

HISTORY 3412F
Britain's Sailors, Soldiers and Empire: 1689-1902
2024-25 | Fall 2024 | Winter 2025

Instructor: Professor Allyson N. May

Email: amay6@uwo.ca

Office: Department of History, Lawson Hall 1205

Office Hours: TBA

This is a draft outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

Course Description

This course examines the emergence of Britain as an imperial power in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the military means by which that empire was acquired (and lost). It explores both soldiers' and sailors' lives and the effects of war on state formation and national identity within Britain. It also examines the relationship between slavery and empire.

Prerequisite(s)

1.0 History course at the 2200 level or above.

Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Syllabus

This course examines the emergence of Britain as an imperial power in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the military means by which that empire was acquired (and lost). It explores both the day-to-day realities of soldiers' and sailors' lives and the changing experience of military engagement as well as race relations within the British empire and the effects of war on state formation and national identity within Britain.

We will meet weekly for two-hour lectures. The class will also meet five times for colloquia (discussion of shared readings) in the third hour. Depending on the number of students, the colloquia may be split into two groups.

On completion of this course students will have

Mastered the chronology of Britain's acquisition of empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

Grasped the geographical extent of the British empire in this period and Britain's military engagement with European rivals

Become familiar with the nature of military and naval engagement, including the impact of organizational and technological change

Become aware of the role played not just by military and naval commanders but soldiers and sailors in the ranks

Understood the significance of empire for British national identity

Understood the relationship between slavery and empire

Improved their skills in both oral and written communication

Methods of Evaluation

Students must complete all coursework. Failure to complete all assigned coursework will result in a failing grade.

Assignment 1 (book report, due 7 Oct.):	30%
Assignment 2 (research essay, due 18 Nov.):	35%
Final exam:	35%

Students will write a **1500-word** book report on Patrick O'Brian's novel, *Master and Commander*. They will also write a **2500-3000 word** research essay on a topic of their own choosing. Topics must be approved by the professor; papers submitted without email approval of the topic will not be graded.

You are expected to meet the deadlines for these assignments. A late penalty of 2% per day, including weekends, will be assigned if an extension has not been granted. Apart from the penalty, late papers will be graded without comment. *Extensions must be sought via Academic Counselling*. Requests for extensions made after the deadline will not be accepted.

You are also expected to adhere to the word-lengths specified for both the book report and the research essay.

Attendance at both the lectures and colloquia is essential to passing the course. I do not provide notes for students who have missed lectures or colloquia.

Make-up tests, midterms, and exams can only be approved by Academic Counselling. Please see https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for department procedures and requirements involving make-up tests and exams.

Course Materials

Required texts

Philippa Levine, *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset*, 3rd ed. (Routledge, 2019)

<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781351259682/british-empire-philippa-levine>

Patrick O'Brian, *Master and Commander* (any edition is fine)

Recommended as back-up (it's out of print but you should be able to find second-hand copies online)

Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (Abacus, 1995)

Primary documents for discussion in the colloquia will be made available online.

Additional Statements

Audio or video recording of lectures is not permitted.

The best way to get in touch with me outside of the classroom is via email. I answer emails between 9 am and 5 pm, Monday to Friday. Please remember that office hours are not simply – or even primarily! – for dealing with problems. You are welcome to come and discuss course material in these hours. My office hours are held in-person.

As the final exam is conducted online, it is open book and you will have internet access.

All work submitted in this course must be your own. You may not make use of generative AI tools like ChatGPT for any assignments in this course.

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.