October is Black History Month in the UK, in a year when the Black Lives Matter movement suddenly surged after the killing George Floyd in the United States. As you will know, calls to rid universities of racism and to ‘decolonise’ departments have rung out and are increasingly being acted on. This week we will be reflecting on what this means for us as historians of early modern religion in England. Though it might seem very far removed from this module, through a range of reading and discussion I will show you why and how it matters to any historian, whatever their area of expertise.

[I recorded a short intro video about why this is and vital for the discipline in a more general way, tackling structural racism etc, but also, important intellectual justifications for thinking about Black History.]

Activities

1) Read your allocated chapter:


OR


OR


2) In the seminar you will be asked to briefly describe your chapter for the benefit of those who didn’t read it. Prepare by writing a short summary of the content and coverage and then upload your summary to the shared google doc.

3) Tuesday seminar

I will ask each of you to briefly describe the chapter that you read for the benefit of the other students. We will then work through some related questions:

- Did you find anything in what you read surprising, and if so, why?
- Why is Black British history a ‘forgotten’ history?
- What primary sources have scholars used to recover Black lives in early modern England?
- How are the histories of race and religion connected?

4) From the SOAS blog, read: Meera, ‘Decolonising the curriculum: what’s all the fuss about? https://www.soas.ac.uk/blogs/study/decolonising-curriculum-whats-the-fuss/

Write a very brief summary (3 sentences) of the three main decolonising pillars/ideas that Meera identifies.

5) Read the Bhambra, Woolf and Keval extracts which provide more details about what decolonising is. Note down any questions that you have, or anything that you would like to clarify in our Thursday seminar.


*The call to decolonise universities across the global North has gained particular traction in recent years, from Rhodes Must Fall Oxford’s (RMFO) campaign for a public reckoning with its colonial
legacies, to recent attempts by Georgetown University, Washington DC, to atone for its past ties with slavery. The UK’s National Union of Students (NUS) has been running ‘Why is My Curriculum White?’ and #LiberateMyDegree as two of their flagship campaigns since 2015. Both campaigns seek to challenge ‘Eurocentric domination and lack of diversity’ in curricula across UK universities. These dissenting interventions take their inspiration from and build on similar campaigns in other parts of the world – for example, the Rhodes Must Fall movement in South Africa and the campaigns against caste prejudice occurring in some Indian universities. They also build on earlier movements and protests organised under notions of social justice and addressing inequality. These include campaigns such as those led by the Black and Asian Studies Association concerning the representation of Black history within the UK National Curriculum and those in defence of the ‘public university’ organised by the Campaign for the Public University and Remaking the University, among others. These movements, collectively, sought to transform the terms upon which the university (and education more broadly) exists, the purpose of the knowledge it imparts and produces, and its pedagogical operations.

Taking colonialism as a global project as the starting point, it becomes difficult to turn away from the Western university as a key site through which colonialism – and colonial knowledge in particular – is produced, consecrated, institutionalised and naturalised. It was in the university that colonial intellectuals developed theories of racism, popularised discourses that bolstered support for colonial endeavours and provided ethical and intellectual grounds for the dispossession, oppression and domination of colonised subjects. In the colonial metropolis, universities provided would-be colonial administrators with knowledge of the peoples they would rule over, as well as lessons in techniques of domination and exploitation. The foundation of European higher education institutions in colonised territories itself became an infrastructure of empire, an institution and actor through which the totalising logic of domination could be extended; European forms of knowledge were spread, local indigenous knowledge suppressed, and native informants trained. In both colony and metropole, universities were founded and financed through the spoils of colonial plunder, enslavement and dispossession.

The fall of formal empires did little to change the logic of Western universities. Calls around ‘decolonising the curriculum’ have shown how the content of university knowledge remains principally governed by the West for the West. Disciplinary divisions, theoretical models and Eurocentric histories continue to provide intellectual materials that decolonising the university reproduce and justify colonial hierarchies. Subjects of Western scholarship are enduringly pale, male (and often stale); where people of colour do appear, they are all too often tokenistically represented, spoken on behalf of, or reduced to objects of scholarship. Products of university research are still strategically deployed in the pursuit of imperial projects conducted by Western states and firms in former colonies. These imperial projects – past and new – remain central to the financing of higher education in the West. Postcolonial scholars and anti-racist activists have made significant strides in bringing these issues to the fore. However, as numerous activists as well as contributions in this volume argue, the foundations of universities remain unshakably colonial; there is, as ever, more work to be done.’


