

The global opium trade in the age of prohibition

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The course examines efforts to restrict the opium trade in the twentieth century, from the first international agreement to restrict opium, signed in Shanghai in 1909, to the establishment of the modern drug control regime under the United Nations with the agreement of the single convention on narcotic drugs in 1961, and their impact on the political economies of producing regions of Asia. The opium trade in this period underwent a dramatic transformation, from being dominated by European empires and merchants to the covert smuggling of opium by a range of private individuals and state agencies. By the late 1930s, the opium sold by the British East India Company, whose saturation of the Chinese market had provoked two wars in the 19th century, had been replaced by exports from Turkey and Iran and the output of a fast-developing opium sector in China and Japanese-controlled territories in Manchuria and Korea. In the attempt to regulate production and commerce of opium and its derivatives, prohibitionist governments and campaigners turned to newly established international organisations such as the League of Nations and United Nations, which became important forums for the confrontation and collaboration between producing and consuming states. The course shows how in spite of the hope invested in new treaties for the harmonisation of laws prohibiting the non-medical use of opium, producers, traders, and consumers of the drug proved to be resilient, forming complex networks of exchange in the pursuit of pleasure and profit. With the recent emergence of efforts to decriminalise drug consumption in much of the world, studying the uneven pathways to the criminalisation of opium and its consequences is all the more relevant.

Assessment:

Students will be assessed on the basis of their participation in class discussion (20%), presentation of weekly readings (30%), and a final paper (50%) of 5000-7000 words due in September.

1. Background: The Nineteenth Century Opium Trade and European Imperialism

Wednesday 13 March, 15-17, Aula Studio

The lecture will provide an overview of the development of the India-China opium trade, its impact in China, the two opium wars, and the significance of the trade to the financing of European imperial expansion in Asia.

In class students will assess economic data charting the growth of the opium trade in the nineteenth century and the memoranda of British, Indian, and Chinese officials and merchants in order to discuss the importance of the trade to the rise of European power in Asia.

Readings:

Song-Chuan Chen, *British Knowledge of China in the Making of the Opium War* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2017), chapter 7.

Frank Dikötter, Lars Peter Laamann, and Xun Zhou, *Narcotic Culture: A History of Drugs in China* (London: C. Hurst, 2004), chapter 2.

Julia Lovell, *The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams and the Making of Modern China* (Basingstoke: Picador, 2011), chapter 1.

2. The Moral Crusade Against Opium and the 1909 Shanghai Opium Conference

Wednesday 20 March, 15-17, Aula Studio

The lecture will survey growing opposition to the opium trade among Asian nationalists, missionary groups and social campaigners around the world, and their contribution to the signing of the first opium suppression conference in Shanghai in 1909.

In class students will examine the campaign literature of anti-opium groups like the anti-opium league and assess the treaty texts and diplomatic communications surrounding the Shanghai conference.

Readings:

Michael C. Lazich, "American Missionaries and the Opium Trade in 19th Century China."

Journal of World History, 17:2 (2006), pp. 197-223.

Steffen Rimmer, *Opium's Long Shadow: From Asian Revolt to Global Drug Control*

(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), chapter 6.

David T. Courtwright, *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), chapter 9.

3. Medical Science and the Study of Addiction

Wednesday 27 March, 15-17, Aula Studio

The lecture will examine the rise in global medical concern with the causes and symptoms of opium addiction that accompanied increasing legal restrictions on opium and opiates and the developing notion of public health.

In class students will discuss excerpts from newspapers, historical medical journals and conference proceedings on opium addiction, in order to further their understanding of the relationship between medical science and policy making.

Readings:

Miriam Kingsberg, "Legitimizing Empire, Legitimizing Nation: The Scientific Study of Opium Addiction in Japanese Manchuria," *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, 38:2 (2012), pp. 325-351.

Kyle T. Evered and Emine Evered, “‘Not just eliminating the mosquito but draining the swamp’: A critical geopolitics of Turkish Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction and Turkey’s approach to illicit drugs,” *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 33 (2016), pp. 6-14.

Ashley Wright, “‘Not Just a Place for the Smoking of Opium’: The Indian opium den and imperial anxieties in the 1890s,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 18:2 (2017).

4. International Conventions on Opium from the League to the United Nations

Wednesday 10 April, 15-17, Aula Studio

The lecture will cover the creation of an international framework for the suppression of opium and the diplomatic conflicts between opium exporting and importing nations that shaped negotiations of international agreements governing opium under the League of Nations and United Nations.

