, 3)

### **Step 3: Conducting Research**

Once you have identified possible primary sources, you need to read and analyze them.

**Assignment #4 Primary Source Analysis:** Write a 1-2 page analysis of a primary source document related to your research paper. Please identify, contextualize, and analyze the source. In particular, explain how this source advances your argument. Attach a copy of the primary source to your analysis. (SLO 2)

### **Step 4: Creating an argument**

Once you begin your primary research, what answers do you find? What patterns can you detect in the sources? And what is the best way to present this argument? Often, this step

involves significant outlining and writing as you think about and reconsider the best ways to organize your evidence so that it makes sense to a larger audience.

**Assignment #5 Outline:** Your outline should include an introduction that 1) introduces the topic in an engaging manner 2) sets out the argument (including historiographical contribution) and 3) prepares the reader. Your full outline should then include detailed bullet points and section paragraphs that make the development of the argument clear. (SLO 1, 3, 4, and 5)

### **Step 5: Writing and writing and writing**

Writing a research paper rarely (never?) occurs in one go. Rather, you will want to write a draft, receive peer reviews, and rewrite (editing in response to reviews). Furthermore, reviewing each other's work will strengthen your own writing by providing you with an opportunity to consider other arguments and how to present your questions and critiques in a helpful and constructive manner.

**Assignment #6 Polished Rough Draft:** Your polished rough draft should be as close to a final draft as you can produce without formal feedback (minimum length of 20 pages), and should include endnotes/footnotes and a bibliography. (SLO 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)

**Assignment #7 Peer Review:** Please provide a one-page, typed review of your peers' papers and provide copies to me as well. Be kind, but also offer constructive feedback—What are the paper's strengths? Where is there room for improvement? Can the argument be clearer or better supported in places?

**Final Papers (SLO 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5):** Students will produce a 25-30 page research paper based on primary and secondary sources. Although paper topics will vary according to individual student interests, all papers must relate to the course theme of the nineteenth-century British Empire. The final paper with bibliography and notes must be uploaded to Canvas by 5pm, **Friday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>**.

**Due Dates:** The assignments for this class are designed to build upon each other and guide students toward the production of an original research paper. As a result, it is essential that students turn in all assignments, on time. Any late assignments will not be accepted, and a 0 will be recorded.

**Academic Integrity Policy:** Please cite your sources using footnotes or endnotes. Plagiarism is a breach of the university's academic integrity policy. For more information on this policy, see <https://osrr.uncg.edu/academic-integrity/>.

**Final Grades will be calculated according to the following:**

Participation, Presentations, and Attendance  
(both in class and during individual meetings): 15%

|                                    |     |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Writing Assignments:               | 35% |
| #1 Paragraph and Research Question |     |
| #2 Historiography Paper            |     |
| #3 Research Proposal               |     |
| #4 Primary Source Analysis         |     |
| #5 Outline                         |     |
| #6 Polished Rough Draft            |     |
| #7 Peer Reviews                    |     |
| Final Paper:                       | 50% |

**Letter grades for PhD students will be assigned as follows:**

|          |          |       |
|----------|----------|-------|
| 93-100 A | 87-89 B+ | <82 F |
| 90-92 A- | 87-89 B  |       |

**Letter grades for MA students assigned as follows:**

|          |          |          |
|----------|----------|----------|
| 93-100 A | 87-89 B+ | 77-79 C+ |
| 90-92 A- | 83-86 B  | 73-76 C  |
|          | 80-82 B- | <72 F    |

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**CLASS SCHEDULE:** \*This schedule is subject to change at the professor's discretion

**UNIT I: EXAMPLES**

**Week 1:      January 15      Getting our Bearings: The Nineteenth-Century British Empire**

**Reading:** Ashley Jackson, *The British Empire: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2013).

**Week 2:      January 22      Writing about Britain and its Empire: The Metropole**

**Reading: Historiography**

Richard Price, "One Big Thing: Britain, Its Empire, and Their Imperial Culture," *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 45, no. 3 (July 2006): 602-627.

**Reading: Example**

Antoinette Burton, "New narratives of imperial politics in the nineteenth century." *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, eds. Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 212-229.

