

# MODERN BRITAIN

## From Glorious Revolution to New Labour

Spring 2009 • Prof. Eric G.E. Zuelow

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*This class meets Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:30-4:50pm*



In 1975 the historian J.G.A. Pocock produced an influential article calling for his peers to “reinvest” the term “British history” with meaning. Today, Great Britain is composed of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, yet all too often, British history focuses almost exclusively on England—admittedly the wealthiest and most populous corner of the British Isles. Other areas claiming distinct national identities are largely ignored. Despite the debate sparked by Pocock’s “Plea for a New Subject,” there has been a singular failure on the part of historians to produce a truly “British” history.

This course will examine the development of Britain from the Glorious Revolution in 1688 through to Tony Blair’s “New Labour” governments of the late 1990s. Always paying particular attention to the interactions between the various “national” communities found in the “North Atlantic Archipelago,” we trace significant developments that occurred in Britain during the past three hundred

years. Important topics will include the emergence of political parties, the development of British democracy, British social history, the industrial revolution, the impact of the World Wars, and the rise of separatist nationalist movements.

Over the course of the semester you will develop an understanding of modern British history and of how the interaction between different national communities has shaped Great Britain. You will discover that history is more than a series of unquestionable facts and is instead about conflicting ways of piecing together and interpreting the past. Finally, you will be expected to improve your own abilities to both understand and make historical (or “historiographical”) arguments.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

T.M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation: A History, 1700-2000* (New York and London, Penguin Books, 2001).

Sara Wise, *The Italian Boy: A Tale of Murder and Body Snatching in 1830s London* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004).

Brian Feeney, *Sinn Fein: A Hundred Turbulent Years* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003).

Additional readings are available for download, either directly from websites listed in the course schedule or in the “Shared Files” section for this course in myUNE.

## RECOMMENDED TEXTS

*The following text offers extensive advice about how to succeed in history courses—including information about how to write papers, how to take notes, how best to study, and how to properly cite sources. Although there will be no formal reading assignments drawn from this book, I will likely refer to it from time to time. I strongly advise you to purchase a copy and to keep it on hand throughout your tenure in history courses here at UNE.*

Vincent Alan Clark, *A Guide to Your History Course* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2009). ISBN: 0-13-185087-3

## COURSE GOALS

This course has three primary goals:

1. Improve critical thinking skills.
2. Improve writing skills.
3. Gain an understanding of modern British history since roughly 1688.

With these goals in mind, you will be asked to take three exams, complete a 7-10 page research paper, participate in group discussions, and carefully read a variety of articles, essays, and books. The first portion of each class will usually involve a lecture. You should come prepared to listen and to take notes. Feel free to ask questions as they occur to you.

## DISCUSSIONS

We will have group discussions or small group activities each week. Discussion is required and you should come prepared to participate—this means that you must complete the assigned reading before class each class period.

Discussions are fun but they are also of major importance to your success in the course. These sessions are vital because they give you an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the subject material, try out your ideas by discussing them with the group in a non-stressful setting, and develop your critical thinking skills. **DO NOT BE SHY!** You are not being judged and you will not get everything you can out of this class unless you are ready to take a few intellectual risks.

## EXAMS

You will take two mid-terms and a final during the course of this semester. Each mid-term consists of ten multiple-choice questions and an essay. The final consists of ten multiple-choice questions and two essays.

As the first exam approaches, we will talk in detail about how to succeed on an essay examination. In a nutshell, successful essay writing requires that you develop a clear and defensible thesis, defend your thesis using accurate evidence drawn from lectures/readings, and ultimately that you prove that your thesis is correct. Thus, your essays should contain three parts:

1. A short introductory paragraph that succinctly summarizes the issue with which you will be dealing (the question), states your 1-2 sentence answer to that question (thesis), and outlines how you will more thoroughly argue your position;
2. Several paragraphs (usually 3-5 for an essay such as this) which carefully present information (evidence) from the lectures and readings to “prove” that your thesis is defensible. Be sure to explain why the evidence that you provide is relevant;
3. A concise conclusion that summarizes your argument, reiterates some of the evidence that you have discussed thoroughly in the body of the essay, and re-states your thesis. The conclusion is your last opportunity to drive home your main point and to convince the reader that your answer is viable.

