

# Decolonising History

The case of Module  
HY12420 Europe and  
the world, 1000-2000

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'The Creation of God' (2017) by Harmonia Rosales

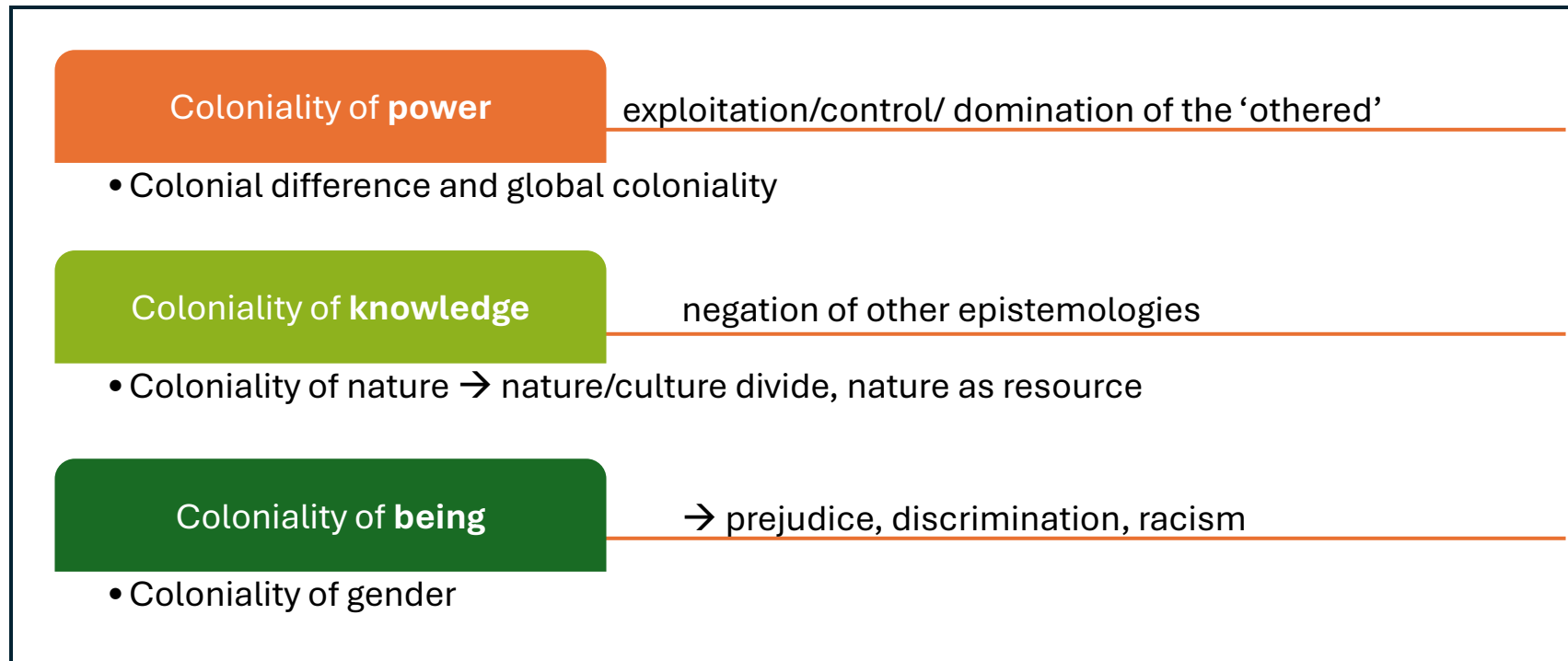
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# Decolonising and decoloniality

- Dismantling forms of coloniality: 'colonial legacies' based on a Eurocentric (Western) system of knowledge
- Act of creation: decolonial curriculums, pedagogies





# Decolonising what?

- Education?
- University?
- Discipline?
- Department?
- Research?
- Curriculum?
- Module?
- Pedagogy?
- Our lives?
- Our selves?