‘The ‘West’ neither invented nor enjoyed a monopoly on history. Nor has history been the closely guarded possession of history’s high priesthood, academics working mainly in institutions of higher education. In fact, a multitude of different civilisations that have inhabited this planet have conceived of the past in different ways, formulated variable notions of its relationship to the present, and evolved distinctive terms – not always directly corresponding to those we use in English – to denote its representation. Past historical culture must be taken on their own merits and judged by their own standards, not by the fairly narrow assumptions of modern professional historians. In short, we too should be wary of both a geographical and chronological parochialism. While many forms of history sprang up in isolation, they did not remain that way. Just as the history of the world is (in part) a story of encounters, conflicts and conquests among different people, so the history of history itself demonstrates that the different modes of knowing the past have often come into contact with and
demonstrably influenced one another. These encounters were relatively limited until the early modern period and their full implications were not realised until the nineteenth century, at which point, with the advantage of hindsight, it can seem as if all the various streams of historical thinking that the world has seen were either dammed up or diverted into the rather large lake of professional history built on European and especially Germanic academic practice which has ruled the past ever since. But this result was by no means inevitable, nor was it necessarily an intellectual ‘conquest’, since Western practices were often quite willingly adopted, even zealously pursued, by social reformers in other countries seeking an alternative to long-standing and, to them, restrictive and progress-retarding indigenous conventions of describing their own pasts.

While there can be no question that Western history has come to be the hegemonic model (at this time), it has in turn been influenced by its encounters with other forms of historical knowledge, even if only sharpening definitions of what history should and should not be by comparing it with an exotic but ‘lesser’ ‘other’. … I will argue further that these contacts, and this growing awareness of alternative modes of ‘historicity’ (which in this sense means the capacity and will to preserve and recover and represent aspects of the past), obliged Europeans to make some decisions about what they deemed ‘within-scope’ for true history, and to prioritise the written record of the past over the oral or pictographic. This prepared the ground for a hardening of European attitudes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the division of the world into those with a history from those (apparently) without it. This in turn set the table for the achievement of Western dominance over history. The book, in short, sketches out the main world traditions of historical writing, and then the process whereby the European approach, which has generated its own self-policing ‘discipline’, achieved its hegemony, sometimes being adapted or altered better to mesh with very different cultures or competing ideologies (which themselves may be understood as differing beliefs about the moral, economic and political status of the present with respect to either a wistfully remembered past or a dreamed-of future).'

Extract from the Discover Society blog: Harshad Keval, ‘Navigating the ‘Decolonising’ process: Avoiding pitfalls and some Do’s and Don’t’s’. 

‘Step 2: Don’t say: “It’s really not my area…I don’t know anything about this…”

Perhaps. But this is about more than something being outside of one’s knowledge boundaries. It is about the nature of knowledge itself, and what we, as academics come to accept as normalised, central, mainstream, and therefore ‘worth knowing’. For example, every social science academic position requires a high level of knowledge at broad and deep levels, spanning not only their own specific expertise but also in other related fields and disciplines (these are essential criteria for most academic positions). Why then is the vast range of social science, research, philosophy and theory that currently exist outside of these criteria not part of what a social scientist should know or be interested in? Social science training, learning and teaching all treat postcolonial and decolonial knowledge as ‘other’. To adopt a position of not-knowing, necessarily requires an unspoken, sub/unconscious adoption of knowing something, and placing that knowledge as foremost in a hierarchy of knowledges.

Do ask: What have I assumed about what is worth knowing?’

6) Decolonising the English Reformation: write down two ideas about how we could decolonise the content of this module. Think about the areas where a discussion of race would be relevant and important to the study of early modern religion. This might relate to ideas and attitudes about race, or to the way that religion worked, how religion spread and so on. Looking at the titles of books on the further reading list might also give you some ideas.

7) In pairs, choose an early modern image from Peter Brathwaite’s website of Black Portraiture. For this exercise, let’s define early modern as something produced between 1450-1750. Add the title of the image to the seminar google doc.
Be ready to explain to the rest of the group why you choose your portrait. What can you learn about the early modern period from the image? As well as the details of the image itself, don’t forget to look at the details of who painted the image, where and when - most of them are not English.

8) Thursday seminar.

