

History 320.201 / Summer 2009

Professor Kali Israel

Meets: T / W / TH, 10:00–12:00

Britain, 1901-1939: Culture and Politics



This course examines changes and continuities in British culture and politics from the death of Queen Victoria through the beginning of the second world war. Both politics and culture will be understood broadly. We will consider political movements and the structures of citizenship as well as Parliamentary politics; we will look at the organization of daily life and at “ordinary,” mundane, and popular forms of cultural understanding and activity as well as “high-cultural” intellectual and aesthetic activity. We will draw upon autobiographies, novels, music, and photographs as well as scholarly writing. Some topics covered will be: the election of 1906; constitutional debates; policies and practices around social welfare and economic planning; the expansion of political participation, especially the enfranchisement of women and working-class people; the social and cultural impacts of the first world war; cultural and political debates in the interwar years; the growth of mass media and other technologies of national unification; anxieties about the boundaries of British cultures; the growth of the Labour Party; the 1926 General Strike; the empire and colonial subjects; the Depression; the “north/ south divide”; the impact of the rise of Nazi and fascist governments in Europe; fascist politics in Britain; debates about appeasement; and a brief consideration of WWII.

No previous knowledge of British history is assumed or required. Readings will include autobiographies, novels, and a coursepack, and class format will combine lecture and discussion.