As you write your exam essays, remember that your job is both to answer the question and to effectively utilize evidence to prove your point. If you do both of these successfully, you will do very well on the three tests.

## RESEARCH PAPER

You must write one double-spaced 7-10 page research paper. This essay can be based on either primary or secondary source research. You should choose a topic that is relevant to the subject of this course; I will be happy to help you. Here are a few potential topics to get you thinking:

The Punk movement  
Youth culture during the 1960s

The Irish Land War  
The British Empire at home

Chartism	The Crofter's War
Nineteenth century social movements	The Clearances
The rise of professional sport	Scottish National Party
The seaside holiday	Plaid Cymru
Thomas Cook and Son	The Black Shirts
The Great Reform Act	The Notting Hill Riots
Strange death of Liberal England	John Wilkes
Home Rule Crisis	Thomas Paine
The successes/failures of one of the various prime ministers	British National Party
	Sexuality in Victorian Britain

Once you have chosen a topic, you will be required to complete each of the following:

- 1) A one-page paper (single-spaced, no smaller than 10-point Times New Roman) outlining your proposed thesis and introducing a short bibliography of your principle sources. While you may use primary sources, you will probably find it much easier to base this essay on secondary sources. These books/articles must be scholarly in nature (peer-reviewed journal articles or scholarly monographs). If you are in any doubt, verify the acceptability of your sources with me. Expect to use a *minimum* of four sources. This paper is worth 10% of your overall course grade. **DUE FEBRUARY 16.**
- 2) An outline along with more developed thesis. Your outline should include a complete written introduction. Failure to complete this un-graded assignment will result in a 15-point reduction on your paper grade. **DUE MARCH 23.**
- 3) Your final paper. 7-10 pages. 12-point, Times New Roman. Be sure to footnote each of your sources (use Chicago Manual of Style). Papers that are less than seven pages will receive a dramatically reduced grade. This paper is worth 20% of your overall course grade. **DUE APRIL 27.**
- 4) The paper grades will be based on: a) writing; b) research; c) argument. In essence, your paper should be written in an inviting fashion, free of excessive errors (grammar, spelling, etc.). It should be thoroughly researched, demonstrating that you have a command of your material. Finally, you should defend a clear thesis, not simply recount information.

## PARTICIPATION/ATTENDANCE

Your attendance and participation are vital for success in this course. You cannot learn, nor can you contribute to the group's progress, if you are absent. I will keep track of who participates in discussion. Participation is worth 10% of your overall grade.

## OTHER POLICIES

### LATE ASSIGNMENTS

- **All papers must be handed in on the day that they are due. This must be done IN CLASS unless otherwise specified. No late papers will be accepted.**
- **Papers will not be accepted electronically unless otherwise specified.**

Having said this, if an unforeseen and serious problem arises, please contact me and we will work something out. Please be prepared to provide a doctor's note, obituary, or other paperwork as needed.

### CELL PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONICS

Cellular phones, MP3 players, and other electronic devices (excluding laptops) are distracting to others and are therefore not acceptable in the classroom.

If you would like to take notes on a laptop, please feel free to do so.

### PLAGIARISM

**Plagiarism represents serious academic misconduct. As per UNE guidelines, students who steal the words or ideas of another party will be referred to the Dean for disciplinary action.**

The University of New England defines plagiarism as:

- a. The use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement; or
- b. The unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

—*Student Handbook*, pp. 33-34

You can learn much more by consulting the following:

<http://www.une.edu/library/resguide/default.asp>

If you have any questions about how to properly cite sources, please contact me.

## GRADES

Before the final exam you will be handed a sheet that lists seven grading options. Each option allows you to raise or lower the value of the respective *test* grades. So, for example, if you do not perform as well as you would like on the first mid-term, you will have the ability to lower

its value relative to the other two test grades. *Regardless of the option you choose, the combined test grades equal 60% of the overall course grade.*

The basic grade breakdown is as follows:

<b>Participation:</b>	10%
<b>Exams (Combined):</b>	60% [ <i>see above</i> ]
<b>Proposal Essay:</b>	10%
<b>Essay Outline:</b>	Not graded [ <i>required</i> ]
<b>Research Paper:</b>	20%

