

HIST XXXX

Buzzed Britons: The Culture of Drink in the Early Modern British Empire



Vaughn Scribner
Sample Syllabus

Oh, alcohol. Today, American society views it as a largely extracurricular beverage, best enjoyed in off-hour events like parties, sporting events, celebrations, and get-togethers (sometimes too liberally, with interesting outcomes). In the early modern period (1500-1800), however, alcoholic beverages were far more than peripheral—they were *the primary means of liquid consumption* for an expanding populace of Britons. Babies slurped alcoholic cider, laborers gulped beer throughout the day, elite women used liquors and wines as beauty products, and doctors prescribed strong spirits as medicine. And the propensity for alcoholic consumption was not limited to one people or place. Whether imbibing Madeira wine from the small islands off the coast of Portugal, rum from the Caribbean, fine wines from Portugal, France, and Spain, whiskey from the backwoods of British America, beer from England, or scotch from Scotland, men and women went great lengths to consume beverages from around the globe.

Yet the culture of drink extended far beyond alcoholic options. Europeans mixed their rum with West Indian lemons, limes and sugar as well as various spices from the Pacific Spice Islands. By the eighteenth century, Britons became addicted to tea from China, coffee from the Middle East, and chocolate from South America, all of which they also flavored with a variety of Old and New World spices and sweeteners. Merchants became incredibly wealthy off these beverages as they navigated global trade networks to distribute various wares to eager consumers. The consumption of alcoholic and caffeinated beverages were thus inherently linked to global imperial trends in the early modern period.

This class will use the culture of drink to understand larger trends and ideas in the early modern world such as imperialism, globalization, race, gender, class, nature, slavery, sociability, consumption, and trade. For lack of a better phrase, we will investigate the early modern British Empire through the bottom of a pint glass (and shot glass, and tea cup, and rum punch bowl, and

wine glass). Though no alcoholic beverages will be consumed during class, I guarantee you will never look at a morning brew of coffee, evening brew of beer, or the British Empire the same way again.

Course Goals:

- Engage with the culture of drink in the early modern world on a critical level, keeping a constant eye to how the consumption of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages opens not-so-obvious doors onto understanding myriad trends and ideas that shaped the early modern British experience.
- Understand the early modern world as an ever-globalizing, ever-changing mixture of people, places, and ideas that constantly clashed.
- Gain a deeper understanding of how colonial Americans viewed beverages, and what they did to produce, consume, and distribute these valuable commodities.
- Gain a fuller understanding of historians' changing perception of the past through thorough reading and discussion of secondary sources, including theory.
- Become better, more critical writers and speakers. I am putting a heavy emphasis on helping you to express yourself, both through the written and spoken word.
- Become more effective readers. I will teach you how to "gut" a book's content (i.e. take out the most important material for your purposes). Not only will this save you time, but it will also help you to hone in on the author's overarching argument(s).
- Ultimately, this course is directed not only at expanding your knowledge and understanding of the culture of drink in the early modern world, but is also centered around making you more active, engaged thinkers. I want you to question the past, and to *develop your own opinion* on various subjects, issues, and ideas that still affect us today.

Required Texts:

- Mack P. Holt, ed. *Alcohol: A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2006).
- Sharon V. Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking in Early America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).
- Gina Hames, *Alcohol in World History* (New York: Routledge Press, 2012).
- Bennett Alan Weinberg and Bonnie K. Bealer, *The World of Caffeine: The Science and Culture of the World's Most Popular Drug* (New York: Routledge Press, 2002).

- Course Reading Packet.

Points Break Down:

Weekly Reaction Papers- 20%

Participation- 25%

Book Review- 15%

Book Review- 15%

Final Paper- 25%

Assignments:

Weekly Reaction Papers (Fourteen Total):

Each week (Friday) a short writing assignment will be due. The two-page reaction paper will show that you have a thorough understanding of the week's reading assignments. I expect you to briefly explain the content of the readings, and how they helped you to more fully understand various factors of the culture of drink and the British Empire.

In each reaction paper, I want you to clearly define:

- 1) The secondary source authors' argument(s).
- 2) Praise and/or criticisms of the secondary source's effectiveness.
- 3) How the secondary source changed or reinforced what you already knew or thought about the past.

Beyond showing me your understanding of the documents in writing, this will also help you prepare for discussion on Friday, which leads me to the next portion of your grade...