**In-class presentations on Primary Source databases.**

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| <b>Week 3:</b> | <b>January 29</b>  | <p><b>Writing about Britain and its Empire: The Periphery</b></p> <p><b>Reading: Historiography</b><br/> Alan, Lester, "Imperial Circuits and Networks: Geographies of the British Empire," <i>History Compass</i> 4, 1 (2006): 124-141.</p> <p><b>Reading: Examples (Choose 1 of the following to read)</b><br/> Alan Lester, "British Settler Discourse and the Circuits of Empire," <i>History Workshop Journal</i> 54 (2002): 24-48.<br/> Mark Doyle, "The Sepoys of the Pound and Sandy Row: Empire and Identity in Mid-Victorian Belfast," <i>Journal of Urban History</i> (2010): 849-867.<br/> Aidan Forth, "Britain's Archipelago of Camps: Labor and Detention in a Liberal Empire, 1871-1903." <i>Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History</i>, vol. 16, No. 3 (Summer 2015): 651-680.<br/> Zoe Laidlaw, "Indigenous Interlocutors: Networks of Imperial Protest and Humanitarianism in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," <i>Indigenous Networks: Mobility, Connections and Exchange</i>, eds. Jane Carey and Jane Lydon (New York and London: Routledge, 2014): 114-139.</p> <p><b>In-class presentations on Primary Source databases.</b></p> |
|                | February 1         | <p><b>Due:</b> Assignment #1 Paragraph (Please upload to course Canvas site by 5pm, Friday, February 1<sup>st</sup>)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Week 4:</b> | <b>February 5</b>  | <p><b>Walking Through the Process (following a class discussion, we will meet with university archivists)</b></p> <p><b>Reading:</b> Jill C. Bender, "Mutiny or freedom fight? The 1857 Indian Mutiny and the Irish press," <i>Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain: Reporting the British Empire, c. 1857-1921</i>, ed. Simon J. Potter (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004): 92-108.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                | February 11        | <p><b>Due:</b> Assignment #2 Historiography Paper (Please upload to course Canvas site by noon, Monday, February 11<sup>th</sup>).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Week 5:</b> | <b>February 12</b> | <p><b>Individual Meetings</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                | February 18        | <p><b>Due:</b> Assignment #3 Research Proposal (Please upload to course Canvas site by noon, Monday, February 18<sup>th</sup>).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

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## UNIT II: RESEARCHING, WRITING, AND MORE RESEARCHING, WRITING

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|----------|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week 6:  | February 19 | Class Meeting                                                                                                                  |
| Week 7:  | February 26 | <i>No Class (Independent Research)</i>                                                                                         |
|          | March 1     | <b>Due:</b> Assignment #4 Primary Source Analysis (Please upload to course Canvas site by 5pm, Friday, March 1 <sup>st</sup> ) |
| Week 8:  | March 5     | <b>SPRING BREAK—<i>No Class</i> (This is a good time to conduct independent research)</b>                                      |
| Week 9:  | March 12    | Class Meeting                                                                                                                  |
| Week 10: | March 19    | Individual Meetings (as needed)                                                                                                |
|          | March 22    | <b>Due:</b> Assignment #5 Outline (Please upload to Canvas by 5pm, Friday, March 22 <sup>nd</sup> )                            |
| Week 11: | March 26    | Individual Meetings                                                                                                            |
| Week 12: | April 2     | Presentations                                                                                                                  |

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## UNIT III: REVIEWING, REVISING, AND POLISHING

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|----------|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week 13: | April 9  | Individual Meetings (as needed)                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Week 14: | April 16 | Class Meeting                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|          |          | <b>Due:</b> Assignment #6 Polished Rough Draft (complete with notes and bibliography). Please upload your draft to the course Canvas site by 3:30 pm and bring two hardcopies with you to class. |
| Week 15: | April 23 | Discussion of Rough Drafts                                                                                                                                                                       |
|          |          | <b>Due:</b> Assignment #7 Peer Review (Please bring two copies of your peer reviews to class)                                                                                                    |
| Week 16: | April 30 | Final Comments and Conclusion                                                                                                                                                                    |
|          | May 3    | <b>***FINAL PAPERS are due. Please upload to Canvas by 5pm on Friday, May 3rd***</b>                                                                                                             |

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