In March 2016, students at Oxford University called for the removal of a statue of Cecil Rhodes and for education to be decolonised. Photograph: DAVID HARTLEY/REX/Shutterstock (theguardian.com)

# Decolonising what?

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In March 2016, students at Oxford University called for the removal of a statue of Cecil Rhodes and for education to be decolonised. Photograph: DAVID HARTLEY/REX/Shutterstock (theguardian.com)



# Decolonising history: the Race, Ethnicity & Equality in UK History report

- **2018** Royal Historical Society (RHS)
- Update 27 June **2024**

2018	2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Historical &amp; Philosophical Studies (H&amp;PS) undergraduate student cohorts overwhelmingly White. <b>BME students 11.3%</b> (while <b>overall UK</b> undergraduate population <b>23.9%</b>)</li><li>• <b>BME in H&amp;PS at PG level 8.6%</b> (<b>16.8%</b> of all UK postgraduate research students)</li><li>• History academic staff are less diverse than H&amp;PS student cohorts (<b>93.7%</b> History staff from White backgrounds, and only 0.5% Black, 2.2% Asian and 1.6% Mixed)</li><li>• <b>Discrimination or abuse based on race or ethnicity</b> witnessed by 18.8% of all respondents to the RHS survey. 29.8% of BME respondents had directly experienced such discrimination or abuse.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• increase percentage share of <b>enrolments – UG, PG– for BME UK-domiciled students</b></li><li>• a decline in the BME awarding gap for a First-Class degree UG</li><li>• highest rates of increase for BME student enrolment at first-degree undergraduate level, and the lowest rates of increase at postgraduate (research) degree level.</li><li>• The percentage of BME students remains lowest for PGR</li><li>• <b>modest increase</b> in the percentage share of <b>BME academic History staff</b> teaching at UK universities</li><li>• recruitment of <b>non-UK national historians</b> for changes in the percentage share of all BME academic History staff</li><li>• slow growth in the number of UK-national BME historians achieving academic jobs in higher education</li><li>• creation of <b>new, dedicated lectureships</b> in, among other subject areas, <b>Black British and British Asian History</b>. These new posts are concentrated in Russell Group institutions while <u>other universities, serving diverse communities, have been unable to make appointments or have seen reversals to existing programmes</u></li></ul>

# History and Welsh history

## Context

- What do we see as the main constraints and opportunities for decolonizing the curriculum with regards to the current context in the following areas:

1. UK Higher Education
2. The discipline of History in UK Higher Education
3. Aberystwyth University.

- Why do we as a department want to decolonize the curriculum?



HANES

BYWYD A FFOEDICA

MOSES ROPER

GAETHIWED AMERICANA

LLANELLI: 1841.

ARGRAFFWYD GAN REES A THOMAS, MHOLY-DWYF.

1841.

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HARVARD UNIVERSITY

## Existing Practice and Priorities

- In what ways is our teaching and modules already “decolonized”?
- What do we want to achieve with this process?
- How can we ensure we develop a curriculum that is attuned to the specific context in Wales?
- In groups, identify what our short-term goals and practical measures should be, as well as our long-term goals for decolonizing the curriculum?



# Diversification of modules offer in our curriculum (last 2-3 years)



HY38920\_AB1\_2023-24

Roads to Modernity: Germany and Japan  
in the Age of Empires, 1860s-1930s (AB1...



HY39120\_AB1\_2023-24

Environmental History of the Neotropics  
(Latin America and the Caribbean) in th...



HY25020\_AB2\_2023-24

Recounting Racism: Oral History and  
Modern American Race Relations. (AB2...



HY24320\_AB2\_2023-24

Interdisciplinary and decolonial history  
(AB2 2023-24)



HQ39720\_AB2\_2023-24

The Invisible Empires: The Second Ku  
Klux Klan and American Society, 1915-...



HY38520\_AB1\_2023-24

Between Revolution and Reform: China  
since 1800 (AB1 2023-24)



# Review of existing modules: The case of Module HY12420 Europe and the world, 1000-2000

## 1. Existing good practices:

TALK, de-centralising contents, promoting critical thinking (essay questions), questioning the role of European powers in modern empires and colonies in contrast with medieval relations, share resources.



