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HSTR 418.01: Britain 1500-1800

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History [HSTR] 418: Research Seminar: Britain 1500-1800.

J.A. Eglin -- Office LA 255 -- MWF Noon-1PM, or by appointment
john.eglin@umontana.edu), or by accident

This class is an undergraduate/graduate research seminar ultimately aimed at producing polished historical writing grounded in primary sources. It meets the upper division writing requirement for history majors. It is primarily intended for students with some background in the period, and will allow these students to delve deeper into its historiographical debates, using both secondary scholarship and printed primary sources drawn from Early English Books Online (EEBO), and Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO), Electronic Enlightenment, the Old Bailey Online, and other resources. For the most part, the topics we cover will be topics that you choose.

Readings for the course will be assigned week to week, and will be determined by the research topics that you choose. We will rely mostly on the Mansfield Library Reserve system, EEBO, ECCO, JSTOR, ODNB, and other online databases. You will need to become intimately familiar with these and other electronic resources. Typically, a week's reading will consist of a primary source selection together with one or two articles from academic journals, or chapters from scholarly books. Graduate students, in addition to these readings, will read either scholarly monographs or a range of supplementary articles and essays. Generally, these readings will be chosen by the presenter(s) for that week in consultation with the instructor. You will need to prepare the assigned readings before the seminar meets.

I have not ordered textbooks for this class, but I do have recommendations. Booth, Colomb, and Williams' *The Craft of Research* [ISBN 0226065669], which, although not specifically geared to historical research, is the best guidebook to research and writing that I have yet run across. John Tosh's *The Pursuit of History* [ISBN 0582894123] is a very good introduction to sources and approaches to British history specifically. Kate Turabian's *Guide for Writers of Research Papers* [ISBN 0226823377] outlines the University of Chicago notation style, which is the preferred style not only in this department, but also in the historical profession generally. *All citations in this class must be in University of Chicago format.* If you need additional background in the period, I recommend (for the first part of the period) Newton Key and Robert Bucholz's *Early Modern England* [ISBN 1405162759], and (for the second part of the period), Paul Monod's *Imperial Island* [ISBN 1405134453].

Attendance at all weekly sessions, including individual meetings, is mandatory. I will deduct up to five points [or 5%] from your final grade each time that you are

absent without a valid and timely excuse. For undergraduates, grades will be determined as follows: 10% preparation for and participation in class (including reading group meetings and individual meetings); 10% on the prospectus and preliminary bibliography; 10% on the presentation; 20% on the draft research paper (3000 words in length, exclusive of bibliography); and 50% on the final research paper (5000-6000 words in length, excluding footnotes and bibliography). NOTE: These percentages only obtain if ALL written work is turned in. *Failure to turn in one or more written assignments will result in failure of the course.* Late work will not be accepted except by prior arrangement (extensions will not be granted after the due date) for reasons that are verifiable and allowed under university regulations. Otherwise, all written work must be turned in on the due date, in class, and in person. *History Department policy does not allow incompletes to be granted for advanced writing courses.*

Graduate students will achieve 25% of their grade through preparation for and participation in seminar (including reading group meetings and presentations), 25% through the short reviews of weekly readings, and 50% through the research paper (7000-10,000 words in length, exclusive of scholarly apparatus). As their research papers are expected to be of publishable quality, it will be particularly important for graduate students to formulate well-framed, focused, and viable research topics. Although they are not required to submit drafts, they will take an active role in the “peer review” reading groups.

Written work will be evaluated, in roughly equal proportions and as appropriate, on the basis of (1) style: grammar, diction, voice, spelling, etc.; (2) argument: framing questions, considering counter-arguments, defending claims; and (3) sources: selection, analysis, use as evidence, documentation.

Course Schedule

25 January. Course Introduction.

1 February. Finding and framing a topic.

8 February. Finding sources and compiling a bibliography.

15 February. Research. Prospectus and preliminary bibliography due.

22 February. Presentation (by way of example).

1 March. Presentations.

8 March. Presentations.

15 March. Presentations.

22 March. Presentations.

Spring Break

5 April. Presentations.

12 April. Presentations.

19 April. Draft papers due (hard copy to the instructor; electronic copies to reading group).

26 April. Reading Group Meetings.

3 May. Reading Group Meetings.

Final Research Paper due in LA 256 by 5 PM Friday 11 May.

TOPIC SUGGESTIONS

This list is not meant to be exhaustive — its intent is only to suggest topics that might not immediately occur to you. You may arrive at other ideas on your own, through your work in other courses, or even, heaven help you, watching the (so-called) History Channel.

