

The Social History of Alcohol

HIST 3109A and HIST 3109T Fall Term, 2013

Course Outline

Lectures	Tuesdays, 6:05-8:55 PM
Instructor	Professor Rod Phillips
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Office hours	Mondays 10:00 - 11:00 AM, or by appointment

Scope of the course

This course examines the social and cultural attributes of alcohol in Europe and North America, with an emphasis on the period 1500 to 2000. This long period saw the transformation of alcoholic beverages (especially beer and wine) from necessary and intrinsic elements in the daily diet of most adults to commodities of discretionary consumption. This radical shift fundamentally altered the social and cultural meanings of alcohol, and had important consequences for regulation and consumption. It forms a hinge in the long-term themes underlying this course.

The key questions we discuss in relation to the history of alcohol are: Who drank what? Why did they drink it? Where and when did they drink it? With whom did they drink it? How did they, and how do we, interpret their patterns of alcohol consumption?

These questions direct us to look at the kinds of alcohol that were available (and thus questions of production, distribution, marketing and exchange) and the differences among them. Why was there a cultural hierarchy of alcoholic beverages, with wine ranked most highly almost everywhere, and why were some alcohols more widely consumed in some places and at some times than others?

We also examine issues of gender, class and race. Why were male attitudes toward women's drinking so often negative? Why did the middle and upper classes find working-class drinking so threatening? How and why was the North American image of the "drunk Indian" constructed? Questions like these force us to examine the ways alcohol was integrated into broader social and cultural processes and the relationships of alcohol to power.

Here we encounter the overarching dichotomous attitudes toward alcohol. At the extremes, alcohol was variously considered "a gift from God" and "the Devil's brew." Alcohol encouraged sociability but could lead to social disruption. Alcohol consumption was widely regarded as necessary and beneficial – it provided hydration and was believed to have health

benefits – but also as dangerous, insofar as it was associated with drunkenness, illness, crime, and sexual promiscuity.

These attitudes, particularly anxiety about “excessive” consumption and later the construction of “alcoholism,” led to a search for ways to define acceptable levels of alcohol consumption. They draw our attention to the regulation of alcohol by various social organizations and structures, including communities, churches and states. These regulations included laws governing the production, sale and consumption of alcohol, and extended to attempts to ban the production of alcohol (or certain alcohols). Examples include gin in eighteenth-century England, absinthe in early-twentieth century Europe, and all alcohol during Prohibition in the United States and Russia. Regulations also covered sites of drinking, such as pubs and taverns, which were often represented as locales of disorder, but that we can also read as spaces of (often gendered) sociability.

In short, this course examines the relationship of alcohol to a wide range of issues – diet, health, the body, sexuality, religion, social control, gender, race, class, childhood, among them – and places it within the broader sweep of Western history.

Textbook

Iain Gately, *Drink: A Cultural History of Alcohol* (New York: Gotham/Penguin Books, 2009)

Copies are available from Octopus Books, 116 Third Ave. (just off Bank Street), phone 613 233 2589. Their hours are Monday to Saturday, 10:00 AM -6:00 PM, and Sunday 12:00-5:00 PM.

To save time, you can order and pay for the book on-line, and then pick it up. If you cannot get to Octopus Books, they will ship the book to you. All the information for on-line ordering is clearly set out at: octopusbooks.ca/students

The readings you should do from the textbook and other (on-line) sources are set out below.

Books for review

Part of the coursework is a book review, and students will need to choose a book for this exercise. Four that I recommend are:

Scott Thompson and Gary Genosco, *Punched Drunk: Alcohol, Surveillance and the LCBO, 1927-75*

Peter Mancall, *Deadly Medicine: Indians and Alcohol in Early America*

Judith M. Bennett, *Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300-1600*

Kolleen Guy, *When Champagne became French: Wine and the Making of National Identity*

Some copies of these books are also available from Octopus Books, as well as from on-line sources such as Chapters.ca and Amazon.ca, or second-hand from sites like abebooks.com. I

recommend choosing and getting one of them as soon as possible. You may select another book to review (there are plenty in the library), *but I must approve it in advance*. It must be an academic monograph (not a survey, a popular book or a collection of articles/essays) and, of course, it must relate to an aspect of this course.