We will begin with a discussion of what ‘decolonising’ means, drawing on the Meera blog post and the three extracts that you read. We will start with the 3 principles identified by Meera, and then will move on to thinking about History more specifically. If you noted down any questions, ask them now.

We will then discuss your ideas for Decolonising the English Reformation. What did you come up with?

Finally, each pair will be ask to present their Peter Brathwaite image to the rest of the group. Say a bit about who painted it, where and when (if we know the details) and then explain why you choose it, and what it can tell us about the early modern period.

9) Consolidate: reflect on what you have learned this week, and then pick one or two items from the further reading to fill gaps in your knowledge or to follow up on something that interested you. Don’t be intimidated because the list is very long this week – I’ve tried to include as much material as possible so you can follow up, and have added some abstracts where I can.

Further Reading

Many of the texts here can be found on this collaborative bibliography. It also includes many other sections, including ones on whiteness, visual culture and critical race theory: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AaMp1al8y715FklUq1x5scqBHYS9QpzvMzqYU_ZyFow/edit?usp=sharing

You can find a reading list of scholarship written by people of colour on slavery and colonialism 1500-1700 here: https://manyheadedmonster.wordpress.com/2017/07/25/a-reading-list-of-scholarship-by-people-of-colour-on-slavery-and-colonialism-c-1500-1750/

Early modern England, general:

Dabybeen, David, Gilmore, John, Jones, Cecily, eds. The Oxford Companion to Black British History. OUP, 2005.


This introduction to the first SQ special issue on early modern race studies suggests that, unlike other early modern fields, EMRS has been subject to an unhealthy recursiveness about its central subject and argues, “Ignoring or disparaging race will not make it go away as a question for our— or Shakespeare’s—time. We thus have set our sights on the next decade, using 2025 as a landmark by which to measure subsequent progress toward establishing the field of early modern race studies with a stronger foundation through a wide spectrum of social issues, a broader scholarly framework, a larger academic audience, and deeper public engagement.” It suggests seven concerns for race studies on the horizon and optimistically proposes that by 2025,” we hope to see a revitalized, intellectually expansive, solidly established field for early modern race studies that attracts much larger audiences in both academic and public spheres.” Drawing on CRT scholar Derek Bell, it concludes with a call for EMRS to “set our own questions and chose methods that embrace strangeness, that refuse an artificial border between past and present, and that listen to the voices of people of color.”

Feerick argues that early modern English social hierarchies were based on race and considers the process by which the "race-as-blood" system of categorizing racial difference (6) was replaced by categorizations based on skin color.


Hall argues that the contemporary hierarchy of white over black in English language and social order can be traced to a pattern of colour-coded power inequality established during the early period of European colonisation and the slave trade.


Hendricks gives an overview of the trajectory of 'race' in early modern England by reviewing what she calls the "conceptual threads that contributed to the formation of the Renaissance concept / category of race": the history of the word "race" and Renaissance theories of generation.


Iyengar considers a wide variety of early modern texts in order to understand how perceptions of "bodily, cultural, and social" difference (1) together influenced racial identity formation in early modern England.


This booklet, published by the Folger Shakespeare Library is an early foray into early modern race studies. Jones explores the ways in which Africa and Africans are represented in the early modern English imaginary.


*Black Tudors* explores the untold history of Africans in Tudor and early Stuart England through the lives of ten individuals.


Kaufmann reflects on interracial relationships in the context of archival records of Africans in early modern England.


A short biography of the African trumpeter who was employed by Henry VII and Henry VIII.

[Most of Kaufmann's work is available online via her website www.mirandakaufmann.com]


*Race in Early Modern England* is a collection of historical texts that illuminate early modern English understandings of race. The collection includes both early modern texts and earlier texts that were foundational to early modern English writers.
Examining the importance of African women's labor in English colonies, historian Jennifer Morgan argues for the importance of English notions of gender and reproduction in the development of racial ideologies and racial slavery in the seventeenth century English Atlantic world.


