

**HISTORY 2192A**  
**Beer: The Business, Social and Cultural History of a Global Beverage**  
**Fall 2025**

**Online Asynchronous**

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**Department of History, Lawson Hall 1207**

**Office Hours: Virtual (Zoom), Mondays, 1pm-3pm**



**This is a draft outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace prior to the start of classes in September for a final version listing all required readings.**

**Course Description:**

This course examines the business, social and cultural history of the brewing and consumption of beer, from its origins in antiquity, through its production and use in the Roman and Medieval periods, to its impact on Renaissance commerce, and the revolutions in technology, advertising, corporatization, globalization and localization during the modern age. There are no course prerequisites!

**Course Syllabus:**

Beer is one of the oldest beverages produced by humans, with known roots dating back to the 5th century BCE. This course traces its history from the ancient period to the present. Among the themes discussed are the methods and approaches to brewing beer over the centuries by diverse human societies, as well as entrepreneurship, innovation, state-intervention, branding and marketing, customs and religious practices, gender and sexuality, corporate social responsibility and technology. Beer and its pivotal role in global history will be examined, from the 'cradle of civilization' to the craft brewing revolution.

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Assess theories regarding early brewing practices and fermentation;
- Describe the varying relationships with beer present in major Ancient World societies, specifically in economic, political, social and cultural/ religious terms;

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- Explain the role of beer within societies of the Medieval Period, including the Germanic, Norse and Anglo-Saxon peoples;
- Describe the rise of hops in the brewing process and the main stages in the development of Northern European brewing between the 13th and the 16th centuries;
- Discuss the gendered division of labour evident in brewing between Antiquity and the Early Modern Period;
- Explain the rise of beer as a commercial and trade product, and its role in the European Age of Discovery;
- Compare the brewing practices that evolved in various New World societies;
- Analyze the effect that developments of the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions had on the production and consumption of beer;
- Discuss the impact of Prohibition, The Great Depression and World Wars I and II on the brewing industries of various countries;
- Explain how beer advertising both reflected and ingrained social and cultural attitudes towards issues of consumption, class, race and gender;
- Discuss the main developments associated with the corporatization, consolidation and globalization of major brewers in the 20th century;
- Examine the modern era of beer production, consumption and marketing in the world's top-producing nations;
- Describe the main developments associated with the history of Canadian brewing, including the rise of beer in the contexts of London and southern Ontario;
- Describe the successes and challenges of the craft brewing industry;
- Analyze a variety of primary and secondary historical sources;
- Express their ideas and arguments clearly and concisely in writing.

### Course Materials:

There are several assigned readings and resources in this course, consisting of a textbook, book chapters, journal articles, illustrations and videos. All readings and resources except for the textbook are accessible through the OWL Brightspace course website.

There is one textbook for the course: Johan Swinnen and Devin Briski, *Beeronomics: How Beer Explains the World* (Oxford University Press, 2017). It may be read online for free through Western Libraries ProQuest Ebook Central (Western ID Username & Password required).



**Methods of Evaluation:**

Forum Postings (10)	30%	By 11:59pm EST each Friday, Weeks 2-11
Midterm Test	30%	October 15 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59amEST to 11:59pm EST
Final Exam	40%	TBD (December Exam Period)

Forum Postings:

Students are required to post their thoughts (via the forum discussion tab of the Brightspace OWL course website) on the content and questions to consider for each of the ten weeks specified in the syllabus (note: there is no forum posting scheduled for the first week of the course). Each posting should be between 150 and 200 words and demonstrate some understanding of the weekly content. These are due by 11:59 pm EST each Friday. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Midterm Test & Final Exam:

The midterm test and final exam in this course will be administered and written online through the OWL Brightspace platform. They will typically be available to students for a period of approximately 12 hours, but once they are opened, they must be completed within a specified time frame (2 hours for the midterm test and 4 hours for the final exam). The twelve-hour window is designed to provide flexibility for students who are writing in different time zones and to allow students to overcome any technical issues they may encounter. The midterm test and final exam may include multiple choice and/or short essay questions.

Please note that instructors are permitted to designate one assessment per course per term as requiring supporting documentation to receive academic consideration. For this course the following assessment has been designated as requiring supporting documentation: **Midterm Test**. Makeup assessments for the midterm test and the final exam will only be provided to students who first receive academic accommodation. For those students normally provided with extra time to write tests and exams through Accessible Education, please note that the midterm test is designed to be written in one hour and the final exam is designed to be written in two hours. The accommodation, therefore, is already built into the extra time allotted for the writing of each evaluation and the 12-hour submission window should preclude further accommodation.

The midterm test and the final exam will be non-cumulative. The midterm test will cover all course material from Unit 1 (Week 1 to Week 5 inclusive), and the final exam will cover material from Unit 2 (Week 6 to Week 11 inclusive). Students must complete both the midterm test and the final exam to qualify for a passing grade in the course, regardless of marks received.

During the writing of the midterm test and the final exam, the use of course lectures, readings, forums, as well as other online (and offline) resources and communication, is strictly prohibited. Students should prepare their answers with reference to the relevant course materials only, i.e. recorded lectures and assigned readings and resources. Answers featuring content external to the course will not be given credit.