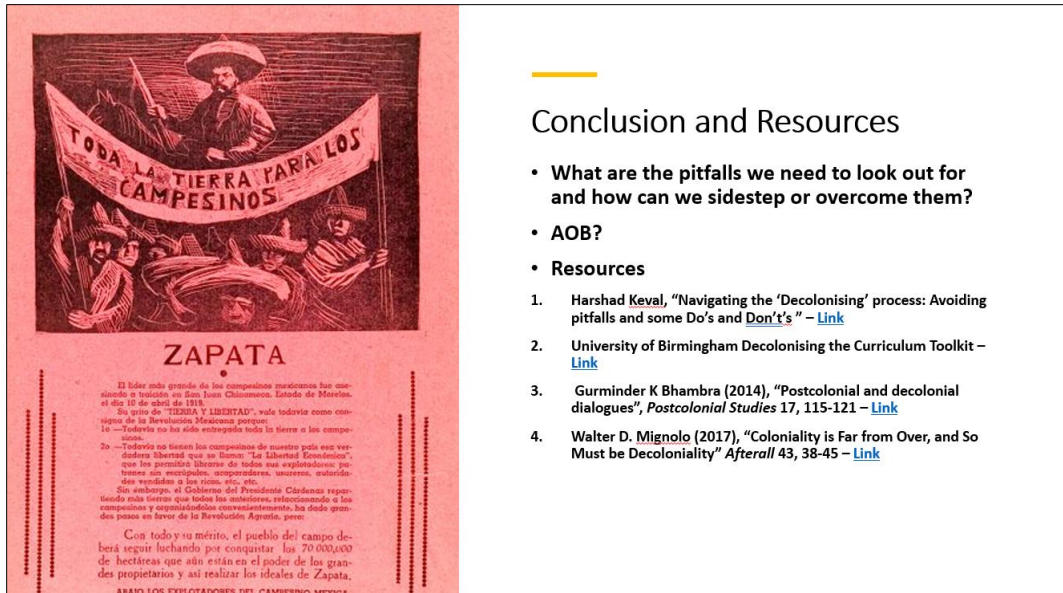
HY12420: Europe and the World, 1000-2000

- In our groups, examine the lecture topics, seminar materials, assessment methods, and marking criteria for HY12420.
- In what ways can we make immediate improvements to this module?
- Can we make any major improvements to the module in future years?



HY12420\_AB2\_2023-24

Europe and the World, 1000-2000 (AB2 2023-24)



## Conclusion and Resources

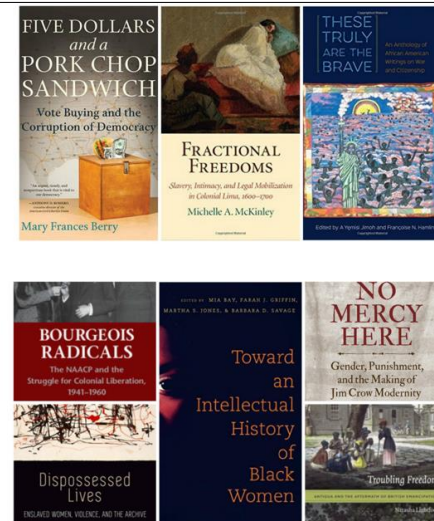
- What are the pitfalls we need to look out for and how can we sidestep or overcome them?
- AOB?
- Resources
  1. Harshad Keval, "Navigating the 'Decolonising' process: Avoiding pitfalls and some Do's and Don't's" – [Link](#)
  2. University of Birmingham Decolonising the Curriculum Toolkit – [Link](#)
  3. Gurminder K Bhambra (2014), "Postcolonial and decolonial dialogues", *Postcolonial Studies* 17, 115-121 – [Link](#)
  4. Walter D. Mignolo (2017), "Coloniality is Far from Over, and So Must be Decoloniality" *Afterall* 43, 38-45 – [Link](#)

