Special Subject H: ‘Masculinities and political culture in Britain, 1832-1901’

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This paper explores what the political history of Victorian Britain would look like if viewed through the lens of the history of masculinity. What difference did it make to British politics that the political elites were overwhelmingly male and that the electorate was exclusively male until 1918? The paper will examine how the conduct of politics was shaped by shifting cultural ideals and practices of masculinity. It explores how notions of political leadership were influenced by ideals of ‘manliness’; how working-class politics was shaped by male workplace culture; how reforming working-class masculinities became central to liberal politics; and how ideas about ‘gentlemanliness’, honour, sexuality and heroism influenced the practice of political elites.

These questions offer a way of exploring a set of deeper theoretical issues about the relations of power that existed between competing masculinities, and the ways in which men were or were not able to appropriate different male identities, both instrumentally and subjectively. Students will be introduced to a variety of approaches to political history, including the history of political languages, the social history of political activism, and the history of emotions. A wide range of sources will be used including diaries, letters, parliamentary and extra-parliamentary speeches, newspapers, cartoons, and photographs.

Teaching:
There will be two introductory lectures, one setting out the major debates in the history of masculinity, and one providing an overview of the political history of the period for those who have not taken studied modern British history at Part I. There will then be 15 two-hour classes on the thematic topics set out below (seven in Michaelmas, eight in Lent). Classes will be structured around student presentations and group discussion. Some classes will begin with a twenty minute lecture introducing the topic and providing necessary context. In Easter term there will be two revision classes on the different kinds of sources used in the course.

Thematic topics:
1. Learning to be a man: schools, street corners, workplaces and universities
2. The ideal of gentlemanliness in Victorian politics
3. Intimacy and sociability in politics
4. Sexuality in politics
5. Political bodies
6. Performing masculinities
   a. Performing masculinities in parliament
   b. Leadership and ‘manliness’
7. The challenge to aristocratic and gentry masculinities
   a. Radical critiques of aristocratic masculinities and the problem of the ‘country gentleman’
   b. The ‘man of business’ in politics
8. Honour and violence in Victorian politics
9. Heroism and political culture
   a. Military masculinities
   b. Imperial masculinities
10. Citizenship and enfranchisement
    a. Changing conceptions of ‘fitness’ for the vote
    b. Women’s suffrage
11. Remaking working-class masculinities

The reading list that follows includes three kinds of material: the primary sources that you must read for the classes; introductory secondary literature I expect you to read for the classes; and supplementary secondary material that I do not expect you to read for the classes, but which might come in useful for the long essay (I have put asterisks next to the material that I think you will find most helpful). All of the set material is available on Moodle.
Seminar topics:

Michaelmas

1) Introduction to Victorian political history and approaches to the history of masculinity

Required primary sources

2. Extracts from Thomas Hughes, *The manliness of Christ* (1879), pp. 1-7, 17-34. [25 pages]

Required secondary reading


Supplementary secondary reading

M. Bentley *Politics without democracy 1815-1914* (2nd ed., 1996), ch. 2-5.

2) Learning to be a man: schools, street corners, workplaces and universities

This class will offer a survey of the institutions that set themselves the task of turning boys into men. How did the public schools and universities shape the formation of the gender identities of members of the governing elites? What were the equivalent institutions that shaped working-class masculinities, and how did they influence working-class political identities? What was the significance of women’s exclusion from these institutions?

Required secondary reading


Required primary sources


**Supplementary secondary reading**

Elites:
*Paul Deslandes, Oxbridge men: British masculinity and the undergraduate experience, 1850-1920* (2005), esp. ch. 2.

Non-elites:
*Andrew Davis, Youth gangs, masculinity, and violence in late Victorian Manchester and Salford*, *Social History* 32 (1998), pp. 349-69.
*Emma Griffin, Liberty’s dawn: a people’s history of the industrial revolution* (2013), part III
Iorwerth Prothero, *Artisans and politics* (1979), ch. 1, 2, 10.
3) Gentlemanliness

This class studies the influence of the ideal of ‘gentlemanliness’ on Victorian political culture. What made a ‘gentleman’? How important was this gendered identity to the creation of a coherent governing elite? How socially inclusive was this ideal? How was gentlemanly status lost, and what were the political consequences of failing to be a gentleman?