Cassander L. Smith investigates how the physical presence of black Africans both enabled and disrupted English literary responses to Spanish imperialism. By examining the extent to which this population helped to shape early English narratives, from political pamphlets to travelogues, Smith offers new perspectives on the literary, social, and political impact of black Africans in the early Atlantic world. With detailed analysis of the earliest English-language accounts from the Atlantic world, including writings by Sir Francis Drake, Sir Walter Ralegh, and Richard Ligon, Smith approaches contact narratives from the perspective of black Africans, recovering figures often relegated to the margins. This interdisciplinary study explores understandings of race and cross-cultural interaction and revises notions of whiteness, blackness, and indigeneity. Smith reveals the extent to which contact with black Africans impeded English efforts to stigmatize the Spanish empire as villainous and to malign Spain’s administration of its colonies. In addition, her study illustrates how black presences influenced the narrative choices of European (and later Euro-American) writers, providing a more nuanced understanding of black Africans’ role in contemporary literary productions of the region.


In Race and Rhetoric in the Renaissance, Smith explores the relationship between language and racial identity formation in English Renaissance literature.

Weissbourd, Emily. “‘Those in their possession’: Race, Slavery, and Queen Elizabeth’s ‘Edicts of Expulsion’ Huntington Library Quarterly 78 (2015), 1-19.

Weissbourd analyzes three now-notorious documents from the turn of the seventeenth century that authorize the removal of “negars and blackamoores” from England. Although they are frequently described as edicts of expulsion, Weissbourd argues that the documents implicate Elizabeth’s Privy Council in a nascent slave trade.

Early Modern Europe:


The essays in Black Africans in Renaissance Europe examine representations of Africans across Spain, Portugal, Italy, England, France, and Germany during the Renaissance.

Moore looks at examples of conflicts in early modern port cities (including Amsterdam, Genoa, Constantinople, and others) in order to examine how trade affected the ways early modern cultures interacted with those they perceived as outsiders.

**Early modern religion:**


Andrews documents the contribution of indigenous North American and African agents to the British foreign missionary enterprise in British North America, the West Indies, and West Africa. Throughout the monograph, a host of American Indian and African missionaries are introduced, ranging from Hiacoomes, a Wampanoag Indian who began his training in the 1640s, to John Quamine, the one-time slave whose mission was thwarted by the American Revolution.

**Byron Ellsworth Hamann,** _Bad Christians, New Spains: Muslims, Catholics, and Native Americans in a Mediterratlantic World._ Routledge. 2019

This book centers on two inquisitorial investigations, both of which began in the 1540s. One involved relations of Europeans and Native Americans in the Oaxacan town of Yanhuitlán (in New Spain, today’s Mexico). The other involved relations of Moriscos (recent Muslim converts to Catholicism) and Old Christians (people with deep Catholic ancestries) in the Mediterranean kingdom of Valencia (in the “old” Spain).

Although separated by an ocean, the social worlds preserved in these inquisitorial files share many things. By bringing the two inquisitions together, Hamann reveals how very local practices and debates had long-distance parallels, parallels that reveal larger entanglements of the early modern world.


This book builds on recent research on early modern Catholic missions, which has shown that missionaries in Asia cooperated with and accommodated the needs of local agents rather than being uncompromising promoters of post-Tridentine doctrine and devotion.

Bringing together researchers from Anglophone countries and continental Europe, this volume investigates how missionaries’ entanglements with local societies across Asia contributed to processes of localization within the early modern Catholic Church.

**Ooi Keat Gin, Hoang Anh Tuan eds.** _Early Modern Southeast Asia, 1350-1800._ Routledge, 2016.

This book presents extensive new research findings on and new thinking about Southeast Asia in this interesting, richly diverse, but much understudied period. It examines the wide and well-developed trading networks, explores the different kinds of regimes and the nature of power and security, considers urban growth, international relations and the beginnings of European involvement with the region, and discusses religious factors, in particular the spread and impact of Christianity. One key theme of the book is the consideration of how well-developed Southeast Asia was before the onset of European involvement, and, how, during the peak of the commercial boom in the 1500s and 1600s, many polities in Southeast Asia were not far behind Europe in terms of socio-economic progress and attainments. **Chapters by Andaya and Aguilar.**


Throughout the text Gerbner reminds readers that the English, Dutch, and some French colonists in the Caribbean were arguably shaped more by their Protestantism than any national attachments. That this was especially the case in their engagement with slavery is an important revelation. She is also
good at exploring and imagining the response of slaves and free blacks to the evolving theology of slavery that was gradually strengthening slavery’s grasp in every corner of the Atlantic world. Perhaps most of all, she shines a light on Christianity’s complicity in the development of modern racism.”