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- Dr Sowande' Mustakeem, '#TheHistorySoundtable: 40 Recent Black Female Authored History Books', *Medium*, 2016  
<https://medium.com/@drmustakeem/thehistorysoundtable-40-recent-black-female-authored-history-books-efcb0887e729>.
- Keisha N. Blain, '#TheHistorySoundtable III: Recent History Books by Black Women - AAIHS', 2017  
<<https://www.aaihs.org/thehistorysoundtable-iii-recent-history-books-by-black-women/>>
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- Pero Gaglo Dagbovie, 'Black Women Historians from the Late 19th Century to the Dawning of the Civil Rights Movement', *The Journal of African American History*, 89.3 (2004), 241–61  
<<https://doi.org/10.2307/4134077>>.
- March 24 and others, 'African American Women Are History Makers. Here's a List of Must-Reads! - Women's Media Center'  
<<https://womensmediacenter.com/news-features/african-american-women-are-history-makers-heres-a-list-of-must-reads>>
- 'History', *Association of Black Women Historians*, 2018  
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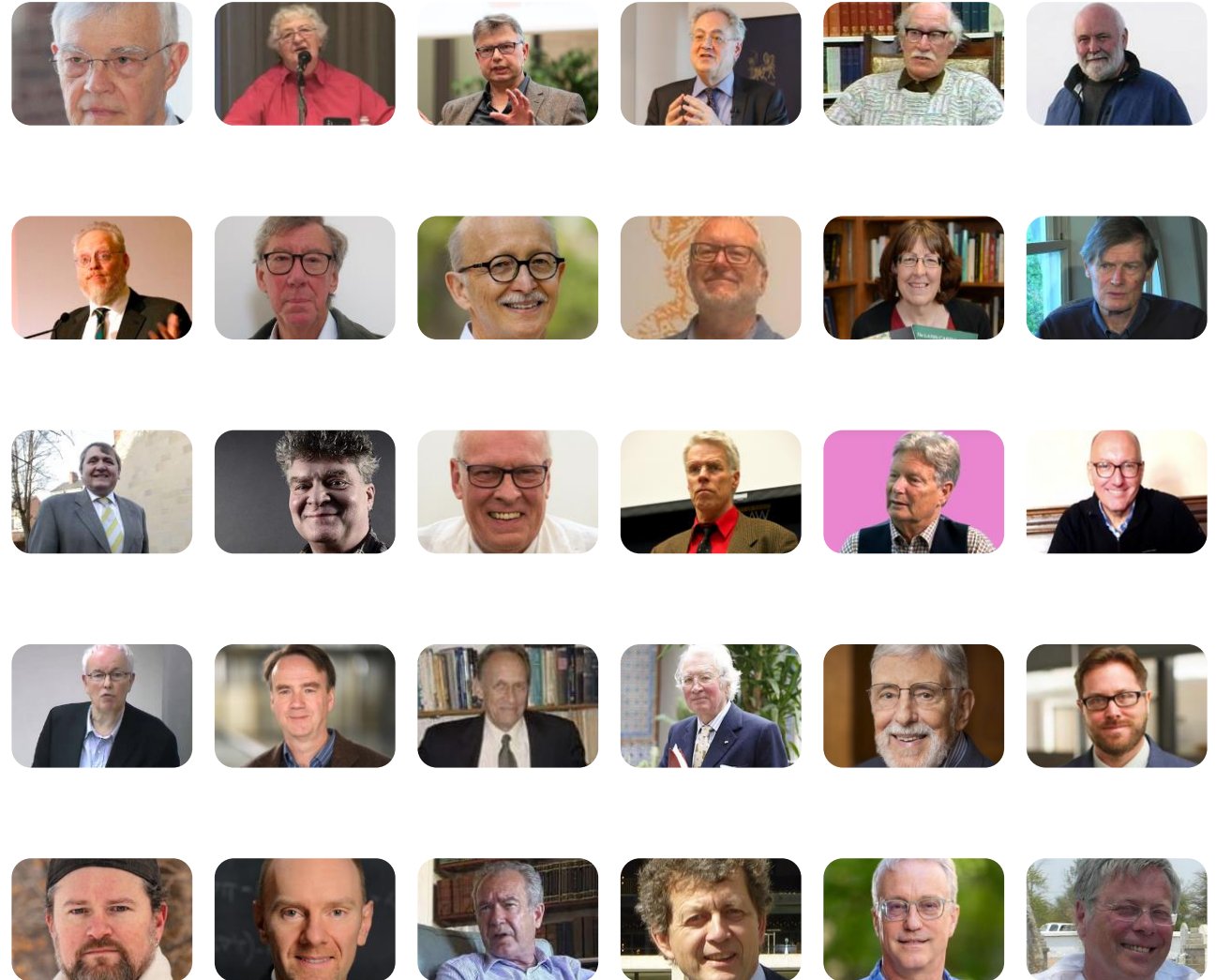
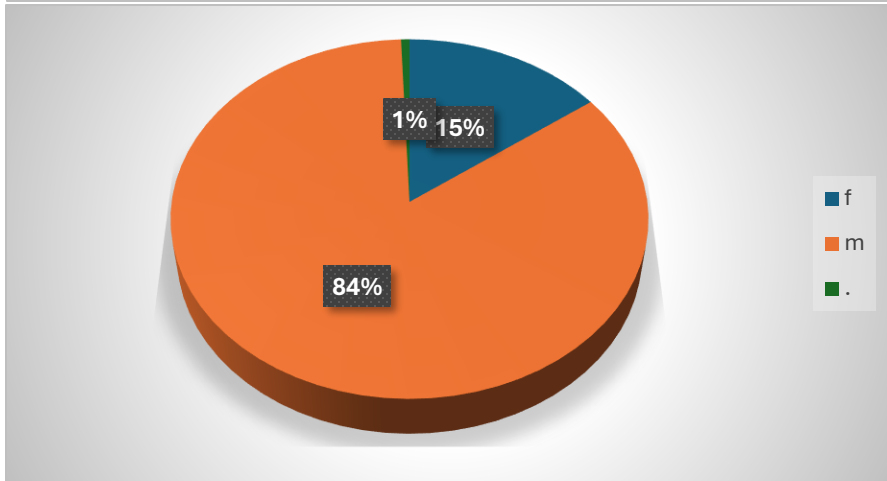
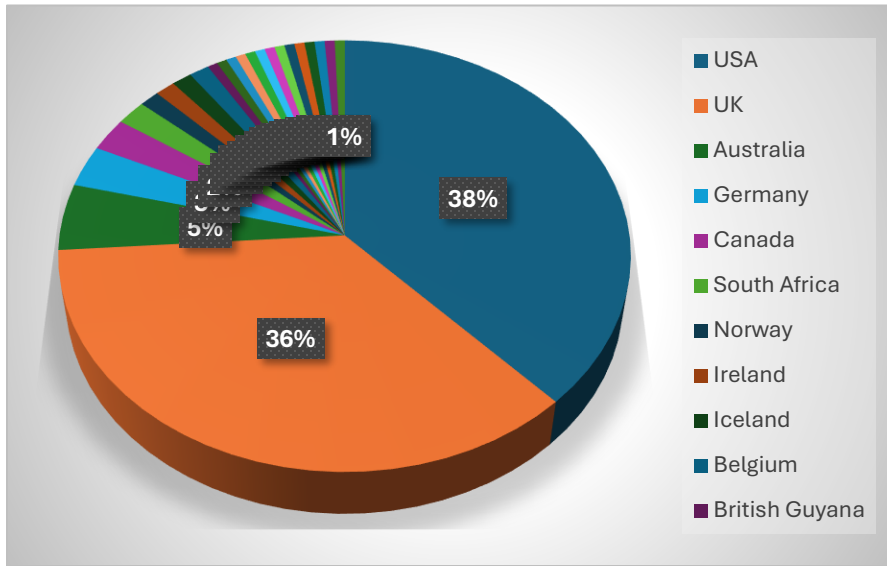
## Black Female Historians