Required secondary reading


Required primary sources

6. How to shine in society, or the art of conversation (Glasgow, 1867), pp. 10-13. [4 pages]
10. Disraeli, Derby and the Conservative Party, 28.11.52 [Pakington complains Disraeli is not a gentleman]. [1 page]
11. Disraeli letters, V 1675, 1959, 2189 [3 pages]

Supplementary secondary reading

Michael Curtin, Propriety and position, a study of Victorian manners (New York, 1987).

4) Intimacy and sociability in politics

Friendships have been a powerful force in politics, providing the social connections and emotional support without which political activism would wither. The social history of political action therefore needs to study changing norms of male friendship and the forms of sociability that created and sustained these friendships.

Primary sources

1. Rules and regulations for the government of the Athenaeum, with an alphabetical list of the members (1862) [5 pages]
3. W. Fraser Rae, ‘Political clubs and party organisation’ Nineteenth Century (May 1878), pp. 912-16, 919-20. [7 pages]
5. Abrahm Hayward, ‘Clubs’, Fraser’s Magazine 73 (March 1866) pp. 342, 362-7. [7 pages]
6. Morning Post, 22 June, 1846, p. 5; 17 April 1848, p. 6; 11 Feb. 1850, p. 6 [on aristocratic salons] [3 pages]
14. Gladstone Diaries: 10/7/79 [1 page]

Secondary reading

Michael Bentley, Lord Salisbury’s world: conservative environments in Late-Victorian Britain (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 72-93.
*Nancy Ellenberger, Balfour’s world: aristocracy and political culture at the fin de siècle (2015), ch. 4, 6.
Mark Girouard, Victorian pubs (1975).
5) Sexuality in politics

This topic explores the way in which attitudes to sexuality shaped Victorian political culture. This has two dimensions. First, these ideas shaped what was considered ‘scandalous’ behaviour. Second, heteronormative assumptions underpinned the ways in which members of the male political elite interacted.

Primary sources

3. Lytton Strachey and Roger Fulford, eds., The Greville Memoirs (8 vols., 1938), II, 364, 426; 290-3; V 41; VI, 441. [6 pages]
4. Disraeli letters, VIII: 3866 [1 page]
14. Times, 17 November, pp. 3-4 on the O’Shea divorce [2 pages]
16. Edward Lyttelton, Training the young in laws of sex (1900), pp. 40-3. [4 pages]

[76 pages]

Secondary reading

Sean Brady, Masculinity and male homosexuality in Britain, 1861-1913 (2005)
Anna Clark, Scandal: the sexual politics of the British constitution (Princeton, 2006).
*Nancy Ellenberger, Balfour’s world: aristocracy and political culture at the fin de siècle (2015), ch. 8.
Anne Isba, Gladstone and women (2007).
6) Political bodies
The literature on masculinity has yet to engage seriously with the history of old age: what kinds of masculinity were available to old men incapable of displaying the same characteristics associated with younger men? Is it useful to think of the able-bodied as ‘temporarily non-disabled’, and what might this do to our understandings of masculinity? How did the gender identities of those disabled through old age differ from those of younger men disabled from birth or through accident? This forms a necessary context for understanding the careers of Lord Palmerston and William Gladstone, for example.

Primary sources
1. ‘One of no party’ [James Grant], Random recollections of the House of Commons from the year 1830 to the close of 1835 (1836), pp. 181, 184. [2 pages]
2. Leslie Stephen, Life of Henry Fawcett (1885), pp. 43-72. [30 pages]
4. S. L. Steele, Arthur Macmorrough Kavanagh (1891), pp. 8-10, 18-19, 128-9, 134-8, 163-8, 301-2. [22 pages]
5. T. Wright, The life of Colonel Fred Burnaby (1908), pp. 34-6, 163-4. [5 pages]
7. Disraeli letters, VII: 3215. [1 page]
10. How to shine in society, or the art of conversation (Glasgow, 1860), pp. 16-20. [5 pages]
11. Henry Lucy, A diary of two parliaments. The Disraeli parliament, 1874-1880 (1885), pp. 10, 40 115, 159-60. [3 pages]
[97 pages]

Secondary reading
Performing masculinities: a) Performing masculinities in parliament
This topic explores the public images that male politicians tried to construct in parliament, looking at emotional control, clothing, body language, and manners.

