

Decolonisation of the British Empire in Asia and Africa, c. 1945-1997

Module Convenor: Dr. Florence Mok

Course Description:

After the end of the Second World War, the British Empire shifted its imperialist policy due to increased economic costs to sustain its colonies and the loss of strategically important spots, such as India and Suez. The rise of the United States and the Soviet Union also led to changing balance of power. With the rise of nationalist sentiments in Asia and Africa, it became increasingly uneconomical and difficult for Britain to hold on to colonies, leading to decolonisations in the 1950s and 1960s. This module explores the political, economic, social and diplomatic factors behind the decline of the British Empire and whether the Empire was strong or weak post-1945. It also examines how patterns of decolonisation varied in British colonies in Asia and Africa. Decolonisation was executed through diverging means in different pace. For example, democratisations and decentralisations took place in Malaya and Kenya soon after the Second World War while democratic reforms were absent in Hong Kong. While British administration ceased in Singapore in 1963, Hong Kong remained a British colony until 1997. Lastly, the module investigates various means employed by the colonial governments to suppress dissidents and capture the ‘hearts and minds’ of the locals during the transitional period, ranging from psychological tests conducted in the Malaya Emergency and secret opinion polling systems in Hong Kong, to ‘sanitary surveillance’ in Singapore and repressive interrogation camps in Mau Mau Uprisings. In doing so, students will critically examine the relationships between the British Empire and its colonies, the Cold War and decolonisations, and culture and colonial statecrafts in Africa and Asia from 1945 to 1997.

Module Learning Outcomes:

- An in depth understanding of a specific historical topic using primary and secondary materials
- Ability to analyse original sources and relate primary and secondary materials to one another
- Familiarity with key debates and evolving historiography

Module Organization:

The module divides into four elements, which map onto the assessment:

We pool knowledge and debate the dominant themes of the British Empire’s decolonisation history. These slots will be organised informally, as workshops, and lay down foundation knowledge for all four modes of assessment: class participation; the annotated bibliography; the gobbet test and the assessed essay of 4,000-word.

1. Class Participation (10%)

Each student should at least present once throughout the semester. The presentation and class participation will count towards the final grade.

2. Annotated Bibliography (20%)

An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to books, articles, and documents. Each citation is followed by a brief (usually about 150 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph, the annotation. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited.

Creating an annotated bibliography calls for the application of a variety of intellectual skills: concise exposition, succinct analysis and informed library research. The creation of an annotated bibliography is to build towards the assessed essay. It should include: full bibliographic citation, author's background, scope of the work, main argument, methodology, sources, strengths and weaknesses, your voice and personal conclusion.

3. Test: Gobbet Analysis (30%)

Practices of gobbet analysis run from week 4 to 10 on each topic. In week 11, there will be a gobbet paper test, which is consisted of 6 questions. You need to choose 3 out of 6 to answer.

4. Assessed essay work (40%)

This element runs through the whole year, and involves independent learning. You must choose at least one of the case studies to be researched during the year. This 4000-word essay is due after Easter. Under my guidance (there will be seminar space and tutorial times to converse about your focus and findings), you will craft an assessed essay question and deploy published sources to answer it.

Teaching Programme:

Week	Discussion Group	Learning Focus
1	Briefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allocate tasks and presentations• Understand the structure of the course and assessments.
2	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set up the module• Introduce students to the course structure• Assign presentations and tasks• Get to know the British Empire and its strength in the pre-war period.
3	Decline of the British Empire?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand prominent historical debates on decolonisation of the British Empire, i.e. why it took place after the Second World War.• Analyse how different factors, political (e.g. Labour Government in power and rise of the United States and the Soviet Union), economic (e.g. changing British economic policies and increased cost to sustain the Empire) and social (e.g. rise of nationalist sentiments in Africa and Asia) constituted to general democratisations in British colonies in the 1950s and 1960s.
4	Decolonisation in Malaya	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore the British attempts to decolonise Malaya in the immediate post-war period and

		<p>why the proposal of a Malaya Union failed in 1948.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate ethnic tensions and democratisation in the Federation of Malaya from 1948 to 1963.
5	Malaya Emergency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine the cause of the Malaya Emergency in 1948. Analyse the strategies, psychological and military, used by the British bureaucrats to counter the insurgency. Look at the British policy of deporting Chinese suspects during the Emergency and its impacts.
6	Decolonisation in Singapore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse how and why Britain's long-term plans for Singapore differed from Malaya. Discuss political reforms and surveillance system introduced by the colonial government in Singapore from 1945 to 1963.
7	Indirect Rule in Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss how indirect rule, such as the use of District Officers, was implemented in Kenya in the post-war period. Compare the case of Kenya to decolonisations in Malaya and Singapore.
8	Mau Mau Uprisings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the origins and development of Mau Mau Uprising. Explore the repressive means used by the British to contain the rebellions. Look at how colonial regime's policy of repression led to rising humanitarian concerns and undesirable international repercussions.
9	Hong Kong as an Anomaly?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate why the British held on to the colony until 1997 despite decolonisations in other colonies. Look at how geopolitical factors (such as, military indefensibility, China's resistance and the colony's role as a bulwark against communism in the Cold War) made Hong Kong an 'anomaly' in the British Empire.
10	Decolonisation in Hong Kong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore how Hong Kong was 'decolonised' without the introduction of an electoral system, (such as use of covert opinion polls and changing relationship between the colonial government and the metropolis).
11	Test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gobbet Test
12	Tutor Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up essay questions (a 4,000-word essay) based on student's chosen theme with a title agreed by the tutor.

Assessment:

- Class participation and presentation (10%)
- An annotated bibliography (20%)
- A gobbet test (30%)
- A 4,000-word essay (40%)

Key Text:

David M. Anderson, 'British Abuse and Torture in Kenya's Counter-insurgency, 1952-1960', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 23:4-5(2012), pp. 700-719.

P.J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Crisis and Deconstruction, 1914-1990* (London, 1993)

John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (New York, 2009)

John Darwin, 'Hong Kong in British Decolonisation', in Judith Brown and Rosemary Foot (eds) *Hong Kong's Transitions, 1842-1997* (London, 1997), pp. 16-32.

Caroline Elkins, 'The Struggle for Mau Mau Rehabilitation in Late Colonial Kenya', *The Institutional Journal of African Historical Studies*, 33:1 (2000), pp. 25-57.

T. N. Harper, *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya* (Cambridge, 1999)

A. G. Hopkins, 'Rethinking Decolonisation', *Past & Present*, 200 (2008), pp. 211-247.

Joanna Lewis: *Empire State-Building: War and Welfare in Kenya, 1925-52* (Oxford, 2000)

Erik Linstrum, *Ruling Minds: Psychology in the British Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2016)

Wm. Roger Louis and Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Decolonization', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 22:3 (1994), pp. 462-511.

Chi-kwan Mark, 'Lack of Means or Loss of Will? The United Kingdom and the Decolonization of Hong Kong, 1957-1967', *The International History Review*, 31:1 (2009), pp. 45-71.

Jurgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Princeton, 1997)

A. J. Stockwell, 'British Imperial Policy and Decolonisation in Malaya, 1942—52', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 13: 1 (1984), 68-87.

C. M. Turnbull, *A History of Malaya, Singapore and Brunei* (Sydney, 1989)

Yeo Kim Wah, *Political Development in Singapore, 1945-1955* (Singapore, 1973)

Brenda S. A. Yeoh, *Contesting Space in Colonial Singapore: Power Relations and the Urban Built Environment* (Singapore, 2003)