Course format

HIST 3109A (on-site) students

This is a lecture course that meets once a week for three hours. I strongly advise you to attend all the lectures. Much of the material discussed in lectures comes from my forthcoming history of alcohol, and is not readily available from other sources. The mid-course test and the final examination will draw on both lectures and the specified readings. Announcements regarding the essay, test, and examination may be made during lectures.

You may use a computer to take notes during the lecture, but please do not go to sites like Facebook or YouTube, or play games or watch movies during the lecture. Doing so is very distracting to other students.

HIST 3109T (on-line) students

I strongly advise you to watch all the lectures, and watch them regularly, rather than try to assimilate them in one marathon viewing of 30-plus hours. Unlike students who are physically present at the lecture, you cannot ask questions or make comments, but if you e-mail questions or comments to me before the following lecture, I'll be happy to answer them on camera.

Coursework

Coursework consists of three components:

Mid-course in-class test (22 October)	20%
Book review (due 8 November)	40%
Final examination (take-home, due 22 Dec)	40%

Detailed information on the format and requirements for the test, book review and examination will be provided well in advance, but note these basic points:

The *mid-course test* will be 90 minutes long, will consist of short-answer questions, and will cover material dealt with in the first six lectures. **Students will write the test in the first half of the lecture period on October 22.**

The *book review* will be a 3,000 word (about 10-page) critique of a book that deals with some aspect of the history of alcohol. Several titles are suggested in this outline. You may choose to review a book not on that list, but it must be approved by the instructor in advance. It is due in the essay box outside the Department of History office (PA 400) by **4:00pm on Friday, November 08**. The review should show a careful reading of the book, and should assess its

success in establishing a clear theoretical framework, in using evidence, and in constructing a coherent argument. The review itself will be graded on your understanding of the book and your ability to critique it, and on the clarity and coherence of your review.

The *final examination* will be a take-home exam and will cover the full term's work. You will be asked to write a 4,000-word essay on **one** of several topics that will be distributed at the beginning of the scheduled examination period. The essay will be graded on the demonstrated breadth of your understanding of a particular theme, and on the coherence and clarity of your argument. **The deadline to submit the take-home examination is December 22.**

In all cases, grading will focus on your grasp of the material and your ability to marshal evidence to construct a coherent, articulate argument.

Course schedule

Note: The following schedule reflects the general pace of the lectures, but the lectures will not be confined to the themes set out here.

Week 1	Sep 10	Introduction to the history of alcohol
Week 2	Sep 17	Ancient societies: setting the themes
Week 3	Sep 24	Alcohol in medieval society (to about 1500)
Week 4	Oct 01	The alcohol revolution of the seventeenth century
Week 5	Oct 08	European alcohol in New Worlds
Week 6	Oct 15	Eighteenth century: gin and other substances
Week 7	Oct 22	Alcohol, class, and social anxieties <i>Mid-course test in the first half of this lecture period</i>
	Oct 29	No class: Fall reading break
Week 8	Nov 05	Water and the anti-alcohol movements
	Nov 08	<i>Book review due by 4:00pm, Friday, Nov 08</i>
Week 9	Nov 12	Alcohol, war and class
Week 10	Nov 19	Prohibitions and their consequences
Week 11	Nov 26	The post-Prohibition dilemmas

Week 12	Dec 03	Alcohol in the modern world
	Dec 22	<i>Take-home examination is due</i>

Readings

You should do these readings ahead of each lecture. Readings marked *Drink* refer to the textbook: Iain Gately, *Drink: A Cultural History of Alcohol*.

Week 1

No readings

Week 2: Ancient alcohols

Drink, 1-10, 11-27, 28-40

Week 3: Medieval

Drink, 41-49, 50-64, 65-75, 76-90

Week 4: The alcohol revolution of the 17th century

Drink, 91-104, 142-58.

Week 5: European alcohol in New Worlds

Drink, 91-104

Week 6: Eighteenth century

Drink, 159-74

Week 7: Alcohol, class, social anxieties

Week 8: Water and the anti-alcohol movements

Drink, 253-67, 308-21, 344-58

Week 9: Alcohol, war and class

Drink, 333-43, 359-68

Week 10: Prohibitions

Drink, 369-84, 385-400

Week 11: Post-Prohibitions dilemmas

Drink, 433-42, 453-66

Week 12: Alcohol in the modern world

Drink, 467-81, 482-98