Primary sources

1. ‘One of no party’ [James Grant], Random recollections of the House of Commons from the year 1830 to the close of 1835 (1836), pp. 77-9, 81, 90-4, 172-5, 209-16, 245 [22 pages]
4. Extracts from Henry Lucy, A diary of the Salisbury parliament, 1886-1892 (1892), pp. 144-5. [2 pages]


[109 pages]

**Secondary reading**


Marcus Morris, ‘“The most respectable looking of revolutionaries”: sartorial identities, class and the politics of appearance in late nineteenth-century Britain’, *Cultural and Social History* (2015).


**8) Performing masculinities: b) Leadership and ‘manliness’**

How far were expectations of political leaders gendered? How did the public images created by political leaders draw on or challenge accepted models of masculinity? Under what circumstances was the ‘manliness’ of leaders called into question and how far did this constitute a serious political problem?

**Required secondary reading**


**Primary sources**

2. ‘One of no party’ [James Grant], *Random recollections of the House of Commons from the year 1830 to the close of 1835* (1836), pp. 105-12, 115; 194-7. [13 pages]


11. *Disraeli letters V* 1769. [1 page]


15. Selection of images of Palmerston, Lord John Russell, Disraeli and Gladstone. [8 pages]

[125 pages]

**Supplementary secondary reading**


**Case studies of individual leaders:**


On Sir Robert Peel, see Richard Gaunt, *Sir Robert Peel* (2010), ch. 5, 6, 8.


On Disraeli and the struggle to succeed him, see Paul Smith, *Disraeli: a brief life* (1991), ch. 5.


Lent Term

9) Radical critiques of aristocratic masculinities and the problem of the ‘country gentleman’
A major trope in British politics has been criticism of aristocratic political elites characterised as effete, libertine and amateurish. These radical criticisms challenged, at one remove, the figure of the ‘country gentleman’ that featured at the heart of nineteenth-century Conservative politics. The debate over the characteristics of ‘the country gentleman’ was one of the ways in which the Conservative Party thought through the consequences of a more democratic political system.

Primary sources
1. Letter from Richard Cobden to Joseph Parkes, 26 Dec. 1838. [1 page]
2. Letter from Richard Cobden to Joseph Sturge, 1 March 1839 [1 page]
3. Letter from Richard Cobden to George Combe, 17 July 1848 [1 page]
4. Letter from Richard Cobden to John Bright, 5 March 1851 [1 page]
5. Speech by John Bright on the aristocratic complexion of Russell’s government in 1849: Hansard, 105, col. 1209-10 (5 June 1849). [1 page]
6. Manchester Times, 16 May 1855. [1 page]
7. Ernest Jones on aristocratic vice: People’s paper, 7 Apr. 1855, p. 4. [1 page]
11. Extracts from Labouchere’s speech against the aristocracy: Hansard, 5 March 1886, vol 303 cc20-31. [2 pages]
12. Thomas Wright, Habits and customs of the working classes (1867), pp. 7-10. [4 pages]
13. Disraeli letters V 1816; VI 2669. [3 pages]
14. John Vincent, ed., Disraeli, Derby and the Conservative Party: the political journals of Lord Stanley, 1849-69 (1978), 7.5.50; 5.3.51; 30.4.51; 25.11.52; 9.2.53; 17.3.53; 20.11.53; 22.11.53; 14.12.53. [5 pages]
18. Walter Long, Memories (1923), pp. 80-82. [3 pages]
Secondary reading


10) The ‘man of business’ in politics

The literature on nineteenth-century middle-class masculinities has ignored the centrality of work to middle-class male identities. This class will explore how middle-class MPs invoked their professional identities in the course of their political activities. These men claimed forms of technocratic expertise that were unavailable to women, and which challenged the political authority of the leisureed classes.