A good research paper topic has several characteristics: it will be narrow enough to cover in the space and time allotted; it will be approachable from sources that are available to you; it will be interesting enough to you to keep you motivated. It will pose a question or problem, your answer to which will be your "thesis." Your thesis must be significant, and it must be contestable (or "falsifiable," as a natural scientist would say).

In addition, your paper must be based on primary sources, and reflect extended research in those sources. This requirement means that some topics are going to be more "do-able" than others. I will need to approve your topic, and to get this approval, you are going to have to persuade me that there are enough primary sources available to you to support research on the topic.

The Thomason Tracts. George Thomason was a 17th century Londoner who collected hundreds of pamphlets, flyers, leaflets, and posters -- every short printed piece he could get his hands on, from the 1640s to the 1660s. EEBO has all of them. These tracts are full of information, for example, about all sorts of weird and flaky political and religious sects that flourished during the English Civil War, and especially the Interregnum that followed the execution of Charles I in 1649.

Medical Tracts. Hundreds of medical guidebooks were published in the 16th,

17th and 18th centuries for families that did not have access to doctors (not that this access would have helped them!). What do these tracts tell us about pregnancy and childbirth in these centuries? What do they tell us about sexually transmitted diseases (syphilis, or "French pox" as the English called it, was a relatively recent arrival from the Americas) and how they were treated?

Terrorism. Interesting papers could be written about terrorism and terrorist plots, real and imagined, in the Tudor Stuart period, from the pamphlet literature that surrounded them. What were people told, for example, about the various plots of Mary Queen of Scots against Elizabeth? About the Gunpowder Plot of 1605? About the (bogus) Popish Plot of 1678?

Witchcraft. Papers could be written about prosecutions for witchcraft, particularly the wave of witch trials in East Anglia in the 1650s.

Recusants. What kinds of resources were available for English Roman Catholics (recusants) who continued to practice their faith illegally? What kinds of strategies could they pursue to alleviate their situation?

Domestic Life. Interesting papers could be written using cookbooks, housekeeping manuals, books of advice. You might, for example, look at "pattern books." In a time when important business was conducted by letter, it was more and more important for ordinary people to know how to write letters addressing particular situations. Pattern books provided samples of letters written to landlords, employers, government officials, and others, to suit the needs of an increasingly literate population.

Exploration. In addition to what is available in EEBO, Mansfield holds the volumes published by the Hakluyt Society, an organization dedicated to transcribing and publishing contemporary accounts of voyages of exploration.

Crime and Punishment. Use the Proceedings of the Old Bailey Online (see below). A very fertile topic, especially for the latter half of the period. There is a vast secondary literature, and lots of interesting questions that could be posed.

Urban Unrest. London crowds in this period generally didn't riot to overthrow the established order; instead, they rioted to uphold the status quo, and often its uglier aspects. Three of the worst riots were directed at religious minorities: Protestant dissenters in 1709, Jews in 1753, and Roman Catholics in 1780. You might focus on one of these disturbances, and look at newspaper and other responses to the rioters and their objectives.

British Perspectives on the American Revolution. For example, some scholars argue that attitudes changed after the American revolutionaries allied with the French in 1778; was this true? How so? It has also been said that the British weren't very interested in the North American colonies before the mid-

1770s, and didn't know much about them. What does newspaper evidence suggest on this point?

The Bible. Any number of topics could deal with English translations of the Bible, of which there were five *before* the 1611 Authorized (or "King James") Version:

For example, the more hardboiled protestants known as "puritans" didn't care for the new translation, preferring the "Geneva Bible" translated in Calvinist Switzerland by English exiles in Mary I's reign.

English Roman Catholics -- driven underground -- sponsored their own translation, the "Douai" Bible, from the Latin Vulgate.

Later in the seventeenth century, the introduction of the numbered chapters and verses (that we now accept as part and parcel of scripture) was a subject of some controversy, with figures like John Locke worrying that people would no longer read the Bible, but would merely consult it as a collection of aphorisms.

The Book of Common Prayer. The availability of scripture in English was one flashpoint during the English Reformation and after; liturgy (how church services were conducted) was another. An English liturgy was finally set down in 1549 in the form of *The Book of Common Prayer*:

No one liked this prayerbook, which sparked riots and rebellions, and caused the downfall of the Duke of Somerset as regent for the young Edward VI. Protestants thought it was too close to the Catholic mass; Catholics, still a force to be reckoned with, thought it was a blasphemous parody of the mass. Was the 1549 prayerbook just the mass in English, or were there elements that made it Protestant?

