

HIST 32151: From New Left to New Times: Socialist ideas in post-war Britain

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Cover of *Black Dwarf*, June 1968

Course description

Left-wing ideas returned to prominence in the wake of the 2008 financial crash and what Mark Fisher called the ‘slow cancellation of the future’; even by 2019 having been held to have ‘won the argument’ about the nature of capitalism. This course provides students with a longer intellectual history of post-war British socialism. Structured around set-piece debates on the Left, it examines how socialist thinkers tackled issues including affluence, the end of empire, globalisation, the dissolution of the ‘traditional’ working class and the rise of New Right. It will assess how they engaged with theoretical frameworks such as class, culture, gender, race and the

self. Through analysis of primary and secondary material, students will attain a detailed understanding of the intellectual history of British socialism, and the changing cultural, social and political context of late twentieth-century Britain.

Teaching methods: 1 x 3-hour slot. 1 hour lecture then two hour seminar.

Indicative syllabus

1. Introduction: writing the history of the Left
2. Culture and society in the 1950s
3. Modernising Britain: socialist theory and the 'Nairn-Anderson thesis'
4. 1968 and after
5. Liberation and new social movements
6. Culture and counter-hegemony
7. Race, nation and the crisis
8. Understanding 'Thatcherism'
9. 'City Limits': Local government and politics of the city in the 1980s
10. 'New Times' and the 1990s
11. Conclusion: Austerity, 'Generation Left' and Corbynism

Assessment

There are two assessed tasks for this course:

- 1 x 1500 word source analysis (35% of the final mark)
- 1 x 3000 word essay (65% of the final mark)

Indicative readings

- Jodi Burkett, *Constructing post-imperial Britain: Britishness, 'race' and the radical left in the 1960s* (2013)
- Diarmaid Kelliher, *Making Cultures of Solidarity: London and the 1984–5 Miners' Strike* (2021)
- Celia Hughes, *Young Lives on the Left: Sixties activism and the liberation of the self* (2015)
- Margaretta Jolly, *Sisterhood and After: An Oral History of the U.K. Women's Liberation Movement* (2020)
- Wade Matthews, *The New Left, National Identity, and the Break-up of Britain* (2013).
- Evan Smith and Matthew Worley eds., *Waiting for the Revolution: the British far left from 1956* (Manchester, 2017)
- Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, *Class, Politics and the Decline of Deference in England 1968-2000* (2018)
- Rob Waters, *Thinking Black: Britain, 1964-1985* (2018)

Zoom consultation – Weds 14 June 12noon. Meeting ID 996 8482 4006.

<https://zoom.us/j/99684824006>