The following grading scale is in effect:

A+	=	97-100
A	=	93-96
A-	=	90-92
B+	=	87-89
B	=	83-86
B-	=	80-82
C+	=	77-79
C	=	73-76
C-	=	70-72
D	=	60-69
F	=	59 and below

## C O U R S E   S C H E D U L E

*Please note that the following schedule is provisional. Changes may be made as demanded by the weather, class progress, etc. Please watch your email for alterations/revisions.*

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### WEDNESDAY, JAN. 14, 2009

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Today we will get to know one another while, at the same time, making certain that everybody understands the syllabus and goals of this course. We will also spend a few minutes discussing the nature of history.

**Lecture:** Introductions

**Required Reading:**

S.W. Swain, "What is History?" *The Journal of Philosophy*, 20 (1923): 281–289.

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**WEDNESDAY, JAN. 21, 2009**

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Just what exactly is “Britain?” Today we will briefly discuss the geography of the British Isles, addressing not only physical geography but national and regional divisions as well.

**Lecture:** The British Isles: An Overview

**Required Reading:**

J.G.A. Pocock. “British History: A Plea for a New Subject,” *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (Dec., 1975): 601-621.

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**MONDAY, JAN. 26, 2009**

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The British Isles faced a period of extraordinary conflict during most of the 1640s, variously called the English Revolution, the English Civil War, or the War of the Three Kingdoms. After a period of Interregnum, during which the country was governed by a parliamentary dictatorship led by Oliver Cromwell, England was once again governed by a monarchy, but this time the country’s ruling elite was less willing to put up with royal excess. The result was yet another wave of conflict in 1688 and 1689 which left England with a dramatically less powerful monarchy and a considerably more powerful parliament. Today we begin our story of British history by examining the revolutions of the seventeenth century that set the stage for all that would come next.

**Lecture:** From the War of the Three Kingdoms to the Glorious Revolution

**Required Reading:**

Lois G. Schworer, “Women and the Glorious Revolution,” *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Summer 1986): 195-218.

T.M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation: A History, 1700-2000* (New York and London, Penguin Books, 2001): 3 – 30

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**WEDNESDAY, JAN. 28, 2009**

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Following the Glorious Revolution, power rested primarily in the hands of a small social elite whose power flowed from extensive land holdings. Today we will get to know the group who define eighteenth century Britain.

**Lecture:** The Landed Elite

**Reading:**

Douglas Hay, "Property, Authority and the Criminal Law," in Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, John R. Rule, E.P. Thompson, and Cal Winslow (eds.), *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Pantheon): 17-64.

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**MONDAY, FEB. 2, 2009**

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What was life like for people living in the British Isles during the eighteenth century? Today we will start by exploring the character of English rule in Ireland and then we will look at the day-to-day realities of life in Britain.

**Lecture:** Social Life in England and Ireland during the Eighteenth Century

**Reading:**

Devine, *Scottish Nation*, 31-63.

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**WEDNESDAY, FEB. 4, 2009**

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How did the landed elite conduct politics during the eighteenth century? Were there any political scandals? Did government function well under a small oligarchy? Today, we find out.

**Lecture:** Eighteenth Century Politics

**Reading:**

Devine, *Scottish Nation*, 49-63, 105-23.

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**MONDAY, FEB. 9, 2009**

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Not everybody was excited about political realities in eighteenth century Britain. Figures such as (the often rather crude) John Wilkes railed against the government, even while seeking a position in parliament. Critics such as Thomas Paine spoke out, attracting a tremendous popular following. Revolution in the American colonies and in France sparked violence much closer to home in Ireland. Today we will tackle the question of eighteenth century radicalism.

**Lecture:** Radicalism in the Late-Eighteenth Century



**Reading:**

Devine, *Scottish Nation*, 196- 230

Sara Wise, *The Italian Boy: A Tale of Murder and Body Snatching in 1830s London*  
(New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004): 1-104.

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**WEDNESDAY, FEB. 11, 2009**

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During the late eighteenth century, a new Protestant sect emerged in England: the Methodists. More than just a religious sect, however, some historians suggest that the Methodists played a fundamental role in assuring that England did not suffer a revolution in the 1840s as did most Continental European countries. Perhaps even more significantly, there is reason to think that Methodism played an important role in the development of working class political action. Today we'll methodically examine the Methodists.

