

IRE332Y0: Work and the British Industrial Revolution

Oxford Summer Abroad, 2025

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Class day/time: Weekdays from 9:30-12:00; field trips will occur both during and outside of scheduled class meetings. Please consult syllabus for field trip dates and exceptions. **Please note the class will start promptly at 9:30.**

Office hours By appointment, please contact instructor via email, rather than through Quercus' messaging system to make an appointment.

Course description

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Britain (and, after 1801, the United Kingdom) became a dominant imperial power, its rise given impetus by globe-spanning commercial and financial networks. As the British empire ascended, Britain itself was transformed by new industries, new sources of energy, new technologies, new forms of financing and capitalisation, and new ways of organising and disciplining workers. This process of industrial revolution – though often uneven and incomplete, and far less sudden and ‘revolutionary’ than its name suggests – nonetheless had a profound impact on the world of work. Industrialisation created new models of employment and solidified a model of wage labour that shapes the present in profound and surprising ways. This course explores the history of industrialisation and draws connections and makes comparisons between the era of industrialisation and the present.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students will have a working knowledge of the history of the industrial revolution in Britain and the wider British imperial and colonial world. Students will acquire basic skills in historical research, particularly in reading primary sources and interpreting objects, architecture, and other elements of industrial material culture. Students will be able to draw connections – and identify disjunctures – between present-day ideologies and models of employment relations and forms of employment in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Class Contributions

Attendance is required – and marked – in this course and will be taken at every class meeting. Course meetings will include a mixture of lectures, discussions of readings and course themes, student presentations, visits to nearby sights in Oxford and field trips outside the city.

Course Readings

All required readings are on Quercus; please navigate to the 'Library Reading List' app to find readings.

Evaluation

Assessment	Weight (%)	Due Date
Weekly quizzes (4; the lowest mark will be dropped)	25%	7, 15, 21 & 27 August, 2025
Primary source analysis (2-3 pages)	30%	18 August 2025
Photo essay and annotated bibliography (slide deck of at least 10 images, 2–3-page annotated bibliography)	35%	25 August 2025
Class participation (5% attendance; 5% class preparedness and contributions to discussion)	10%	Throughout course

Term Work Policies

Students are expected to take responsibility for making appropriate judgments to ensure that their assignments are submitted in a timely manner. It is also the student's responsibility to back up their work either electronically or by photocopying the work for their own reference, as well as keeping rough and draft work and hard copies of their assignments, as these may be required by the instructor. You must keep all your graded term work until your final grade has been released on ACORN. Any grade miscalculations or other grade-related issues may require that you provide your graded assignments to the instructor and/or the Program Office.

Assignments

Quizzes (25%)

Students are expected to read and take notes on course readings before the course meets. Each week students will be required to complete a weekly short quiz of two short-answer questions, related to the assigned readings and course themes.

The quizzes will be released immediately after class meets on 7 August, 15 August, 21 August, and 27 August. The quizzes will be available for about 72 hours after each is released (with some small variations because of field trips, etc.).

Please note - once you open the quiz, you will have 60 minutes to complete it. Do not use any outside tools to complete the quiz other than your notes.

The three best of the four quizzes will be counted toward the final mark.

Primary source analysis (30%)

For this assignment, students will choose a nineteenth-century object from a list provided on Quercus and write a short analysis (about 2-3 pages, no additional sources or footnotes required) explaining its relationship to course themes, placing the object or text in context and explaining its relationship to industrialisation or Britain's industrial heritage.

Photo essay (35%)

Students will take at least 15 photographs related to the themes of the course during the Summer Abroad period, ideally in Oxford or its environs, or on the course field trips.

Students will post the images to Quercus as a PowerPoint (or similar application) stack of slides. The slides should alternate between images and brief discussions of the images and their connections to one another. The final slide should include a suggested bibliography of 3-5 sources related to the images, either primary or secondary.

Course participation (10%)

Students are expected to attend every course meeting, and to arrive prepared and ready to discuss course themes and materials. Participation is evaluated qualitatively and holistically; speaking often is not necessarily 'better' than making a few thoughtful interventions into class discussions. 5% of the participation mark is based on attendance; 5% is based on a holistic evaluation of preparedness and contributions to discussion.

Class field trips are mandatory; participation in field trips will be considered as part of the overall participation grade.

Late/Missed Work/Late Penalties

Late assignments will be penalised 2% per day late. However, lateness will be calculated by rounding down, rather than up, based on the time the assignment was submitted. For example, if an assignment is due by the end of the day on a Wednesday, and you turn it in late Saturday evening, it might be 2.8 days late. You would be penalised 4%, rather than 6%.

Extensions

Please alert the instructor to any difficulties that you may be experiencing in a timely manner so that appropriate assistance and/or direction can be provided.