Primary sources


2. Letter from Richard Cobden to Francis Place, 17 Sept. 1840 [1 page]
   Letter from Richard Cobden to Edward Watkin, 9 Oct. 1841 [1 page]
   Letter from Richard Cobden to Frederick Cobden, 11 March 1843 [1 page]
   Letter from Richard Cobden to Joseph Sturge, 10 June 1846 [1 page]
   Letter from Richard Cobden to John Bright, 8 Dec. 1849 [1 page]


5. Extracts from W.E. Forster speech on commercial diplomacy *Hansard* 177, col 1850-7 (17 March 1865). [2 pages]


[110 pages]
Secondary reading

*Olive Anderson, A liberal state at war (1967), ch. 3.
M. J. Daunton, “‘Gentlemanly capitalism” and British industry, 1820-1914’, Past and Present 122 (1989).
N. Edsall Richard Cobden: independent radical (1986).
M. Hewitt The emergence of stability in the industrial city: Manchester 1832-67 (1996), ch. 3.
D. Read Cobden and Bright (1967).

11) Honour and violence in Victorian politics
Conceptions of honour were vital in structuring both interpersonal and inter-state relationships in the nineteenth century. This class will trace how men sought to defend their honour by examining duels fought between politicians. This will provide a context for thinking about how honour was invoked in political discourse, particularly in debates about foreign policy.

Primary sources
1. Letter from Richard Cobden to George Combe, 2 Feb. 1846 [1 page]
3. Duel between Wellington v. Winchilsea: Times, 23 March, 1829, p. 5; 31 March 1829, p. 4. [2 pages]
5. Duel between Lord Powerscourt and J. A. Roebuck: Times, 22 May 1839, p. 5. [1 page]
8. Richard Cobden’s reply to Sir Thomas Hastings’s challenge *Times*, 19 Dec. 1850 [1 page]

[74 pages]

**Secondary:**


M. Chamberlain *British foreign policy in the age of Palmerston* (1980).


12) **Heroism and political culture 1: Military masculinities**

This class will look at ideals of ‘manliness’ as they were articulated during the invasion scares of the 19th century, and conflicts from the Crimean War to the Second Boer War. It will also examine commentaries identifying military masculinities as problematic and socially disruptive.

**Required secondary reading**

Primary sources
3. Letter from Richard Cobden to Joseph Sturge, 17 Dec. 1849 [1 page]
   Letter from Richard Cobden to Robertson Gladstone, 29 March 1851 [1 page]
   Letter from Richard Cobden to Joseph Sturge, 19 Apr. 1852 [1 page]
   Letter from Richard Cobden to Henry Ashworth, 16 Oct. 1852 [1 page]
4. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, ‘Riflemen form!’ [1 page]
5. T. Hughes, ‘The Volunteer’s Catechism’ Macmillan’s Magazine 2 (July 1860) [9 page]
6. Sir John Tenniel cartoon ‘Winner of the Queen’s Prize Captain Punch. ‘Another bullseye. Pam!’
   Eighteen a head! First place still! And mind you keep it!!’ Punch 1864[1 page]
7. Francis Paget, A word to soldiers about Christianity and manliness (1889) [9 pages]
8. Disraeli letters VI, 2705 [1 page]
9. Letter from Lord Ponsonby to Disraeli (24.1.54) Hughenden papers B/XXI/p/364-5. [1 page]
10. Times 18 Nov. 1848, p. 4 on meeting of Financial Reform Association. [1 page]
12. Extracts from parliamentary debates on abolition of purchase of commissions Hansard 204,
   cols. 1397-1415 (6 March 1871); Hansard 207, cols. 1544-620 (13 July 1871). [7 pages]
14. Wellington political correspondence I: 1833-November 1834 (1875), pp. 156-9, 393. [5 pages]
[129 pages]

Supplementary secondary reading
Olive Anderson, A liberal state at war (1967).
Hugh Cunningham, The volunteer force: a social and political history, 1859-1908 (1975)
Graham Dawson, Soldier heroes: British adventure, empire and the imagining of masculinities
(1994).
Stefan Dudink and John Tosh, eds., Masculinities in politics and war: gendering modern history
(2004).
Thomas F. Gallagher, “Cardwellian mysteries”: the fate of the British Army Regulation Bill,
Ken Hendrickson, ‘A kinder, gentler British Army: mid-Victorian experiments in the
Paul McHugh, Prostitution and Victorian social reform (1980).
Stephen M. Miller, ‘In support of the “imperial mission”? Volunteering for the South African
Heather Streets, Martial races: the military, race and masculinity in British imperial culture,
1857-1914 (Manchester, 2010)
Judith Walkowitz, Prostitution and Victorian society: women, class and the state (1980).