- Dr Sowande' Mustakeem, '#TheHistorySoundtable: 40 Recent Black Female Authored History Books', *Medium*, 2016  
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- Keisha N. Blain, '#TheHistorySoundtable III: Recent History Books by Black Women - AAIHS', 2017 <<https://www.aaihs.org/thehistorysoundtable-iii-recent-history-books-by-black-women/>>
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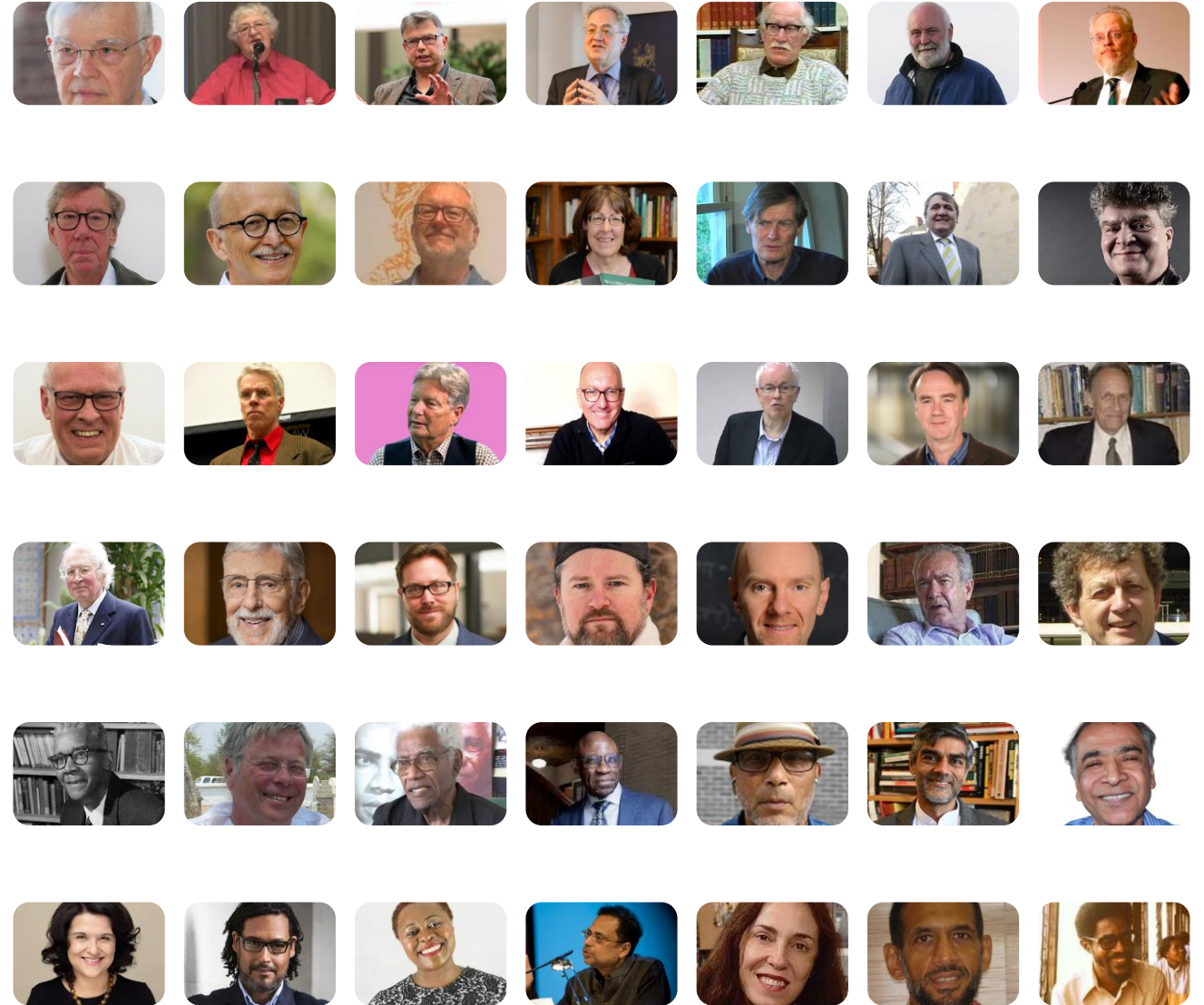


