

## Afghanistan and Britain:a political-history

Class code LONS PSUK 211S

Instructor Details Dr. Sevket Akyildiz

Class Details

Summer

3 Credits

**Prerequisites** 

None (a general knowledge and interest of world history)

## Class Description

This course provides a study of the modern British political and military involvement in the country of Afghanistan circa 1840 - 2012 (commencing with the British empire and continuing until today). Historical, political, military and economic themes are investigated, and examined around the Great Game theory and the extension of British interests abroad. We use British sources (academic and popular historiography, online newspapers and film) to help us understand better what is happening in the news today, and outline the Afghan-British relationship in modern history; the effect of military involvement on contemporary British society and British identity; and address core issues concerning British involvement in Afghanistan.

## Desired Outcomes

This course will enable students:

- to familiarize with some of the major themes in the modern history of the region from a British perspective
- to understand the transition from imperial structures to nation states, and the role played by Britain as colonial interventionist in the process.
- to understand historical processes from a continuity/change perspective particularly in the political, social and cultural fields.
- to engage with the cultural/political context within which British historical literature was produced.
- to develop independent study and group work and participate in tutorial groups, and group discussions.

Assessment Components

40% Two written papers of 2,000 words each. (Set questions)

30% Group Presentations (of two students working together, speaking for 15-20 minutes)

30% Class participation and weekly presentations (Set presentation research)

Failure to submit or fulfil any required course component results in failure of the class.

# Assessment Expectations

Please refer to your Arcadia University student handbook for information regarding the London Study Centre's general marking criteria and assessment expectations.

## Grade conversion

Please refer to your Arcadia University student handbook for the most up-to-date scale of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

Degree Class	Numerical Grade	Arcadia Letter Grade
First Class 1 <sup>st</sup>	75-100 68-74 65-67	A+ A A-
Upper Second Class 2.1	60-64 55-59 50-54	B+ B B-
Lower Second Class 2.2	47-49 43-46 40-42	C+ C C-
Third Class 3 <sup>rd</sup>	35-39	D
Fail	0-34	F

## Attendance Policy

ARCADIA has a strict policy about course attendance. Illness or family emergencies may require a student's absence. Such an absence must be documented by a physician's note or by consultation with the Arcadia University London Office prior to the absence. The Office will inform the Director of the circumstances requiring the absence. The Director will have the final decision on the disposition of an absence. The absent student is always responsible for assignments missed.

Unexcused absences from exams are not permitted and will result in failure of the exam. If you are granted an excused absence from examination (with authorisation, as above), your lecturer will decide how you will make-up the assessment component, if at all (by make-up examination, extra coursework, or an increased weighting on an alternate assessment component, etc.).

Arrival at work or class more than ten minutes late or leaving the class early will be considered an absence.

Please note that for classes involving a **field trip or other external visit,** transportation difficulties are never grounds for an excused absence. It is the student's responsibility to arrive at an agreed meeting point in a punctual and timely fashion.

## Late Submission of Work

Written work due in class must be submitted during the class time to the professor.

### Required Text(s)

(1) A course pack of the key readings will be produced by the convenor; this will contain approximately 22 photocopied book chapters (two for each week). (Copyright laws will be adhered.) The course pack will cost approximately 15 Pounds

These writings and photocopied chapters and short book sections will be taken from the recommended reading below and from the bibliography (see below). British newspaper articles and internet resources will be researched by the students. PDF files written by the convenor will available on Blackboard and other documents emailed to students. Students will be encouraged to visit the libraries at the School of Oriental and African Studies, Kings College, London and the British Library, Kings Cross; students will be told of the artefacts related to this course viewable at the British Museum.

#### Recommended reading:

Brandon, Piers. 2009. The Decline and Fall of the British Empire. London: Vintage. ISBN 0712668462

Hopkirk, Peter. 1992. The Great Game. London: Kodansha International.

Kipling, Rudyard. (1888) 2011. The Man Who Would Be King. London: Penguin. Free ebook on Amazon.co.uk

Newby, Eric. 1958. A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush. London: Picador. ISBN 0330266233

Lessing, Doris.(1987) The Wind Blows Away Our Words. London: Picador. ISBN 03330300768

Text(s)
purchased by
Arcadia
University

None

Internet Research Guidelines There is extensive use of the BBC website, The Times Archive, the Guardian Online Archive, CIA World Fact Book online, and other recommended sites as and when appropriate

Additional Required Equipment

None required

### Session 1

### BRITAIN AND THE GREAT GAME I

History: European-style colonialism: imperial Russia versus Great Britain: 'The Great Game'; explanation of the political and economic tussle between Great Britain and Russia over Central Asia and in particular Afghanistan.

Culture: British Victorian literature about colonial rule and expansionism into Central Asia and Afghanistan (and Western China), and what they said about the locals.

#### Skills and Learning:

- Discussion about the 'Great Game' and what is the new 'Great Game; what was / is Britain's role in this 'Game'?
- British Victorian historiography about Central Asia and Afghanistan
- Views of a young journalist called Winston Churchill 1897 on the tribal territories, Rudyard Kipling.

#### Readings:

Session 2

A PDF file will be produced by the course convener to explain and Encourage debate upon the Great Game and British imperial interests in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Film: DVD: Clips from The Man Who Would be King (1975) based on a book by Rudyard Kipling.

