HST 116: Stimulants in Modern History
Instructor: Tim Carmichael

This course covers the period from approximately 1500 to the present, exploring the varied roles that legal and illicit psychoactives have played in history. In looking at diverse civilizations, societies, and cultures – as well as investigating political, cultural, religious and other themes over a long temporal time span – this course will introduce students to fundamental methodologies of the academic discipline of History and illuminate past events that continue to resonate in the modern world.

We will investigate major issues, events and developments, such as European exploration of the New World(s), commercial relations between India and China, the early modern Islamic empires, the Atlantic Slave Trade, late nineteenth century European literature and art, global warfare, decolonization, and US foreign relations. We will see that over the course of Modern World History, through time and regardless of location—or whether we concentrate on politics, economy, society, culture or religion—one shared characteristic has been the presence, and often the central presence, of psychoactive substances.

Historical explorations of this topic require delving into many closely related issues, including labor, technology, economy, politics (and political ideas), law, society, military, gender relations, and religion, among others. We will learn about peasants, farmers, traders, clergy, soldiers, officers, administrators, lords, ministers, kings, animal trainers, business people, teachers, presidents, students, men, women, children, and many others. And we will find that in the past and even in the present, members of all of these social categories have produced, packaged, traded, consumed, taxed, or regulated psychoactives, and history was often changed as a result.

Since the topic of “drugs” is arguably controversial, it should be emphasized that a central methodological component of the course will comprise of the analysis of primary source documents, with the primary documents being provided initially by the instructor and later located and introduced by the students in their research projects. Because the course covers modern history, the CoFC library collection and its relationships with other institutions are sufficient to meet this need.

Throughout the course we will interrogate the relationships between religious ideologies, political power, economics, and social issues such as class and gender, as well as how all these issues have long been mediated through local, regional and international legal systems. Which forces are most significant in shaping History in general, and the articulations of drugs and society in particular?

At the conclusion of this course, each student should possess a good working knowledge of the essentials of the study of Modern History, including familiarity with the basic principles of primary source analysis. Moreover, students should possess an intellectual grasp of major world events over the last 500 years, and an informed understanding of how historical debates about politics, economics, law and socio-religious issues are salient throughout our society and the world today.
If you apply yourself sufficiently, over the course of this semester you will:

- Develop a greater appreciation for different types of historical evidence and their strengths and weaknesses and how they shape our views of history.
- Improve your research skills and your knowledge of various library systems and resources.
- Learn more about the roles and relevance of argumentation in the study of History.
- Sharpen your analytical and argumentation skills by personally engaging in critical ways with the relationship(s) between evidence and argument.

In short, you will improve your understanding and command of the ‘building blocks’ that make up the disciplinary study of History (facts, evidence), and the re-construction processes by which historians place those blocks together in presumably meaningful ways (methodology, theory, argument). If you work sufficiently you will find that all the skills that you can develop or improve in this class are potentially useful not just in other college courses, but also in a wide variety of professions, such as law, management, foreign relations, and policy analysis.

**Topics**

The weekly topics for this course will include:

- Columbus and other Europeans’ first contacts in the New World: Tobacco
- King James and God: European Reactions to Tobacco
- Islam’s Modern Empires: Coffee and Tea
- Islam’s Modern Empires: Tobacco, Opium and Cannabis
- Europe’s Enlightenment: Tea, Coffee and Chocolate
- The Atlantic Slave Trade: Sugar and Rum
- The Atlantic Slave Trade: Coffee, Tea and Tobacco
- India and China: Opium and Empire
- The Industrial Revolution: Urbanization, Gin and Family Life
- Muse or Scourge?: Absinthe in 19th Century European Society and Art
- Funding War and Empire: Opium and Japan’s Invasion of Manchuria
- Science and Leisure: American and German Drug Use during the World Wars
- Decolonization and Economic Dependency: Tea, Coffee, Chocolate and Tobacco
- 20th Century US Foreign Relations: Drugs War from Prohibition to 1980s Columbia

**Readings**

There is no text that is both limited to the period and topics covered in this course and appropriate for a 100-level History class. Therefore, readings will be drawn selectively from various sources, including:


2003.

**Evaluation Criteria**

15% Regular class participation (emphasizing quality over quantity)
20% Regular in-class quizzes (emphasized because discussion will be crucial and if the students have not done the reading they will not be able to contribute to or properly appreciate the class format)
5% Oral presentation
5% One primary source analysis (3pp.)
10% One short paper (3pp.)
15% One research paper (5pp.)
15% Midterm exam
15% Final exam