HIST2159
Chasing the Dragon: Alcohol, Drugs and Imperialism in Asia, 1700-2000
6 credits – total learning hours: 150
Session C: July 16 – August 3, 2018
10:00-13:00, Mon-Fri

Session
Course Description
This course aims to introduce students to key themes and debates in the study of intoxicating substances and imperialism, with a focus on Asia. It will explore the various uses to which alcohol and drugs were put in the colonies and in the independent countries which were confronted with the realities of imperial hegemony. It will unpack the myriad interests which underpinned and therefore characterised colonial drug policy. Whilst it acknowledges the impact of colonial policies on the rise of nationalist movements, the course seeks to transcend the paradigm of exploitation and resistance. For instance, it will examine how the farms and monopolies that were established to ensure the steady supply of alcohol and drugs introduced new opportunities as well as challenges for subject populations, and probe the transnational networks that both enabled and regulated their consumption. To this end, students will be invited to think critically about the political, economic and social dimensions of the subject in order to derive a nuanced understanding of the interrelationship between drugs and power.

Outline

1. Introduction
This week’s seminar will introduce students to relevant aspects of imperialism in Asia and signpost the topics that will be taken up for discussion over the next eleven weeks.


2. Alcohol and European Society in Asia
We will discuss alcohol’s role in shaping European social life in the colonies, with a focus on clubs and cantonments where the “knife-edge distinction between drinking and drunkenness” tended to be especially pronounced.

— Douglas M. Peers, ‘Imperial Vice: Sex, Drink and the Health of British Troops in North Indian Cantonments, 1800-1858’ in David Killingray and David Omissi (eds),
3. Medicine or Poison? Colonial Knowledge and the Science of Drug Use
This week’s discussion will examine the scientific discourses, technologies and practices that accompanied the use of drugs for medicinal purposes. We will take up the question of how alcohol and drugs were transformed into medicine or poison under the conditions created by imperialism.


4. Race, Addiction and the Colonial Gaze
Picking up from where we left off last week, we will explore the interrelationship between, and the implications of, the scientific constructs of ‘addiction’ and racial difference for both sides of the imperial divide.

— G.B Souza, “Early British Encounters with the Indian Opium Eater” in Mills and Barton, Drugs and Empires.

5. Contentious Commodities: Drugs and the Global Economy
This week’s seminar will look at the circulation of drugs in the global economy. It will examine the conditions that facilitated the inter-Asian trade in opium and consider the implications of drug use in the West.
6. Conflict and Compromise over Opium
We will discuss the challenges and opportunities that the Western powers’ interest in opium presented for Asian societies.

— Christopher Munn, “The Hong Kong Opium Revenue, 1845-1885,” in Brook and Tadashi, *Opium Regimes*.
— Rush, “Opium Farms” and “Channelling Influence: Chinese, Priyayi and Dutch” in *Opium to Java*.
— Ashley Wright, “Regulating Opium in British Burma, 1852-1885: Addiction, Ethnicity and Revenue,” in *Opium and Empire in Southeast Asia: Regulating Consumption in British Burma*.

7. Monopolising Vice: Revenue from the Demon Drink
This week’s discussion will focus on the consumption of alcohol and trace the implications of colonial alcohol policy, particularly with the establishment of government monopolies, for Asian societies.

— Marc Jason Gilbert, “Empire and Excise: Drugs and Drink Revenue and the Fate of States in South Asia,” in Mills and Barton (eds), *Drugs and Empires*, pp. 116-141.

8. Reform, Regulation and the Moral Economy of Empire I
We will examine the conflict between the imperative of revenue maximisation on the one hand, and the moral obligations of the civilising mission on the other. How was the addiction of subject populations perceived and managed in the metropoles?

— Michael Mann, “Torchbearers upon the Path of Progress”: Britain’s Ideology of a “Moral and Material Progress” in India, An Introductory Essay” in Harald Fischer-
— Rush, “The Opium Regie and Ethical Java,” in Opium to Java.

9. Reform, Regulation and the Moral Economy of Empire II
Building on last week’s discussion, we will examine the agenda, strategy and outcomes of the international regulatory mechanisms that sprung into action as a result of addiction.


10. Revolt and Resistance
This week’s discussion will delve into efforts by subject populations to resist colonial drug policies, the reasons for their resistance, and their correlation with local conditions, society and culture.

— Rush, “Relentless War! Against the Opium Farm”, Opium to Java.

11. Postcolonial Legacies and Challenges
We will evaluate the impact of colonial drug policies on the postcolonial situation: was it positive, negative, or possibly mixed?

12. Mock Convention Week
By way of concluding the course, students will form groups representing the signatories of the International Opium Convention of 1912, some of which were the United Kingdom, the United States, France, the Netherlands, China and Siam. While India, Indonesia and Vietnam were not present at the Convention owing to their status as colonial dependencies, their concerns will be represented by student groups. During the seminar, the ‘country’ teams will put forth their arguments first as to why the trade and consumption of opium should be allowed, prohibited or regulated before they finally arrive at a consensus. This exercise in historical simulation will require students to apply relevant information and perspectives from the course material to defend a certain viewpoint. They would also need to research the International Opium Convention and identify the key concerns that the Convention surfaced as they debate the status of opium. A group mark will be awarded for the demonstration of creative and critical thought and application.

Outcomes

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<th>Course Learning Outcomes – On completing the course, students will be able to:</th>
<th>Alignment with Common Core Programme Learning Outcome(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Explain major issues relating to drugs and imperialism in Asia.</td>
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<td>2. Discuss the objectives, strategies, and outcomes of imperial drug policies.</td>
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<td>3. Compare, where applicable, the responses of Asian societies to imperial drug policies.</td>
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<td>4. Evaluate the impact of imperial drug policies for postcolonial governments.</td>
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Assessment Tasks

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<tr>
<th>Assessment Method</th>
<th>Details of Assignment</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Alignment with Course Learning Outcome(s)</th>
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<td>Active tutorial participation</td>
<td>Assessment will be through active participation in seminars.</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>Mock Convention</td>
<td>Students will participate in a mock international convention in which they synthesise and apply their learning from the course (refer to outline).</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>Essay</td>
<td>Students will write an essay from a topic of their choice as listed in the course description. Marks will be awarded for the critical application of course readings and demonstration of intellectual rigour.</td>
<td>50</td>
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