Both this prayerbook and its decidedly more Protestant sequel in 1552 contain services for the "churching" of women who had recently given birth. What do these services, and the differences between them, tell us about attitudes toward women, toward pregnancy, and toward religion?

Penance, involving oral confession of one's sins to a priest, is a sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church and was one of its cornerstones. The English Reformation, of course, did away with it -- or did it? What, if anything, did the prayerbook substitute for auricular confession, and what can we determine (from the writings of the Anglican clergyman George Herbert, for example) about how effective these substitutes were?

John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments of the Christian Martyrs*, a.k.a. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. This lavishly and graphically illustrated multivolume masterpiece of Protestant propaganda first appeared in 1563, once English

protestants had returned from exile. Multiple editions are accessible online:
<https://www.johnfoxe.org>

It describes the arrest, imprisonment, torture, trials, and grisly executions (usually burning) of of something like 300 English protestant men, women, and in at least one case, infants during the brief Catholic restoration under the reign of Mary I (1553-1558). But -- wait a minute -- it also describes the trial and execution of Anne Askew in 1546, *during the reign of Henry VIII* (who *started* the English Reformation). What was up with that?

What do the accounts in Foxe suggest about *who* came to the attention of authorities, and *how* they drew attention? Executions ceased on the advice of authorities in 1557, several months before Mary I's death. What do the accounts in Foxe, and other sources, suggest about the changing attitude of the authorities toward the arrest and trial of suspected Protestants?

Online Resources:

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB): An essential resource for your papers. These are biographies of notable and not-so-notable British people from ancient times onward. Entries include valuable bibliographic information. The ODNB is searchable in full text.

Oxford English Dictionary (OED) online: This is a historical dictionary; the print edition runs to 20 thick volumes. It contains every word that has ever existed in the English language, including words long out of use, and tracks the changing definitions of words over the centuries.

Early English Books Online (EEBO): Digital images of over 100,000 titles (books, pamphlets, and broadsides) printed in English before 1700. Searchable by entry.

Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO): This database is the chronological continuation of EEBO, and contains later editions of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century works, including works that do not appear in EEBO. Importantly, ECCO is searchable in full text, which EEBO (regrettably) is not.

Electronic Enlightenment. A digital collection of the published letters and papers of literary and cultural figures in the eighteenth century.

Burney Collection of Early English Newspapers. Extensive runs of English language newspapers and periodicals from the middle of the 1600s to the first decade of the 1800s.

All of the databases above are accessible through the Mansfield Library website. A number of other important sources are accessible online:

Proceedings of the Old Bailey Online: An utterly amazing, endlessly fascinating online resource. Contains transcripts of trials at London's main criminal court from the 1670s until the first years of the twentieth century. Searchable in full text, and very well indexed. <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org>

The Diary of Samuel Pepys: this covers the decade of the 1660s. Pepys was a high ranking civil servant who, among other things, re-organized the Royal Navy during the Restoration. Coded entries describe his sexual escapades. <https://www.pepysdiary.com/diary/>

Yale Edition of the Correspondence of Horace Walpole. The recently digitized version of the massive [forty-three volumes in print] correspondence of Horace Walpole (1717-1791), the son of a Prime Minister, a gothic novelist, traveler, celebrated wit, and malicious gossip who wrote to and received letters from some of the most important figures of his day. <http://images.library.yale.edu/hwcorrespondence/>

The National Archives in Washington DC have also digitized tens of thousands of autograph manuscripts related to colonial and revolutionary America, available as scans of the original documents as well as annotated transcriptions: <https://founders.archives.gov>

Additional (Print) Sources: Do not neglect print sources. Mansfield holds:

The Diary of John Evelyn: a wealthy and well-connected Englishman who kept a diary, since published, covering the period from 1641 to 1706.

250 volumes in the Camden Society series: these are transcriptions of archival sources (letters, diaries, household account books, etc) from all periods of British history.

195 volumes in the Surtees Society: Much the same as the Camden Series, except for a focus on Northern England.

189 volumes in the Hakluyt Society, which are generally transcriptions of accounts of voyages of exploration.

Bits and pieces of the Calendar of State Papers and Historical Manuscripts Commissions (many in microfilm and microform).

In addition, many valuable printed primary sources (including many of those listed above) are available in full text digital format through Google Books and the Hathi Trust, as a number of major university libraries have committed to digitizing the portions of their collections that are no longer under copyright.

For print items that Mansfield doesn't hold, there is **Interlibrary Loan**, which I have found to be very efficient, and very easy. There is no need to confine yourself to what is available on Mansfield's shelves, but there is a need to compile a working bibliography sooner rather than later!