#### BRITAIN AND THE GREAT GAME II

History: European-style colonialism: imperial Russia versus Great Britain: 'The Great Game'; explanation of the political and economic tussle between Great Britain and Russia over Central Asia and in particular Afghanistan.

Culture: British Victorian literature about colonial rule and expansionism into Central Asia and Afghanistan, and what they said about the locals.

#### Skills and Learning:

- Discussion about the 'Great Game' and what is the new 'Great Game; what was / is Britain's role in this 'Game'?
- A study of British imperial aspirations in Asia and the link with exploration (see film clip about Aurel Stein)
- British Victorian historiography about Central Asia and Afghanistan

#### Readings:

A PDF file will be produced by the course convener to explain and Encourage debate upon the Great Game and British imperial interests in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Film: DVD: Clips from China's Frozen Desert. Aurel Stein and British imperialism.

#### Session 3 BRITISH WAR REPORTING ON AFGHANISTAN 1979-1988

History: The Soviet war in Afghanistan 1979-1988; military history, and local guerrillas

Culture: British newspaper reports and the BBC World Service; criticisms and covert challenges to Soviet interventionism in Afghanistan

#### Skills and Learning:

- Discussion about war and intervention in Afghanistan: external powers, formerly the British and now the Soviets; why are they intervening?
- The British response to Soviet intervention
- Discussion about the British boycott of the Moscow Olympics due to the Afghan War
- Review of BBC, The Times, and other British news sources about the war and government policies

#### Readings:

PDF document of key events and concepts on the Afghan War 1979-1988 produced by the course convener.

ASSIGNMENT ONE DUE (First 2,000 word assignment due)

#### Session 4

#### **BRITISH TRAVEL WRITING: AFGHANISTAN**

This class will address British travel writing in two forms: (a) travel writing and (b) British war writing that reflects the intervention by British military forces in Afghanistan.

#### Skills and Learning:

- Group discussion: what do we learn about Afghanistan, the Afghans, and the current war in Afghanistan from these sources? What do you think, and why?
- Do these texts help our understanding of the country? Do they repeat the Victorian Orientalist discourse? If so how and why?

#### Readings:

A PDF file will be produced by the course convenor on the theme of British travel and war literature:

Lessing, Doris. 1987. The Wind Blows Away Our Words. London: Picador.

Newby, Eric. 1958. A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush. London: Picador.

Lewis, D. 2008. Apache Down, London, Sphere.

Rashid, A. 2001. Taliban, London, Pan Books.

Shepherd, B. The Circuit, London, Pan Books

#### Session 5

#### AFGHANISTAN and BRITAIN TODAY

This class will examine the economic and political link between the Afghanistan and Britain.

History: Afghanistan 1979-2012 in the British media and scholarly texts. Issues discussed include war, Afghan compliance and resistance, terror, refugees, Iran, oil & gas. The intellectual content of the course will include a study of some the British sources on the history and political world of contemporary Afghanistan.

Culture: A close study of mainstream newspapers: How have the British sources portrayed the region today, why, and what does this mean for us? What do the core British sources tell us about neo-liberalism and globalization and Afghanistan? Why are the British still interested in Afghanistan? And how is this debated and portrayed in the British texts?

#### Skills and Learning:

- Discussion on the relationship between Afghanistan and Britain today: with a focus upon economic and political factors
- Why is Britain involved in Afghanistan (for a third time)?
- What is the moral justification for intervention? Consideration will be given to children's education, women's rights, ethnic minority rights, oil pipeline routes, and exploitation of natural minerals.

## Readings:

Online British newspaper and BBC archive materials will be used for this class.

A PDF document (of text and photographs) will be produced by the course convenor and will address and explain the above points and questions; students will be encouraged to think about these topical points in a Western context which they can relate too, and consider what this means for the people and governments of Central Asia.

British government and non-governmental websites, and British newspaper web sites will be recommended to view; an extended paper summarizing the key topics will be written and disseminated by

the course convenor.

ASSIGNMENT TWO DUE: Second 2,000 word assignment due

#### Session 6

#### THE EFFECTS OF MILITARY INTERVENTION ON BRITISH SOCIETY

The class will address issues of British military involvement in Central Asia and Afghanistan in the contemporary period. Students will gain an insight into the everyday domestic social outcome of financially costly wars that appear (arguably) to reap few positive results.

#### Skills and Learning:

What has been the popular response of the British society?; Analysis of why the Afghanistan intervention is generally supported by the public?

How have British citizens resisted or criticized the current war in Afghanistan.

How have some groups of British citizens used extreme right-wing political rhetoric and mobilization to question British multiculturalism values and why?

How viable is British involvement in Asian wars when its domestic society is multicultural; how does global economic recession further complicate this factor?

An organized class debate will be arranged to allow the students to debate these points independently and critically.

#### Readings:

A PDF document will be produced by the course convenor to help students structure their research and encourage them to think about the above questions. Select academic texts and journal articles will be summarized and photocopied for dissemination amongst the students.

BBC website downloads, *The Times, The Sun, The Guardian,* and The *Daily Mail.* The popular rhetoric in the mainstream British newspapers will provide the students with an array of simplistic and biased rhetoric.

Poem: Kipling's Poem "Young British Soldier" – a modern interpretation by a contemporary British soldier: *Daily Mail*.

**Assignment: Presentation Groups** 

Classroom Etiquette Eating is not permitted in any classrooms. Please kindly dispose of rubbish in the bins provided.

Required Cocurricular Activities None required

Suggested Cocurricular Activities None required