Class Attendance/Participation:

Although lecture will be an important part of this class, the fifty-minute class period will also be devoted to class-wide discussion and critical analysis of readings. Fridays, in particular, will be devoted exclusively to discussion and analysis of assigned readings, etc. For this reason, your participation grade will not be simply determined by attendance. Rather, I will grade you on how well you participate upon arriving at class. This means you need to come prepared and ready to contribute to discussion with well-informed opinions. Therefore, even if you come to class every day, if you do not talk you will not receive an "A" for participation. Finally, we are all adults, and I expect you to treat me—and each other—accordingly. Disrespectful behavior towards your classmates or me will not be tolerated.

Final Paper:

Students will complete a six-to-eight page paper addressing the question I provide, due at the end of the semester. A successful paper will show a solid argument and proficient knowledge of the culture of drink and those people, places, and ideas that shaped it. This question will be open-ended, without a clear-cut “right” or “wrong” answer. I want you to reflect on what *you* think about the past, and make this clear in your well-developed, concise, argumentative answer. Utilize the secondary sources we have analyzed throughout the semester to support your contentions.

The paper should be typed (double-spaced), with one-inch margins, a title page, and footnotes/citations. Please use the Chicago Manual of Style. A letter grade will be subtracted for every day late.

Book Reviews (2):

You will each choose two of the following (listed) books to review. Your first book review will be due one month into the semester, while the second book review will be due two months into the semester. I expect these book reviews to be more than a simple explanation of the book’s argument and trajectory. I expect you to engage with the material, and analyze the book’s argument(s), scope, and effectiveness with a critical eye. Point out where you think the book succeeds in its goals—and where it does not. How effective was the author’s argument? How well did he/she follow through on what they set out to do? Where is there room for improvement? Read this book with a *critical eye*. A letter grade will be subtracted for every day late.

Books:

- T.H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992).
- Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution: Taverngoing and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).
- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006).
- Judith M. Bennett, *Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England: Women’s Work in a Changing World, 1300-1600* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
- Thomas Brennan, *Public Drinking and Popular Culture in Eighteenth Century Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

- Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200-1830* (New York: Longman, Inc., 1983).
- Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- David Conroy, *In Public Houses: Drink and the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).
- Brian Cowen, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).
- Alice Morse Earl, *Stage-Coach and Tavern Days* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912).
- Aytoun Ellis, *The Penny Universities: A History of the Coffee-Houses* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1956).
- David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
- David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of American Trade and Taste*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
- Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England: 1727-1783* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).
- Sarah Hand Meacham, *Every Home a Distillery: Alcohol, Gender, and Technology in the Colonial Chesapeake* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).
- Sydney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985).
- Marcy Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures: A History of Tobacco and Chocolate in the Atlantic World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).
- Julia Roberts, *In Mixed Company: Taverns and Public Life in Upper Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009).
- Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants*, trans. by David Jacobsen (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992).

Schedule of Classes

Week One: The Culture of Drink, An Overview

Class One: An Empire Drenched in Alcohol

Class Two: Caffeine Steps onto the World Stage

Class Three: Discussion of Readings/Lectures

Secondary Readings:

- Holt, *Alcohol*, Introduction.
- Hames, *Alcohol in World History*, Chapter One and Four.
- Weinberg, *The World of Caffeine*, Part One.

Week Two: Empire—How the British Empire Fueled Itself on Booze

Class One: What is Empire? How Should We Understand It?

Class Two: Was the British Empire Global in the Early Modern Period?

Class Three: Discussion of Readings/Lecture

Secondary Readings:

- Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), Introduction. Packet.
- Alison Games, "Beyond the Atlantic: English Globetrotters and Transoceanic Connections," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63.4 (2006): 675-692. JStor.

Week Three: Constructing the “Other”—Race and Alcohol

Class One: Deadly Medicine: Native Americans’ Struggles with Alcohol

Class Two: Blacks and Alcohol: The New York Slave Conspiracy of 1741

Class Three: Discussion of Readings/Lecture

Secondary Readings:

- Peter Mancall, *Deadly Medicine: Indians and Alcohol in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), Chapter One. Packet.

- Jessica Kross, “‘If you will not drink with me, you must fight with me’: The Sociology of Drinking in the Middle Colonies,” *Pennsylvania History* 64 (1997): 28-55. JStor.

Week Four: Gender—How Women Shaped the Production and Consumption Patterns of Alcohol and Caffeine

Class One: Every Home a Distillery: Women as Prime Alcoholic Producers

Class Two: The Tea Table: Women’s Roles in Fostering New Drugs

Class Three: Discussion of Readings/Lecture

Secondary Readings:

- Sarah Hand Meacham, “‘They Will Be Adjudged by Their Drink, What Kinde of Housewives They Are’: Gender, Technology, and Household Cidering in England and the Chesapeake, 1690-1760,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 111 (2003): 117-150. JStor.
- Salinger, *Taverns*, Chapter Two.