13) Heroism and political culture 2: Imperial masculinities
Anxieties about the need to produce men capable of governing the empire were a persistent refrain in
political discourse. Why, and with what effect?
Required secondary reading


**Primary sources**

3. Letters from Richard Cobden to Joseph Sturge, 11 March 1850, 5 Apr. 1850 [2 pages]
   Letter from Richard Cobden to John Bright, 18 Oct. 1850 [1 page]
5. Geoffrey Drage, *Eton and the Empire* (1890), pp. 17-18, 24-9, 40 [9 pages.]

[132 pages]

**Supplementary secondary reading**


H.C.G. Matthew, *Gladstone, 1809-98* [for material on General Gordon].


14) Citizenship and enfranchisement

How far did debates about parliamentary reform between 1832 and 1900 rest on gendered assumptions about what made a good voter? This class will study these assumptions, including Chartist demands for the franchise, concerns about electoral violence, the debates about household suffrage in 1867 and the enfranchisement of agricultural labourers in 1884.

Primary sources

3. ‘Morality of the working classes’, Chartist Circular (2 Nov. 1839), p. 22. [1 page]
5. Extracts from speech by Richard Cobden on National Representation: Hansard, 100, col. 183-95 (6 July 1848). [3 pages]
6. Speech by Rev. J. R. Stephens at Chartist meeting in Wigan, Northern Star 17 Nov. 1838, p. 6. [1 page]
8. Speech by Lowe on reform HC Deb 13 March 1866 vol 182 cc141-64 [13 pages]
9. Extract from Sir Hugh Cairns’s speech on class representation: HC Deb 16 April 1866 vol 182 cc1462-75 [2 pages]
12. Speech by John Bright on the residuum Hansard, 186, col. 626-42 (26 March 1867) [2 pages]
17. Extracts from speeches by Jesse Collings and John Barran on agricultural labourers and political education. Hansard, 286, col. 619-72 (24 March 1884); Hansard, 286, col. 1815-916 (7 April 1884). [1 page]
18. Gladstone’s speech on the masses against the classes, Liverpool 1886. [1 page]
19. Wilfrid Lawson on pauper disqualification Hansard, 2, col.1197-8 (18 March 1892). [1 page] [76 pages]

Secondary reading

Women’s suffrage
The most obvious way in which the political system was gendered was the formal exclusion of women from the parliamentary franchise. How was this justified? How was it challenged? To what extent did arguments in favour of excluding women from the franchise draw on patterns of exclusion between men? What can studying debates about women’s suffrage tell us about Victorian masculinities?

Required secondary reading


Primary sources

2. Letter from Richard Cobden to Catherine Cobden, 26 Jan. 1846. [1 page]
3. ‘To the “Hoores” of England’ Northern Star, 2 January 1841, p. 4. [1 page]
11. ‘A Lady in the Gallery [Isabella Tod], ‘A letter to the Rt Hon John Bright, MP’ (1876). [7 pages]

[128 pages]

Supplementary secondary reading

*B. Harrison, *Separate spheres: the opposition to women’s suffrage in Britain* (1978)
Angela John and Claire Eustance, eds., *The men’s share? masculinities, male support and women’s suffrage in Britain, 1890-1920* (1997).
Sandra Stanley Holton ‘Now you see it, now you don’t: the Women’s Franchise League and its place in contending narratives of the women’s suffrage movement’ in Maroula Joannou and June Purvis, eds., *The women’s suffrage movement: new feminist perspectives*, (Manchester, 1998), pp. 15-36.
Sarah Richardson, *The political worlds of women* (2013).

16) Remaking working-class masculinities

Victorian Liberalism was characterised by a tremendous confidence in the capacity of the state to “improve” the morals of the poor, and a particular concern was to improve the behaviour of working-class men. How was this expected to work? Which aspects of working-class masculinities were identified as problematic and in need of reform? How far were anxieties about working-class masculinities reflecting anxieties about upper-class men?

Primary sources

1. Thomas Wright, *The great unwashed* (1868), ch. 1 ‘working men’ [27 pages]
2. *Special report from the select committee on the Married Women’s Property Bill, Parliamentary Papers* [hereafter P.P], 1867-68, VII, pp. 61-4, 70-71. [6 pages]
6. Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), ch. 10 [9 pages]

Secondary reading