## 2. Shifting perspectives: Analysis of our reading list 2023

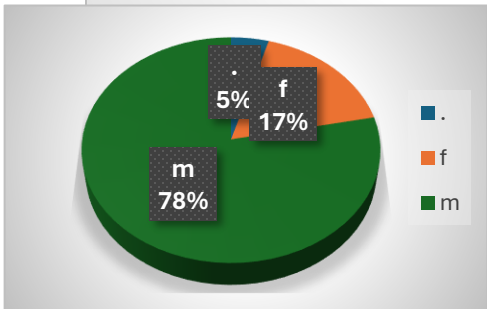
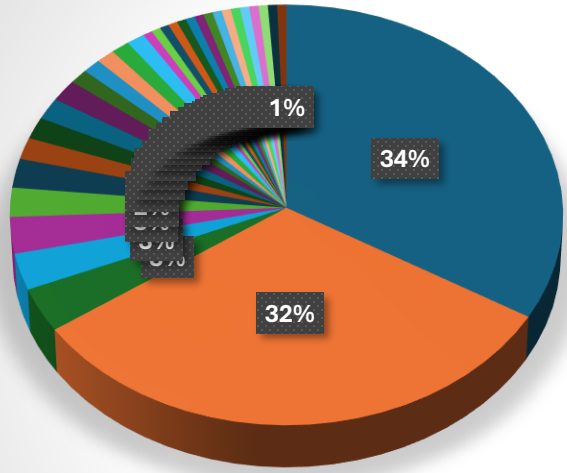




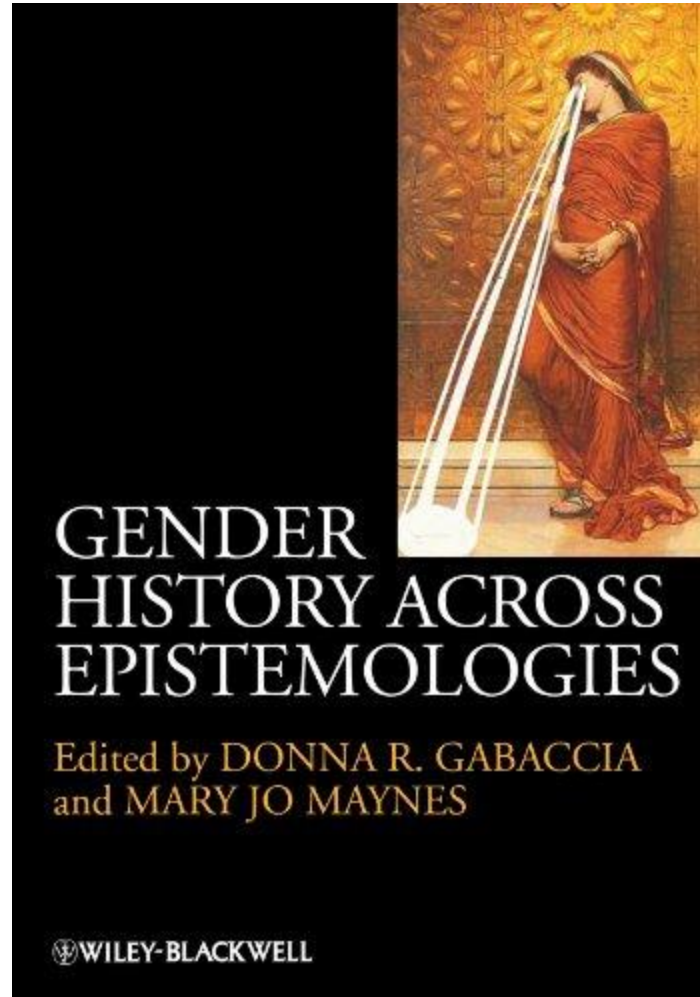
# Today



- UK
- USA
- .
- Brazil
- Australia
- Netherlands
- Germany
- Canada
- Italia
- India
- South Africa
- Trinidad and Tobago
- Iceland
- Norway
- Belgium
- Austria
- New Guinea
- Switzerland
- British Guyana
- Denmark
- Cameroon
- France
- Global
- Ireland
- Sweden
- France-USA
- Cuba
- Italia-USA
- Zimbabwe
- Barbados
- Guyana
- Greece



