

HI34I-30 Medicine, Empire and the Body, c.1750-1914

24/25

Department

History

Level

Undergraduate Level 3

Module leader

Elise Smith

Credit value

30

Module duration

22 weeks

Assessment

60% coursework, 40% exam

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

This final-year undergraduate Advanced Option module explores the fundamental transformation in attitudes about health and the body in the age of European imperial expansion. Focusing on the period 1750 to 1914, it examines how encounters with unfamiliar bodies and diseases led Europeans to rethink both the theory and practice of medicine, and the nature of human diversity.

[Module web page](#)

Module aims

Through a critical examination of course materials, students will evaluate the relationship between global history and medical history, considering how imperial aims influenced medical culture, and how medical realities in turn inflected the practices of imperial management and control. Using historical, anthropological, literary and visual sources, students will gain an overview of a variety of topics illustrating European self-confidence in its natural knowledge and superiority and how fears of pollution and degeneration came to challenge these certainties. This entails a review of primary sources, secondary literature, digital resources, and a field trip to the Natural History Museum and Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford to consider how biological and cultural artefacts disseminated ideas

about racial 'evolution' and 'extinction' to the broader public. Through such means, students will learn about the development of racial theory at home and abroad, and its role in shaping modern anthropology and the character of colonial medicine. By the end of the year, students will be able to situate how racialized bodies, experiences of health and illness, medical research, and anthropological theories framed the imperial enterprise.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Autumn Term

1. Overview: Science and Empire
2. The Columbian Exchange
3. First Encounters and the Origins of Anthropology
4. Medicinal Plants I: Exploration
5. Medicinal Plants II: Exploitation
6. Reading Week
7. Disease and the Environment
8. Difference on Display
9. Field Trip: Pitt Rivers Museum
10. Collecting Empire

Spring Term

11. The Control of the Caribbean
12. Colonial Medicine in South Asia
13. Settling Africa
14. Tropical Medicine
15. Depicting the Irish
16. Reading Week
17. Evolution, Anthropology, and Racial Science
18. Theories of Racial 'Extinction'
19. Sexuality, Gender and Empire
20. Medical Colonisation

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a systematic knowledge and understanding of the role of natural knowledge in the production of imperial ideology between 1750 and 1914
- Critically analyse and evaluate a broad range of primary sources (including textual, visual, and material sources) relating to imperial, medical and scientific history.
- Effectively communicate ideas, and make informed, coherent and persuasive arguments about how notions about race, health, and human difference were conceptualized and rationalised against the backdrop of European imperialism
- Critically review and consolidate theoretical, methodological, and historiographical ideas

relating to imperial, medical and scientific history

Indicative reading list

Illustrative Bibliography

- Denis R. Alexander and Ronald L. Numbers (eds.) *Biology and Ideology: From Descartes to Dawkins* (Chicago, 2010)
- Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health, and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Durham, 2006)
- David Arnold, *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies* (Manchester, 1988)
- David Arnold (ed.), *Warm Climates and Western Medicine* (Amsterdam, 1996)
- David Bindman, *Ape to Apollo: Aesthetics and the Idea of Race in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2002)
- Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800-1930* (Ithaca, 2003)
- Alice L. Conklin, *In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850-1950* (Ithaca, 2013)
- Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange* (Westport, 1972)
- Pratik Chakrabarti, *Medicine and Empire, 1600-1960* (Palgrave, 2013)
- Philip Curtin, *Death by Migration: Europe's Encounter with the Tropical World in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1989)
- L. Perry Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, Revised Ed. (Washington, 1997)
- James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina, 2013)
- Saul Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa* (Cambridge, 1995)
- Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin (eds.), *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies* (Edinburgh, 1997)
- Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Washington, 1996)
- Mark Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions: Health, Race, Environment and British Imperialism, 1600-1850* (Oxford, 1999)
- Nicholas Hudson: 'From "Nation" to "Race": The Origins of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29 (1996), 247-264.
- Eric T. Jennings, *Curing the Colonizers: Hydrotherapy, Climatology, and French Colonial Spas* (Durham, 2005)
- Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics: Policing Venereal Diseases in the British Empire* (London, 2003)
- J. R. McNeil, 'The Ecological Basis of Warfare in the Caribbean, 1700-1904' in M. Ultee (ed.) *Adapting to Conditions: War and Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Alabama, 1986), 26-42.
- Ronald L. Numbers (Ed.) *Medicine in the New World: New Spain, New France, and New England* (Knoxville, 1987)
- Paolo Palladino and Michael Worboys, 'Science and Imperialism', *Isis* 84 (1993), 91-102
- Sadiya Qureshi: *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago, 2011)
- Michael Sappol and Stephen P. Rice (eds.), *A Cultural History of the Human Body in the Age of Empire* (London, 2014)

- Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender and the Making of Modern Science* (Rutgers, 2003)
- Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800-1960* (London, 1982)

Sample Primary Source Extracts

- James Johnson, *The Influence of Tropical Climates on European Constitutions* (1827)
- Benjamin Moseley, *A Treatise on Tropical Diseases; On Military Operations; and on the Climate of the West Indies* (1789)
- Charles Darwin, *The Voyage of the Beagle* (1839)
- Charles White, *Account of the Regular Gradation in Man, and in Different Animals and Vegetables* (1799)
- Hannah Augstein, *Race: The Origins of an Idea, 1760-1850* (Bristol, 1996)
- House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, *Contagious Diseases: A Bill for the Prevention of Contagious Diseases at Certain Naval and Military Stations* (1864)

[View reading list on Talis Aspire](#)

Subject specific skills

See learning outcomes.

Transferable skills

See learning outcomes.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	18 sessions of 2 hours (12%)
Tutorials	4 sessions of 1 hour (1%)
Other activity	4 hours (1%)
Private study	256 hours (85%)
Total	300 hours

Private study description

History modules require students to undertake extensive independent research and reading to prepare for seminars and assessments. As a rough guide, students will be expected to read and prepare to comment on three substantial texts (articles or book chapters) for each seminar taking approximately 3 hours. Each assessment requires independent research, reading around 6-10 texts and writing and presenting the outcomes of this preparation in an essay, review, presentation

or other related task.

Other activity description

Revision sessions

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group D3

	Weighting	Study time
Seminar contribution	10%	
1500 word essay	10%	
3000 word essay	40%	
7 day take-home essay with citations and a bibliography	40%	

Feedback on assessment

Written feedback provided via Tabula; optional oral feedback in office hours.

[Past exam papers for HI34I](#)

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 3 of UENA-VQ32 Undergraduate English and History
- UENA-VQ33 Undergraduate English and History (with Intercalated year)
 - Year 4 of VQ33 English and History (with Intercalated year)
 - Year 4 of VQ33 English and History (with Intercalated year)
- Year 4 of UFRA-R1VA Undergraduate French and History
- Year 4 of UGEA-R2V1 Undergraduate German and History
- Year 4 of ULNA-R4V1 Undergraduate Hispanic Studies and History
- UHIA-V100 Undergraduate History
 - Year 3 of V100 History

- Year 3 of V100 History
- UPDA-Y306 Undergraduate History (Part-Time)
 - Year 3 of Y306 History (Part Time)
 - Year 3 of Y306 History (Part Time)
- Year 3 of UHIA-V102 Undergraduate History (Renaissance and Modern History Stream)
- Year 4 of UHIA-V103 Undergraduate History (Renaissance and Modern History Stream) (with Year Abroad)
- Year 4 of UHIA-V101 Undergraduate History (with Year Abroad)
- Year 3 of UIPA-V1L8 Undergraduate History and Global Sustainable Development
- Year 4 of UITA-R3V2 Undergraduate History and Italian
- Year 3 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
- Year 4 of UHIA-V1V6 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with Year Abroad)
- UHIA-VM11 Undergraduate History and Politics
 - Year 3 of VM11 History and Politics
 - Year 3 of VM11 History and Politics
 - Year 3 of VM11 History and Politics
- Year 4 of UHIA-VM12 Undergraduate History and Politics (with Year Abroad)
- Year 3 of UHIA-VL13 Undergraduate History and Sociology
- Year 4 of UHIA-VL14 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with Year Abroad)
- UVCA-LA99 Undergraduate Liberal Arts
 - Year 3 of LA99 Liberal Arts
 - Year 3 of LA92 Liberal Arts with Classics
 - Year 3 of LA73 Liberal Arts with Design Studies
 - Year 3 of LA83 Liberal Arts with Economics
 - Year 3 of LA82 Liberal Arts with Education
 - Year 3 of LA95 Liberal Arts with English
 - Year 3 of LA81 Liberal Arts with Film and Television Studies
 - Year 3 of LA80 Liberal Arts with Global Sustainable Development
 - Year 3 of LA93 Liberal Arts with Global Sustainable Development
 - Year 3 of LA97 Liberal Arts with History
 - Year 3 of LA91 Liberal Arts with Life Sciences
 - Year 3 of LA75 Liberal Arts with Modern Languages and Cultures
 - Year 3 of LA96 Liberal Arts with Philosophy
 - Year 3 of LA94 Liberal Arts with Theatre and Performance Studies