Week Five: Class: “The Rabble” and the Culture of Drink

Class One: Perceived Problems throughout the Empire

Class Two: The Lower Classes Fight Back—Alcohol, Caffeine, and the Consumer Revolution

Class Three: Discussion of Readings/Lecture

Secondary Readings:

- Salinger, *Taverns*, Chapters Three, Six, Seven.

Week Six: Nature—The Most Natural of All Beverages?

Class One: That Dangerous Liquid: Early Modern Views toward Water and Nature

Class Two: Elixirs of Health?: Alcohol and Caffeinated Beverages as Healthy Substitutes

Class Three: Discussion of Readings/Lecture

Secondary Readings:

- Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), Chapter One. Packet.

Week Seven: Slavery: How Alcohol and Caffeine Fueled the Early Modern Slave Trade

Class One: Rum and Sugar: The Triangular Trade Network

Class Two: Beyond the Atlantic: Tea, Coffee, and Spices

Class Three: Discussion of Readings/Lecture

Secondary Readings:

- Vincent Brown, "Eating the Dead: Consumption and Regeneration in the History of Sugar," *Food and Foodways* 16:2 (2008): 117-126. JStor.

- Weinberg, *The World of Caffeine*, 51-83.

Week Eight: Sociability: A Drink Suited to Connecting with the World

Class One: Imperial Pubs: Taverns as Central Spaces of Global Connection

Class Two: Cosmopolitan Colonists: The Faults of Global Connections

Class Three: Discussion of Readings/Lecture

Secondary Readings:

- Vaughn Scribner, "Cosmopolitan Colonists: Gentlemen's Pursuit of Cosmopolitanism and Hierarchy in British American Taverns," *Atlantic Studies* 10.4 (Dec., 2013): 467-496. Packet.

- Holt, *Alcohol*, Chapter Six.

Week Nine: Consumption: Alcohol, Caffeine, and the Consumer Revolution

Class One: The Consumer Revolution: New Opportunities and New Problems

Class Two: Tea Boom: How the Poor Sipped Tea Out of Porcelain

Class Three: Discussion of Readings/Lecture

Secondary Readings:

- T.H. Breen, "An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690-1776." *The Journal of British Studies* 25 (1986): 467-499. JStor.

Week Ten: Trade: Merchants Become "Citizens of the World?"

Class One: Beyond Europe: The Early (Global) Alcohol and Caffeine Trade

Class Two: Revolution and Trade

Class Three: Discussion of Readings/Lecture

Secondary Readings:

- David Hancock, "The Triumphs of Mercury: Connection and Control in the Emerging Atlantic Economy," in *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500-1800*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Patricia Denault (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 1-42. Packet.
- Hames, *Alcohol in World History*, Chapter Three.

Week Eleven: Globalization: Alcohol and Caffeine as Manifestations of Global Empire

Class One: Rum Punch: A Globally-Sourced Beverage and What It Meant for Britons' Worldviews

Class Two: Tea, Coffee, and Chocolate: Beverages of International Taste

Class Three: Discussion of Readings/Lecture

Secondary Readings:

- Woodruff D. Smith, "Complications of the Commonplace: Tea, Sugar, and Imperialism," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23 (1992): 259-278. JStor
- Troy Bickham, "Eating the Empire: Intersections of Food, Cookery, and Imperialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Past and Present* 198 (Feb., 2008): 71-109. JStor.

Week Twelve: Religion: Pre-Cursors to Prohibition

Class One: The First Great Awakening

Class Two: Caffeine—A Godly Substitute?

Class Three: Discussion of Readings/Lecture

Secondary Readings:

- Hames, *Alcohol in World History*, Chapter Five
- Holt, *Alcohol*, Chapter Three.

Week Thirteen: Revolution: The Culture of Drink and the Age of Revolutions

Class One: Trade and Consumerism

Class Two: Riots and Debauchery

Class Three: Discussion of Readings/Lecture

Secondary Readings:

- Benjamin Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots: The Boston Tea Party & the Making of America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), Introduction and Chapter One. Packet.
- T.H. Breen, "The Baubles of Britain: The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 119 (1988): 73-104. JStor.

Week Fourteen: Reflections—How Have Our Perceptions Changed?

Class One: The Prohibition Era

Class Two: Starbucks, Budweiser, and the Culture of Drink Today

Class Three: Discussion of Readings/Lecture

Secondary Readings:

- Walter Loeb, "Starbucks: Global Coffee Giant Has New Growth Plans," *Forbes*, January 1, 2013:
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/walterloeb/2013/01/31/starbucks-global-coffee-giant-has-new-growth-plans/>
- Justin Parkinson, "Can Politicians Save Britain's Pubs?" *BBC News*, February 26, 2013:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-21402497>