**Lecture:** Methodism and the Industrial Revolution

**Reading:**

Devine, *Scottish Nation*, 152-169, 249-261.

Wise, *Italian Boy*, 105-192.

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**MONDAY, FEB. 16, 2009: EXAM #1 REVIEW DAY**

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**Discussion:** Exam review

**Reading:**

*No Reading Assignment*

**NOTE: PAPER PROPOSAL DUE**

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**WEDNESDAY, FEB. 18, 2009: MID-TERM EXAM #1**

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Mid-Term Exam #1

**Reading:**

*No Reading Assignment*

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**MONDAY, FEB. 23, 2009**

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The Industrial Revolution was far more than an economic transformation; it changed everything. Living conditions, politics, leisure, environmental conditions, identities, and many, many other aspects of life were torn utterly asunder. A new world emerged. Today we will survey the change.

**Lecture:** The Industrial Revolution and its Impact

**Reading:**

Devine, *Scottish Nation*, 261-266.

Wise, *Italian Boy*, 192 – 270.

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**WEDNESDAY, FEB. 25, 2009**

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Given the profound transformation of British society, it is not at all surprising that a growing chorus of both working and middle class voices demanded change. The Great Reform Act certainly brought change that the middle class could believe in, but it was much less helpful for would-be working class voters. Today we'll examine the Reform Act and its history.

**Lecture:** The Great Reform Act of 1832

**Reading:**

Devine, *Scottish Nation*, 273-280.

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**MONDAY, MAR. 2, 2009**

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The Chartist Movement represents arguably the first political expression of working class identity. Today we will examine the rise and fall of Chartism.

**Lecture:** Chartism

**Reading:**

Wise, *Italian Boy*, 271-312.

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**WEDNESDAY, MAR. 4, 2009**

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The Potato Famine was the greatest human disaster of the nineteenth century. More than one million Irish men, women, and children died when the potato crop failed repeatedly between 1845 and 1852. Popular memory of the Famine holds that nature may have

brought the blight, but the English brought the famine. Today we will examine what happened and examine who bears responsibility.

**Lecture:** The Great Irish Potato Famine

**Reading:**

Tyler Anbinder, "Lord Palmerston and the Irish Famine Emigration," *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2001): 441-469.

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**WEDNESDAY, MAR. 4, 2009**

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After the horrors of the Famine years, Irish politics took on a new urgency as a growing number of groups started to demand Irish independence or Irish home rule. The Fenians were one of the most significant of these groups. Today we will examine their story.

**Lecture:** The Fenians

**Reading:**

Devine, *Scottish Nation*, 170-195, 413-425.

—NO CLASSES—  
**SPRING BREAK, MARCH 9-13**

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**MONDAY, MAR. 16, 2009**

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As the nineteenth century moved along, it was increasingly clear that the Great Reform Act was simply not enough. Many in the working classes wanted the vote. But what would be the political result? Today we'll start to find out.

**Lecture:** The Second and Third Reform Acts

**Reading:**

*No Reading Assignment*

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**WEDNESDAY, MAR. 18, 2009**

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From the mid-century forward, the standard of living started to rise. As this happened, the working class increasingly developed a culture all its own—a culture which involved unique ways of dress, a devotion to football, the expectation of an annual seaside holiday, and the

growing consumption of fish and chips. For its part, the middle class grew more devoted to the notion of “self-help” and “respectability,” two concepts they tried to implant (largely unsuccessfully) among the workers. As for the upper classes, their social significance declined relative to the middle class. Today we’ll explore these three disparate threads of social life in the last half of the nineteenth century.

**Lecture:** Social Life in the Late Nineteenth Century

**Reading:**

John K. Walton, “Fish and Chips and the British Working Class, 1870-1930,”  
*Journal of Social History*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Winter, 1989): 243-266.

William J. Baker, “The Making of a Working-Class Football Culture in Victorian England,” *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Winter, 1979): 241-251.

