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KAREN FOLEY: Hello, and welcome back to the Student Hub Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Showcase. In this next session we take a look A225, the British Isles and the Modern World 1789 to 1914. And I am joined by Anna Plassart and Donna Loftus. Thank you for coming along.

Now this is the longest title, I think, and one that's very dated. Is there a significance to this, and was it difficult to think of the exact wording for this module?

DONNA LOFTUS: Do you want to start?

ANNA PLASSART: The short answer is, yes.

KAREN FOLEY: You only have 20 minutes.

ANNA PLASSART: Do you want to elaborate on the British Isles, maybe?

DONNA LOFTUS: OK. Well, the long 19th century-- sorry, I'm starting with the long 19th century. It starts with the French Revolution, and ends with the First World War. And the British Isles in that period changes a lot. So there's the relationship between England, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland, and also their relationship with the wider world. So yeah, the title is an attempt to encompass all of those things.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent now this is a level two module. So we're getting to some extent specific, but also again very broad. And you cover a lot in this module, both in terms of time, and also content and skills.

DONNA LOFTUS: Absolutely. Yeah. No. So it's a step up from level one, and it will go deeper into some of the methods of history and how you are a historian. And it will kind of, well, it will be a refresher for those that have done another level two history course, and an introduction for those that are new to history as well.

KAREN FOLEY: Now you mentioned the modern world, Donna. Anna, I wonder if you can talk a bit about how that applies to scope. Because we've mentioned the sort of time factors which are obvious there. But scope is another way of looking at the modern world.

ANNA PLASSART: Yes, that's right. We wanted to include the modern world, because obviously every period

thinks that they are modern, because that's their modernity. But there's something special about the 19th century. And one of these special things I think is that it's the first time in history-- in British history, anyway-- that people living in the times start to think of themselves as being, living in a modern, globalised world. And that's quite new. So that's what we wanted to get through with this title.

And part of being globalised is, as Donna was saying earlier, is having all these relationships with the wider world. And we really try to include that in the module, because it is what makes British history in the period. It's all the relationships with Europe, all the wars-- well, two big wars, beginning and end; Ireland as well-- British Isles, Ireland; and also the British Empire. So it's all these things coming together to make Britain a global place in the 19th century for the first time, when people are really realising this, and thinking, oh, we are modern. So that's what we wanted to--

DONNA LOFTUS: The focus is very much on Britain, but it's not an inward history of Britain. It's the history of Britain in the context of the wider world. And it's about the modernist, so much associated with these sort of narratives of progress.

And we want to show that actually that modernity can shift in different ways. There's progress in some areas. There's defence of tradition in others. And there's this push-pull in different directions, and which produces lots of contradictions-- great wealth, great poverty, great confidence, great anxiety; and a sort of national identity, and one that's also very fractured by ideas of class and region.

KAREN FOLEY: This term "dialectic of modernity," and you talk about the push-pull, and all the exciting things that are happening. So we've got these geographical changes, and also these sort of changes in terms of access to things as a result of industrialisation. All of a sudden there's access to the printing press, and news. Such a massive amount of sources are both generated at this time that I guess historians can use, which I know is one of the key things that you look at in terms of skills throughout the model.

But there is an awful lot there. So just sort of tell me, then, about this dialectic of modernity, and the push-pull, and how you explore that throughout these sort of blocks of the module.

DONNA LOFTUS: Well, I mean, one of the things about doing 19th century history is you have to cope with a proliferation of a range of different kinds of sources-- government inquiries, newspapers, images. And these are produced in lots of different regions for lots of different reasons. And so

you can kind of get so many different perspectives on the 19th century. Coping with that diversity and that proliferation is very, very difficult. And I think one of the things we have to do in this course is give students the skills for managing that diversity and that range.

And the dielectric, in a way, comes from seeing them in conversation, or seeing them in relationship to each other. So one source might produce this particular image of modernity and progress, and of a government getting in control of change. And then others will produce a kind of very different impression of resistance, and I suppose also the way different identities are produced by different kinds of events and experiences.

KAREN FOLEY: So let's take a look at the blocks, because you have a three-block structure. And it's books and online materials as well. So Anna, could you talk us block one, which is about ambition and anxiety, 1789 to 1840?

ANNA PLASSART: Yep. I can. Well, the block is really about all the new things transforming Britain in the early 19th century. And there are a range of different factors that make it so Britain really is transformed between 1789 and 1840.

The most obvious one, I would say, is probably our starting point, which is 1789. That's the French Revolution, which actually is a huge event in British history for a number of reasons. The first one is probably political. It infuses British politics with all sorts of new radical ideas.

But also the French Revolution comes with wars. And Britain is at war from 1793 to 1815 with barely a stop. That's 22 years of almost continuous war that completely transforms Britain as well.

And another change is the economic change of industrialisation. So it's a period when there starts being a mass exodus from rural areas towards cities. And people start working in cities, start working in factories-- it's the beginnings of the factory system. So there's this brand new economic system that's starting to take hold in Britain, and transforms its landscape. It transforms the way people work.

And one of the things we talk about in this block is the birth and the rise of something called the working class. That didn't really exist before. But that really comes from all these new changes put together. And they're interacting in a number of different ways. This working class that is starting to rise due to all the economic changes also finds a political identity, in part thanks to the French Revolution; starts to find a political voice demanding changing,

demanding political changing for representation. So it's all really intertwined.

And the block is about how British people experience these changes, and how they try to make sense of them. What is this new Britain? And it's a really difficult thing to come to grips with, when everything is changing around you. So it's really change, I think, would be the key word in this first block. And it leaves us in 1840 with a Britain that's quite industrialised, and with a clear working class demanding political rights, which is quite new.