Absences and Accommodations

If you become ill and it affects your ability to do your academic work, consult me right away. Normally, I will ask you for documentation in support of your specific medical circumstances. This documentation can be an Absence Declaration (via ACORN) or the University's Verification of Student Illness or Injury (VOI) form. The VOI indicates the impact and severity of the illness, while protecting your privacy about the details of the nature of the illness. If you cannot submit a VOI due to limits on terms of use, you can submit a different form (like a letter from a doctor), if it is an original document, and it contains the same information as the VOI (including dates, academic impact, practitioner's signature, phone and registration number). For more information on the VOI, please see <https://registrar.utoronto.ca/policies-and-guidelines/verification-of-illness-or-injury/>. For information on the Absence Declaration Tool for A&S students, please see <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/absence>. If you get a concussion, break your hand, or suffer some other acute injury, you should register with Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

Documentation Types

The following are recognized forms of documentation for student absences.

- Absence declaration via ACORN
- U of T Verification of Illness or Injury Form
- College Registrar's letter
- Letter of Academic Accommodation from Accessibility Services

Religious observances

The University also provides reasonable accommodation of the needs of students who observe religious holy days other than those already accommodated by ordinary scheduling and statutory holidays. Students have a responsibility to alert members of the teaching staff in a timely fashion to upcoming religious observances and anticipated absences, and instructors will make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling tests, examinations, or other compulsory activities at these times. For more information, and to link to the University's policy on accommodations for religious observances, please see the website of the [Office of the Vice-Provost, Students](#).

Remarking Term Work

A student who believes an individual item of work has been incorrectly or unfairly marked may ask the person who marked it for a re-evaluation. The request must be submitted by email and include a detailed statement that highlights which specific questions or portions of the test/assignment you would like to be reviewed and why you feel the marks given do not reflect

your answer. The statement should refer to course texts or lecture notes. Any remarking may result in the grade being raised, lowered, or unchanged. .

Continuing with the remark or the appeal means the student accepts this condition. It is not to your advantage to submit a request for remarking unless you believe you will actually gain points. The deadline for requesting a remarking is two weeks from the date the term work was made available for pickup; the deadline for an appeal is one week after the remark was made available for pick up. Late requests will not be accepted.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.

Accessibility Services

The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the University's courses and programs. For more information on services and resources available to instructors and students, please see the [Accessibility Services website](#).

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

1. Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement;
2. Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor;
3. **Any** use of generative artificial intelligence tools or apps for assignments in this course, including tools like ChatGPT and other AI writing or coding assistants, is absolutely and strictly prohibited.
4. Making up sources or facts;
5. Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

In academic work:

1. Falsifying institutional documents or grades;
2. Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes; and
3. When you knew or ought to have known you were doing so.

Copyright

“Lectures and course materials prepared by the instructor are considered by the University to be an instructor's intellectual property covered by the Canadian Copyright Act. Students wishing to record lecture or other course material in any way are required to ask the instructor's explicit permission, and may not do so unless permission is granted. This includes tape recording, filming, photographing PowerPoint slides, Quercus materials, etc. Such permission is only for that individual student's own study purposes and does not include permission to “publish” them in any way. It is absolutely forbidden for a student to publish an instructor's notes to a website or sell them in other form without formal permission.” [Faculty of Arts & Science Academic Handbook for Instructors](#) Section 4.5 Taping/Recording/Photographing Lectures etc.

Class Schedule

Week 1: Political Economy, Work Ethic, and Labour		
1	4 August	Introduction and orientation
2	5 August	Empire and work ethic
3	6 August	Slavery, free trade, and free labour
4	7 August	Work ethic, starvation, and the ‘science’ of political economy
5	8 August	Day trip to London: ‘Darkest Victorian London’ walking tour; Borough Market; London Museum Docklands
Week 2: Daily Bread – Enclosure, Agriculture, and Empire		
6	11 August	Enclosure and ‘improvement’ – agriculture, empire, and industry
7	12 August	The global countryside
8	13 August	Free trade and cheap food
9	14 August	Day trip to Blenheim Palace
10	15 August	The global country house
Week 3: Dark Satanic Mills		
11	18 August	Progress?
12	19 August	The factory and the empire of cotton
13	20 August	Energy, invention, and intellectual life
14	21 August	Child labour and public education
15	22 August	Day trip to Black Country Living Museum (Dudley, W. Midlands)

Week 4: Imperial Labour		
16	25 August	No course meeting
17	26 August	The world of the middle class
18	27 August	Labour relations at the high noon of empire
19	28 August	Day trip to Cambridge: Lunch at Cambridge marketplace; ‘Cambridge and Colonialism Walking Tour’; Cambridge University and University Museums

Reading list

Week 1: Political Economy, Work Ethic, and Labour

4 August: Introduction and orientation

Hobsbawm, Eric. *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848*. 1st Vintage Reprint Edition. New York: Vintage, 1996, Introduction, Chapters 1 & Chapter 2.