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**MONDAY, MAR. 23, 2009**

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Irish nationalism gained steam after the Famine. The Fenians represented one pole of the nationalist story, the Irish Home Rule Party represented another. Today we’ll examine how Charles Stewart Parnell made his party the most powerful in Ireland, how his efforts raised Home Rule to the top of the Westminster Parliament’s agenda, and how his personal life ultimately undermined the quest for Home Rule.

**Lecture:** The Home Rule Crisis

**Reading:**

Devine, *Scottish Nation*, 299-316.

**NOTE: PAPER OUTLINE DUE**

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**WEDNESDAY, MAR. 25, 2009**

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The decline of the Liberal Party represents one of the most curious developments in British history and scholars have tried to explain it for many years. Today we’ll examine the strange death of liberal England.

**Lecture:** The Decline of the Liberals

**Reading:**

Brian Feeney, *Sinn Fein: A Hundred Turbulent Years* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003): 7-43.

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**MONDAY, MAR. 30, 2009: MID-TERM EXAM #2 REVIEW**

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**Discussion:** Exam review

**Reading:**

*No Reading Assignment*

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**WEDNESDAY, APR. 1, 2009: MID-TERM EXAM #2**

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Mid-Term Exam #2

**Reading:**

*No Reading Assignment*

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**MONDAY, APR. 6, 2009**

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The First World War represented a profound shock to Britons (as it did for virtually all Europeans). Today we'll discuss the war experience while also starting to examine the myriad results for British life.

**Lecture:** World War I

**Reading:**

Feeney, *Sinn Fein*, 44-160.

Devine, *Scottish Nation*, 316-327.

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**WEDNESDAY, APR. 8, 2009**

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One of the great slogans of Irish nationalist history is that "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity." During the Great War, a small group of nationalists attempted to use the war as a chance to launch a rebellion. Today we'll trace the story of the 1916 Easter Rising and we will examine its implications for British politics.

**Lecture:** The Easter Rising

**Reading:**

Feeney, *Sinn Fein*, 211-291.

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**MONDAY, APR. 13, 2009**

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The interwar years were exceptionally difficult in England. Unemployment was daunting as the economy reinvented itself in the wake of World War I. In many ways, the Second World War brought a fracturing country back together again, while also giving support to the notion that states should exist to support their citizens through active social programs. Today we'll discuss the Second World War and the rise of the welfare state.

**Lecture:** World War II and the Welfare State

**Reading:**

Devine, *Scottish Nation*, 545-564.

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**WEDNESDAY, APR. 15, 2009**

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During the 1950s, England enjoyed a brief period of extraordinary unity before it started to pull apart again. Class was one dividing line, but age and gender were probably more significant. Today we'll take British history from the end of war through to The Beatles.

**Lecture:** The 1950s and 1960s

**Reading:**

Feeney, *Sinn Fein*, 292-382.

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**MONDAY, APR. 20, 2009**

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By the 1970s, Britain headed into a very difficult period. The country suffered "stagflation," nationalists in Scotland and Wales started to find an audience for their demands, and a growing number of people started to express their anger, not only in terms of politics but culturally as well. When Johnny Rotten snarled "there's no future for you," his words resonated with a large number of Britons. Margaret Thatcher promised answers. Today we'll explore the problems and Thatcher's proposed solution.

**Lecture:** Malaise and the Rise of Margaret Thatcher

**Reading:**

Devine, *Scottish Nation*, 565-617.

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**WEDNESDAY, APR. 22, 2009**

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Margaret Thatcher spoke with an overwhelmingly southern English voice and she irritated (to put it gently) many in places such as Wales, Scotland, and even Northern Ireland. The result was increasingly virulent nationalist agitation and growing calls for home rule or even independence. Commentators such as the Marxist Tom Nairn went to far as to predict that Britain was breaking apart. Indeed, when Tony Blair and his New Labour government took power, quickly implementing home rule for Scotland and Wales, it appeared that the crows were coming home to roost. Britain was, or so it seemed, coming apart at the borders. Today we follow the break-up story, asking whether the end of Britain is the next logical step in British historical development.

**Lecture:** The Break-up of Britain?

**Reading:**

Feeney, *Sinn Fein*, 383-442.

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**MONDAY, APR. 27, 2009: FINAL EXAM REVIEW**

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**Discussion:** Final exam review

**Reading:**

*No Reading Assignment.*

***NOTE: FINAL PAPER DUE***