Make-up tests, midterms, and exams can only be approved by Academic Advising. Please see [https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_module\\_information/policies.html](https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html) for department procedures and requirements involving make-up tests and exams.

### **Course Structure & Advice for an Enjoyable Course Experience:**

This course is being offered in an online asynchronous format. There are no scheduled classes. It will be taught through the OWL Brightspace course website, which contains all course materials (except for the textbook), including recorded voice-over slide lecture presentations; additional assigned readings; the complete syllabus; announcements, forum, assessments, calendar entries; and a gradebook. The best way for us to communicate throughout the term is via email, though we can meet over zoom during my weekly virtual office hours.

This course runs for the fall academic term and is organized into two main units. For those new to taking online asynchronous courses, please be advised that it is extremely important to keep up with the recorded lectures and readings. Doing so will reduce your workload when preparing for the midterm test and the final exam. Effective time management is crucial. The designated weeks and forum posts are intended to help guide students through the completion of course content in an organized and consistent fashion in anticipation of the evaluations. Please note that the schedule also accommodates assessments, as well as official university holidays. I will also post a weekly announcement to help students schedule their work for the course on a regular basis to avoid falling behind.



I hope this will be an enjoyable experience for you. Please let me know as soon as possible if you are encountering issues or have concerns about your course experience. We will work towards finding a solution. Thank you for enrolling!

Cheers! Professor Mike Dove

***Image: Woman drinking beer.***

## **Tentative Course Schedule & Readings:**

[Please note that several additional readings will be assigned and will appear on the final version of the course syllabus, posted on the OWL Brightspace course website prior to the start of term]

### **UNIT I**

#### **Week 1: September 08-12**

##### **The Business, Social and Cultural History of Beer: An Introduction**

###### Readings:

Textbook: "Introduction: From Monasteries to Multinationals and Back," pp. 1-6.

TBA

#### **Week 2: September 15-19**

##### **Beer & The Ancients: Mesopotamia to Egypt, Greece, Rome & the Celtic World**

###### Readings:

Textbook: "The World's Oldest Profession: Brewing in the Cradle of Civilization," pp. 7-13.

TBA

#### **Week 3: September 22-26**

##### **Beer & The Medieval World: The Early Germanic, Norse & Anglo-Saxon Worlds**

###### Readings: TBA

#### **Week 4: September 29-October 03**

##### **'Brewers' Gold': The Hop Revolution**

###### Readings:

Textbook: "A Revolution Every Thousand Years: How Hops Jump-Started Commercial Brewing in Medieval Europe," pp. 15-22.

TBA

#### **Week 5: October 6-10**

##### **Beer & Early Modern Europe**

###### Readings:

Textbook: "The Brew that Launched a Thousand Ships: How Porter Paid for the British Royal Navy," pp. 23-36.

This is a draft outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

TBA

**MIDTERM TEST: 15 OCTOBER 2025!**

**(Note: There are no lectures or forum postings for this week)**

## UNIT II

**Week 6: October 20-24**

**New World Beer**

Readings: TBA

**Week 7: October 27-31**

**Industrial Age Brewing**

Readings:

Textbook: “A Revolution Every Thousand Years, Part II: How Bottom Fermentation Made Beer the Darling of the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions,” pp. 37-46.

TBA

**FALL STUDY BREAK: NOVEMBER 01-09, 2025!**

**Week 8: November 10-14**

**Prohibition, The Great Depression, & The World Wars**

Readings: TBA

**Week 9: November 17-21**

**Postwar Corporatization, Consolidation & Globalization in the Brewing Industry**

Readings:

Textbook: “How TV Killed the Local Brewery,” pp. 47-54.

“Beer Monopoly: How the Belgian Beer Barons Dethroned the King,” pp. 55-61.

“Socialist Lubricant: Liberalization, Takeovers, and Restructuring the East European Brewing Industry,” pp. 63-72.

“The Belgian White: Reincarnation of an Old World Brew,” pp. 73-81.

“The Reinheitsgebot: Protection Against Competition or Contamination?”, pp. 83-91.

This is a draft outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

“From Land to Brand: How Nineteenth-Century Nationalist Politics Planted the Seeds for the Global Trademark Battle over ‘Budweiser’,” pp. 93-102.

“The Great Convergence: The Fall of the Beer-Drinking Nation and The Rise of the Beer-Drinking World,” pp. 103-111.

From Vodka to Baltika: Deciphering Russia’s Recent Love Affair with Beer,” pp. 113-118.

“Trading Water or Terroir? The Changing Nature of the Beer Trade,” pp. 119-127.

### **Week 10: November 24-28**

#### **The Canadian Brewing Tradition**

Readings: TBA

### **Week 11: December 01-05**

#### **The Craft Beer Revolution & The Future of Beer**

Readings:

Textbook: “Craft Nation: How Belgium’s ‘Peasant Beers’ Became the Best in the World,” pp. 129-144.

“Hop Heads and Localholics: Strategies of the American Craft Beer Movement,” pp. 145-159.

Textbook: “Conclusion: How Beer Explains the World,” pp. 161-169.

TBA

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Please review the Department of History’s shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: [https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_module\\_information/policies.html](https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html) for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.