This course focuses on three sets of genres, methods, and protocols by which an influential group of Britons tried to make sense of the past and a rapidly changing world of empire and commerce. All of the writers we examine belonged to a single London organization: the Literary Club, which included many of the century’s most important writers and theorists. The members of this club, working independently or in a variety of innovative collaborations, wrote, translated and published texts that helped found the modern disciplines of literary study, economics, and history. Reading selections of Samuel Johnson’s literary work and philology (as well as parts of James Boswell’s *Life of Samuel Johnson*), Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*, Edward Gibbon’s *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and Sir William Jones’s translations of Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit literature will reveal how these disciplines emerged from a society being transformed by imperial expansion and the media revolution associated with the expansion of print.