In class students will examine the texts of the 1925 opium convention, 1931 convention for the suppression of the illicit traffic in narcotic drugs, and 1961 single convention on narcotic drugs, alongside contemporary commentary on the treaties in order to assess their impact.

Readings:

William B. McAllister, *Drug Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century: An International History* (London: Routledge, 2000), chapter 3.

David Bewley Taylor and Martin Jelsma, “Regime change: Re-visiting the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs,” *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 23:1 (2012), pp. 72-81.

Harumi Goto-Shibata, ‘The League of Nations, Washington and internationalism in East Asia with special reference to the League’s attempt to control opium’, in *The International History of East Asia, 1900-1968: Trade, Ideology and the Quest for Order*, ed., Antony Best (London: Routledge, 2010).

5. European Colonialism and Opium Revenues in South-East Asia

Wednesday 17 April, 15-17, Aula Studio

The lecture compares the management of opium consumption by the Dutch in the East Indies, the British in Burma, Malaya, and Hong Kong, the Portuguese in Macao, and the French in Indochina.

In class students will assess colonial governments’ communications on matters of opium with their metropolitan superiors, as well as examine League of Nation’s reports on opium consumption, in order to assess the local and international pressures on European colonies.

Carl A. Trocki, 'Opium and the Beginnings of Chinese Capitalism in Southeast Asia', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 33:2 (2002), pp. 297–314.

Ashley Wright, *Opium and Empire in Southeast Asia: Regulating Consumption in British Burma* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), chapter 5.

Diana S. Kim, *Empires of Vice: The Rise of Opium Prohibition Across Southeast Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), chapter 5.

6. Opium in Soviet Central Asia (Guest lecture by Niccolo Pianciola, University of Padua).

Wednesday 24 April, 15-17, Aula Studio

Readings:

Niccolo Pianciola, 'Illegal Markets and the Formation of a Central Asian Borderland: The Turkestan-Xinjiang Opium Trade (1881–1917)', *Modern Asian Studies*, 54:6 (2020), pp. 1828-1875.

James Bradford, 'Drug Control in Afghanistan: Culture, Politics, and Power during the 1958 Prohibition of Opium in Badakhshan', *Iranian Studies*, 48:2 (2015), pp. 223-248.

Daniel Weimer, "'It's That Difficult of a Terrain": Opium, Development, and Territoriality in US-Afghan Relations, 1940s–1970s', *The Social History of Drugs and Alcohol*, 33:1 (2019), pp. 113-144.

7. Warlords and Drug-Barons in Republican China.

Wednesday 8 May, 15-17, Aula Studio

The lecture focuses on the role of illicit opium production and trade in sustaining the power bases of local leaders in the Republic of China, the wavering approach of the Chinese nationalist regime to suppressing the drug, and the consequences of Japanese expansion into formerly Chinese territories

In class students will use newspaper and consular reports to assess how control of opium impacted the fractured politics of pre-Communist China and provided local sources of revenue for competing authorities in the country.

Readings:

Edward R. Slack, 'The National Anti-Opium League and the Guomindang State, 1924-1937' in Brook Timothy, and Tadashi Wakabayashi Bob (eds.), *Opium regimes: China, Britain and Japan, 1839-1952* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

Alan Baumler, *The Chinese and Opium Under the Republic: Worse Than Floods and Wild Beasts* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2007).

Xavier Paulès, “Unacceptable but Indispensable: Opium Law and Regulations in Guangdong, 1912–1936,” *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, 2:2 (2013), pp. 366-392.

8. International Defiance and Opium Monopolisation in Iran, Yugoslavia, and Turkey.

Wednesday 15 May, 15-17, Aula Studio

The lecture explores the motivation behind Iranian and Turkish resistance to international opium controls and documents their strategy of creating state monopolies for the purchase and export of opium.

In class students will examine the reports of foreign consuls and the League of Nations on both countries, as well as Turkish and Iranian defences of their opium industry, in order to understand the connection between ideologies of national development and the opium trade.

Readings:

Ryan Gingeras, ‘Poppy Politics: American Agents, Iranian Addicts and Afghan Opium, 1945–80’, *Iranian Studies*, 45:3 (2012), pp. 315-331.

Daniel-Joseph MacArthur-Seal, ‘The Trans-Asian Pathways of ‘Oriental Products’: Navigating the Prohibition of Narcotics Between Turkey, China, and Japan, 1918–1938’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 55:6 (2021), pp. 1–43.

Ozgür Burçak Gürsoy, ‘Losing Wealth or Restricting the Poison? Changing Opium Policies in Early Republican Turkey, 1923-1945’, *Historia agraria*, 61 (2013), pp. 115–143.