### 3. Challenging our language (another way to shift the perspective)



The cover image, *Postcard (At the Golden Gate) 2009*, is Ruth Claxton's re-working of a Victorian oil painting by Valentine Cameron Prinsep. Prinsep's original evokes orientalist fantasies of the languorous, passive and submissive woman of the East and embodies the masculine gaze so pervasive in western art. Claxton's pointed slashing gives the formerly passive subject a gaze of her own, and a sharp one at that. She still looks downward, but the passivity suggested by her stance is contested by the potential for her instantly to turn her gaze toward the viewer; with beams emanating from her eyes, she has become the gazer, the seer. At the same time, Claxton's alteration draws critical attention to the embodied stereotype of the eastern female. It leads us to notice the performance of gender: underneath the lush exterior, the hyper-feminine draperies and bracelets, who is actually there? Viewed this way, the image provokes epistemological insights even as it re-represents gender stereotypes. The familiar gendered image becomes ambiguous and indeterminate. The once passive object of scrutiny, in becoming the viewer, focuses our attention on the relationship between knowledge and perspective that has long held a central place in feminist epistemology. Thus *Postcard (At the Golden Gate) 2009* provides a perfect point of entry into a special issue of *Gender & History* devoted to the theme of 'Gender History across Epistemologies'.

### 3. Challenging our language - examples

Whether we consider the Crusades of the Middle Ages, the 'discovery' of America in the fifteenth century, the colonisation, or the World Wars of the twentieth century, European

Trade
i. Concept
ii. Material goods case study <i>The trade in precious goods in (and beyond) medieval Europe</i>
iii. <u>'Human goods'</u> case study <i>The Atlantic Slave Trade</i>





# 5. Updating our marking criteria

2023/24

## MARKING SCHEME: Year 1 Option Modules

Class	Mark range	Descriptive equivalent for essays
First Class Honours - I	80 and above An outstanding first	Intellectually mature, rigorous in argument and sophisticated in exposition, with independence and originality of interpretation. Thoroughly grounded in the literature and alert to wider (e.g. comparative, interdisciplinary, methodological) perspectives <b>including a global perspective</b> . A very discerning historiographical awareness, and sophisticated organisation of material. Clear evidence of the potential to undertake advanced research.
	75 - 79 A solid first	Demonstrates a high level of critical engagement with historical literature. Clear signs of originality of thought and sophistication in presenting an argument. Firm grasp of historiographical issues, and awareness of wider (e.g. comparative, interdisciplinary, methodological) perspectives <b>including a global perspective</b> . A perceptive and analytical approach sustained across the whole essay. Clearly and elegantly written and presented.
	70 - 74 A first which is borderline or just above	Identifies the key issues and analyses them critically, with a discerning historiographical awareness. Intelligent structure and persuasive argument <b>including a global perspective</b> . Elements of originality and high quality, but not sustained throughout. Identifies the key issues and analyses them critically, with some awareness of historiographical issues. A clearly structured argument, written readably, clearly and precisely. Some independent ideas expressed, and relevant supporting evidence presented. Draws on a wide range of reading, beyond the course reading lists where necessary, and uses such literature judiciously.
Upper Second Class Honours (II,i)	60 - 69	Intelligent awareness and cogent discussion of the issues. Clearly focussed, thoroughly and thoughtfully prepared. Judicious and well balanced in its synthesis of conflicting views. Methodical and businesslike in approach.
Lower Second	50 - 59	Broadly relevant and competent, but uninspired in approach and pedestrian in structure and argument. May be uneven in its coverage.

## 6. Students' involvement



'The Creation of God' (2017) by Harmonia Rosales



## 6. Students' involvement

- Key: involving students in our endeavour. Challenging the authority of the teacher in the classroom “puts our money where the mouth is.”

‘Crisis game: The Conquistadors in the New World’ (2024) This activity was co-facilitated by two lecturers and one of our students.



## 6. Students' involvement

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### Challenges

- Colleagues' participation
- Resources
- Students' expectations

‘Crisis game: The Conquistadors in the New World’ (2024) This activity was co-facilitated by two lecturers and one of our students.



# Last thought: Potential lecturer-student partnership?

Proposed next steps:

- 1) Refining Intended Learning Outcomes ILOs and improving the structure of our activities (lectures and seminars)
- 2) Diversifying assignments in creative ways (as much as possible)
- 3) Strengthening the lecturers-students collaboration.



# To start a Q&A

Proposed next steps:

- Could these be formulated using a 'Students as Partners SaP' approach?
- Challenges?

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