What makes modern Britain modern? A small group of islands off the coast of Europe, it has been of cardinal importance to Europe, North America and the world. How is one to account for it? Modern Britain is a strange country. Strongly traditional, it has been revolutionary. Class-bound it is a country of great social mobility. It has a monarchy, an aristocracy, and an established church, but it is democratic. Medieval institutions persist but it is a welfare state. How is it possible to reconcile these contradictions?

Part 1: England in the Confessional Age—

Political Behavior and Attitudes

Reading—

Willcox and Arnstein, The Age of Aristocracy, chapters 1, 4, and 7.
The Past Speaks, chapters 1, 4, 5.

Social and Economic Behavior

Reading—

Willcox and Arnstein, The Age of Aristocracy, chapter 4
The Past Speaks, chapter 2.

Part 2: Britain and Reform—

Reading—

Arnstein, Britain Yesterday and Today, chapters 1, 2, 7, 11.
The Past Speaks, chapters 6, 10, 13

Part 3: Industrialization and Empire

Arnstein, Britain Yesterday and Today, chapters 2, 5, 10
The Past Speaks, chapters 7, 12
Part 4: Liberal Britain

Arnstein, Britain Yesterday and Today, chapters 8, 9
The Past Speaks, chapters 9, 11

Four Bibliographical Essays:

Browse through the issues of the American Historical Review, the Journal of British Studies, Past and Present, Victorian Studies, the Journal of Modern History, the Journal of Interdisciplinary History, the English Historical Review, and the Historical Journal and for each of the following assignments choose four articles. Then, examine their arguments and footnotes and chase down information about the historians and the evidence for the following problems.

1. Eighteenth Century Politics: What is the role of parliament? Which have been the most prominent historians of 18th century parliaments? What evidence do they use in their researches? What do we yet want to know about 18th century parliamentary politics?

2. Political Reform: What was the motive for political reform? Which have been the most prominent historians of political reform? What evidence do they use in their researches? What do we yet want to know about political reform?

3. Social Change: What produced social change? Which have been the most prominent historians of social change? What evidence do they use in their researches? What do we yet want to know about political reform?

4. Liberalism: What is liberalism? Which have been the most prominent historians of liberalism? What evidence do they use in their researches? What do we yet want to know about liberalism?

Optional Final Essay: what makes modern Britain modern?

Requirements: attendance, the readings, four bibliographical essays, good will, a sense of humor.

WCL/ 7-1-2002