And also, it leaves Britain with the beginnings of what is going to become the British Empire. So Britain had long had strong trade links in the Atlantic world between the Americas and Africa. But in the period it also started developing its empire in the East. And that will come through in block two.

KAREN FOLEY: Donna, how do self-help books, recipe books, come into block two, then, which is about confidence and crisis?

DONNA LOFTUS: Well it's because we finished block one with a society which it's suffered a lot of change. There's great uncertainty. And we start 1840 with the threat of revolution, the rise of Chartism. But very soon this dissipates, and we seem to enter a period of relative confidence and stability, a period which is known as the Age of Equipoise.

And in the block, we explore the reasons for that. And one of them is to do with the rise of the middle class. And Mrs. Beeton is there to demonstrate how the rise of this new class creates a demand, really, for a new way of living-- a new guidance on how to live. So Mrs. Beeton's book meets that market, this sort of anxious middle class not knowing quite how to live in the new urban city.

And then we have Samuel Smiles, who, I mean, he dominates the age. His book is published in 1859, the same year as Darwin's *Origin of Species.* And it's a massive bestseller. And it's all about the gospel of work, and thrift, and perseverance, and industry. But it's about how individual energy is going to regenerate society. And through transforming yourself, you can transform the world around you.

And that inspires great confidence in the mid-19th century, to the extent that social problems still exist. There's still great poverty. The legacy of the Irish famine lingers for many, many years. But nevertheless there is this confidence that we can resolve society's problems.

KAREN FOLEY: And then block three, Anna, is about decline and renewal. So talk us through that.

ANNA PLASSART: Yes. Well the counterpoint to confidence is the fear of decline. And that starts very much appearing in this later period, which is quite paradoxal, because in one way it's the peak of British power, of the British Empire. Britain is very wealthy. It has no doubt of its place in the world.

At the same time, this fear of decline is instilled in British society. And you have all these conversations about, well, we have peaked. There's nowhere to go but down. And this is the anxiety side of it. But it's a complex period, because at the same time it's also a very modern period in the sense that people are very aware of living in an innovative, modern world.

And, well, one way to think about it is to think of the working class, I think-- again the working class. I worked on the working class. If you look at newspaper reports; if you look at what the middle classes are writing about, the working class, it's very fear-inducing. There's this fear that the genetic stock of the nation is declining, basically.

But if you look at what working class people are writing about themselves-- if you look at the unions, if you look at the associations-- there's a real sense of confidence in themselves and of political organisation. And also it's the moment when this working class culture has started to inform into mass popular culture. So they really drive the rise of cinema, the rise of the music hall, the rise associated with sports like football. So all of this is really coming to the fore in their period at the same time as middle class observers are saying, ooh, this is not going well at all. So it's this push and pull, this paradox.

KAREN FOLEY: So Donna, do you just learn all of this history? I mean, it's a 30-week module. And it seems like there's an awful lot to cover. How do you teach people how to be a historian in addition to the history?

DONNA LOFTUS: Well to answer the first part of your question, no, you can't possibly know all of this yourself, and learn all of it yourself. And so historians learn in dialogue with each other. They learn from each other. They read each other's work. They study each others' sources. They even share sources between them. And we hope in this course to get students involved in that kind of learning.

And there are two collaborative assignments-- TMA03 and TMA05-- where we attempt to draw students into that kind of discussion and debate and collaborative learning. Each student will

have a source-- their own source-- and a question. And they will be asked to kind of post responses to the question and the source in a forum, and then to share those ideas. They then take those ideas and answer an essay question themselves.

And the point is to show that you can't know everything. You can't cover all other sources-- particularly for the 19th century. But you can share them, and you can learn from each other.

KAREN FOLEY: So let's go on to the assessment now as we end up with this aspect. Because what I really like about the way you've done this is that you've got the collaboration, but there's an individual mark. And I think that that can be really important to students. So they're benefiting from that exercise. But again, it's all assessed individually. And you've mentioned that this applies to two of the TMAs. But there are five in total.

DONNA LOFTUS: Yeah, there are five. Do you want to talk about the other ones?

ANNA PLASSART: Yeah. Just to go back on what Donna was saying. I think the collaborative work is meant to replicate the way historians work together. So we talk together, we exchange ideas, we learn from each other. But in the end, we write own work. And that's what's assessed. So it's meant for students to work like historians-- very much so.

And the other TMAs are, I would say, much more classical TMAs. The first one is source-based. So it's discussing a source and what we can learn, discussing an extract from an autobiography. So it's again very much honing the skills of being a historian.

And TMAs 2, 4, and 6 are essays. So a question that you answer in an essay. So much more.

KAREN FOLEY: And then there's a three-hour exam with three questions at the end.

DONNA LOFTUS: That's right. Yeah. And there'll be plenty of support for that.

KAREN FOLEY: Excellent. You've given us a really wonderful overview of the module. It sounds really exciting. It sounds jam-packed with lots of both skills as well as content, and the way that it's structured. I mean, you could see that students wouldn't get bored with that. So Donna and Anna, thank you very much for joining me today.

DONNA LOFTUS: Thank you.

ANNA PLASSART: Thank you.

KAREN FOLEY: We're now going to show you a couple of short videos from our 60-second adventures series. And these are going to be 60-second adventures in thought. And then we're going to end the last of our sessions today with A853, which is the MA in Philosophy Part 1. I will see you in a few minutes.

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