5 August: Empire and work ethic

Required:

Weber, Max. “The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism (1905).” In *The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism, ” and Other Writings*. Edited by Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells. Penguin Classics. New York: Penguin, 2002.

De Vries, Jan. “The Industrial Revolution and the Industrious Revolution.” *The Journal of Economic History* 54, no. 2 (1994): 249–70.

Recommended:

Brewer, John. *The Sinews of Power: War, Money, and the English State, 1688-1783*. New York: Knopf, 1989, Introduction & Chapter 7.

6 August: Slavery, empire, and labour

Required:

Morgan, Edmund S. “The Labor Problem at Jamestown, 1607-18.” *The American Historical Review* 76, no. 3 (1971): 595–611.

Berg, Maxine, and Pat Hudson. *Slavery, Capitalism and the Industrial Revolution*. Cambridge: Polity, 2023, Chapters 2 & 3.

7 August: Poor relief, wages, and the ‘science’ of political economy

Required:

Malthus, Thomas Robert. *Essay on the Principle of Population, as It Affects the Future Improvement of Society with Remarks on the Speculations of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet, and Other Writers*. London: J. Johnson, 1798, Chapter 1 & Chapters 3-7.

Polanyi, Karl. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2001, Chapter 6 & Chapter 7.

Week 2: Daily Bread – Enclosure, Agriculture, and Empire

11 August: Enclosure and ‘improvement’ – agriculture, empire, and industry

Required:

Cobbett, William. *Rural Rides*. Edited by Ian Dyck. Penguin Classics. London: Penguin, 2005, “Through Hampshire, Berkshire, Surrey, and Sussex.”

Drayton, Richard. *Nature’s Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the “Improvement” of the World*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, Chapters 2 & 3.

12 August: The global countryside

Required:

Melillo, Edward D. “The First Green Revolution: Debt Peonage and the Making of the Nitrogen Fertilizer Trade, 1840–1930.” *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 4 (January 10, 2012): 1028–60.

Schiebinger, Londa. *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004, Introduction & Chapter 2.

13 August: Free trade and cheap food

Required:

Thompson, E. P. *Customs in Common*. “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century.” *Past & Present*, no. 50 (1971): 76–136.

Otter, Chris. *Diet for a Large Planet: Industrial Britain, Food Systems, and World Ecology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020, Chapters 2 & 4.

15 August: The global country house

[Documentary film, shown in class: 'Hidden Treasures of the National Trust,' ep. 3 (BBC, 2025)]

Week 3: Dark Satanic Mills

18 August: Progress?

Required:

Southey, Robert. *Colloquies on Society* [1830]. Cassell’s National Library. Cassell & Company, 1894, Colloquy IV, “Feudal Slavery.”

Macaulay, Thomas Babington. “Southey’s Colloquies on Society (January 1830).” In *Critical and Historical Essays Contributed to the Edinburgh Review*, 1:215–66. London and New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1890.

19 August: The factory and the empire of cotton

Required:

Ure, Andrew. *The Philosophy of Manufactures: Or, An Exposition of the Scientific, Moral, and Commercial Economy of the Factory System of Great Britain*. London: Charles Knight, 1835, Preface & Chapter 1 of Book 3.

Beckert, Sven. *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*. New York: Knopf, 2014, Introduction & Chapter 6.

20 August: Energy, invention, and intellectual life

Required:

Rose, Jonathan. *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*. 3rd edition. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2021, Chapters 1 & 2.

Smil, Vaclav. *Energy and Civilization: A History*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017, Chapters 5 & 6.

Recommended:

Secord, James A. *Victorian Sensation: The Extraordinary Publication, Reception, and Secret Authorship of Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, Chapter 2.

21 August: Making workers

Required:

Griffin, Emma. *Liberty's Dawn: A People's History of the Industrial Revolution*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2013, Introduction & Chapter 2.

Engels, Friedrich. *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. Edited by David McLellan. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, Chapters 2-4.

Recommended:

Winter, Alison. *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, Introduction & Chapter 3.

Week 4: Imperial Labour

26 August: The world of the middle class

Required:

Davidoff, Leonore, and Catherine Hall. *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*. London: Hutchinson, 1987, Chapters 3, 4, & 5.

Cohen, Deborah. *Household Gods: The British and Their Possessions*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006, Introduction & Chapter 1.

Beaumont, George. *The Beggar's Complaint, against Rack-Rent Landlords, Corn Factors ... and Many Other Oppressors and Oppressions. Also, Some Observations on the Conduct of the Luddites*. 2nd edition. Sheffield, 1812.

27 August: Informal work in the industrial era

Required:

Mayhew, Henry. *London Labour and the London Poor*. Edited by Robert Douglas-Fairhurst. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, "Costermongers."

Davis, Mike. *Planet of Slums*. London: Verso, 2006, Chapter 6.