The volume explores global developments and tracks the many ways in which Reformation movements shaped relations of Christians with other Christians, and also with Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and aboriginal groups in the Americas. Contributions explore the negotiations, tensions, and contacts that developed across social, gender, and religious lines in different parts of the globe, focusing on how different convictions about religious reform and approaches to it shaped social action and cross-confessional encounters. The essays explore the convergence of religious reform, global expansion, and governmental consolidation in the early modern world and examine the Reformation as a global phenomenon; the authors ask how a global frame complicates our understanding of what the Reformation itself was and offer a unique and up-to-date examination of the Reformation that broadens readers’ understanding in creative and useful ways.


The Routledge Companion to Christianity in Africa offers a multi-disciplinary analysis of the Christian tradition across the African continent and throughout a long historical span. The volume offers historical and thematic essays tracing the introduction of Christianity in Africa, as well as its growth, developments, and effects, including the lived experience of African Christians. Individual chapters address the themes of Christianity and gender, the development of African-initiated churches, the growth of Pentecostalism, and the influence of Christianity on issues of sexuality, music, and public health. This comprehensive volume will serve as a valuable overview and reference work for students and researchers worldwide.


Tears of Repentance revisits and reexamines the familiar stories of intercultural encounters between Protestant missionaries and Native peoples in southern New England from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries. Focusing on Protestant missionaries’ accounts of their ideals, purposes, and goals among the Native communities they served and of the religion as lived, experienced, and practiced among Christianized Indians, Julius H. Rubin offers a new way of understanding the motives and motivations of those who lived in New England’s early Christianized Indian village communities.

Rubin explores how Christian Indians recast Protestant theology into an Indianized quest for salvation from their worldly troubles and toward the promise of an otherworldly paradise. The Great Awakening of the eighteenth century reveals how evangelical pietism transformed religious identities and communities and gave rise to the sublime hope that New Born Indians were children of God who might effectively contest colonialism. With this dream unfulfilled, the exodus from New England to Brothertown envisioned a separatist Christian Indian commonwealth on the borderlands of America after the Revolution.


From the 14th century onward, political and religious motives led Ethiopian travelers to Mediterranean Europe. For two centuries, their ancient Christian heritage and the myth of a fabled eastern king
named Prester John allowed the Ethiopians to engage the continent's secular and religious elites as peers. Meanwhile, back home the Ethiopian nobility came to welcome European visitors and at times even co-opted them by arranging mixed marriages and bestowing land rights. The protagonists of this encounter sought and discovered each other in royal palaces, monasteries, and markets throughout the Mediterranean basin, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean littoral, from Lisbon to Jerusalem and from Venice to Goa. Matteo Salvadore's narrative takes the reader on a voyage of reciprocal discovery that climaxmed with the Portuguese intervention on the side of the Christian monarchy in the Ethiopian-Adali War. Thereafter, the arrival of the Jesuits at the Horn of Africa turned the mutually beneficial Ethiopian-European encounter into a bitter confrontation over the souls of Ethiopian Christians.


In this interdisciplinary collection of essays, Joel W. Martin and Mark A. Nicholas gather emerging and leading voices in the study of Native American religion to reconsider the complex and often misunderstood history of Native peoples' engagement with Christianity and with Euro-American missionaries. Surveying mission encounters from contact through the mid-nineteenth century, the volume alters and enriches our understanding of both American Christianity and indigenous religion.

Decolonising (just a few things to get you started):


Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History (1995), chapter 4 ‘Good day Columbus’.


Royal Historical Society’s 2018 report on racial and ethnic inequalities in the teaching and practice of History in the UK, based on a survey of 700 university based historians. https://royalhistsoc.org/racereport/


The Royal Historical Society’s 2018 Race, Ethnicity & Equality in UK History: A Report and Resource for Change is one of the most recent reports to raise the alarm on the prevalence of racism and negative experiences of students and staff of colour in Higher Education Institutions in the UK. The report highlights the urgency of this issue especially within the field of History, along with a series of recommendations, borrowing from studies from across the sector and outside of academia. In this Viewpoint, the report’s proposals to address the negative university experience for and unequal awarding of degrees to students of colour is discussed, particularly those proposals directly related to teaching practice. Despite the focus on the content of the curriculum and perhaps the attitudes of those who teach, it is argued that racial equality will only be achieved if we are willing to change the very structure and pedagogy of our classrooms, adopting critical and engaged anti-racist pedagogical practice. That is to say, we must take seriously efforts to decolonise the institution, not just diversify it.