

Understanding Modern Britain

Course Details

Course Designator & Number: LNDN 3333

Number of Credits: 3

Language of Instruction: English

Course Description

One of the most effective ways of understanding a nation is by examining the images, values, symbols, and individuals by which a nation represents itself. This multidisciplinary course explores a variety of forms of national representations – “icons and ideals” – to investigate the ways in which modern Britain and British identities have been imagined, constructed, and experienced at home and internationally. This theme is examined through specific topics including: imperialism and its legacy; consumer culture; immigration and racial politics; the monarchy and government; the impact of World War Two; and varieties of political and cultural dissent. The course also gives students the opportunity to engage directly with the heritage industry and contemporary British culture, utilizing London’s cityscape and its vast array of distinctive neighbourhoods, cultural venues, galleries, and historical sites as primary tools of analysis. Classes are arranged thematically, combining contextual lectures, film, seminar discussion, and field studies. Emphasis will be placed on understanding and interpreting the legacy of Britain’s past upon the ways in which the contemporary nation and British identities are structured in the twenty-first century.

Course Objectives

This course is designed to introduce students to key themes of contemporary British society, culture and politics, to analyse the historical forces which shaped modern Britain, and to provide a framework in which students can better understand their experiences abroad. Our analysis of Britain will be situated in relation to the wider global framework of the nation’s development, including the influence of empire, immigration, and European and Anglo-American relations. The course will also enable students to further develop the ability to read critically and interpret primary documents, to strengthen analytical skills, and to engage in critical debate. Research essays and presentations will enhance students' abilities to

source, synthesise and critically assess information from a variety of historical, contemporary, and theoretical perspectives.

Methodology

Field classes form an important element of the course; attendance at these classes is mandatory. Field classes present a valuable opportunity for students to immerse themselves in the varied spaces and places of contemporary Britain and provide direct interaction with a wide range of culturally diverse communities. They also illuminate the ways in which British society and identities are showcased in contemporary London. In these classes we will learn about the forces which have structured, and continue to influence, British culture, politics and society. We will interpret the sites we visit through class discussion as well as in written work. Field studies for this course include: walking tours of the East End, the South Bank, and the Olympics Site, the Churchill War Rooms, and a guided tour of the Houses of Parliament.

Students are also encouraged to take advantage of the My Education calendar in order to broaden their understanding of contemporary British culture.

Required Reading / Materials

Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000). John Benson,

Affluence and Authority: A Social History of Twentieth-Century

Britain (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005) Christopher Breward, *Fashioning London: Clothing and the Modern Metropolis* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

David Cannadine, *In Churchill's Shadow: Confronting the Past in Modern Britain* (London: Penguin, 2002).

David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2001).

Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London: Routledge, 2002).

Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2002).

James Hampshire, *Citizenship and Belonging Immigration and the Politics of Demographic Governance in Postwar Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1995).

Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.)

Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918 – 1957* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

Susan Kingsley Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain, 1640-1990* (London, Routledge, 1998).

W. R. Louis, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire, vol. III: The Nineteenth Century*, eds. A. Porter & A. Low (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (London: Macmillan, 2008).

Mike Phillips and Trevor Phillips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: HarperCollins, 1999)

Erica Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain, 1939 -1945* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003).

Cathy Ross, *Twenties London: A City in the Jazz Age* (London: Philip Wilson, 2003).

Sheila Rowbotham, *A Century of Women: The History of Women in Britain and the United States* (London: 1999).

Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had it So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (London: Abacus, 2006).

Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties* (London: LittleBrown, 2006).

Nick Tiratsoo, ed., *From Blitz to Blair: A New History of Britain since 1939* (London: Phoenix, 1998).

Wendy Webster, *Imagining Home: Gender, 'Race' and National Identity, 1945 - 1964* (London: UCL Press, 1998).

Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century-A City and its People* (London: Penguin,2001).

Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Vintage, 2008).

Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain* (London: Abacus, 2005).

Lindy Woodhead, *Shopping, Seduction & Mr. Selfridge* (London: Profile Books, 2008).

Useful Websites

BBC history <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/>

Official site of the 2012 Olympics <http://www.london2012.com/>

The Times Online <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/>

The Guardian <http://www.guardian.co.uk/>

19th C History <http://www.victorianweb.org/>

Immigration and Race <http://www.blackpresence.co.uk/>

Political History <http://bubl.ac.uk/link/b/britishpoliticalhistory.htm>

Churchill War Rooms www.cwr.iwm.org.uk/

Imperial War Museum <http://www.iwm.org.uk/>

Moving Here: 200 years of migration to England

<http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/English/EventsExhibitions/Community/MovingHere.htm>

Grading

CAPA Program and Instructor Policy

The faculty expects from its students a high level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic course depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student, it is imperative that a student demonstrate a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work and class behavior. This means to gain full attendance you must attend all classes, you must not be late (unless with a valid reason) and you must be respectful of the professor and of other students by not talking/whispering in class when others are talking or presenting. Persistent lateness or lack of attention in class, i.e., reading materials other than the work assigned, may result in a low or zero grade for participation, and possible referral to the CAO. **No electronic equipment will be used in class**, including laptops, phones, ipods, cell phones, etc, unless you have written permission from the Chief Academic Officer prior to the course. If you are caught using any electronic equipment, you may receive a zero grade for participation.

Plagiarism will be dealt with very seriously, and will be referred to the Chief Academic Officer in London. You may receive an F for the course. If all work is not submitted by the end of the program, you will receive an F for the course.

Class Participation and Attendance

Attendance at all classes is mandated by CAPA; students who miss a class without permission from CAPA's Chief Academic Officer will have their grade for the course lowered. Informed participation is expected in every class, so students must have read the full assignment carefully before coming and be ready to discuss it if called upon. At any meeting there may be a brief, pass-fail two-minute quiz on some utterly obvious fact in the assigned reading. Students will also be asked to complete informal in-class writing assignments on a regular basis, which will require them to demonstrate their familiarity with the assigned materials. Students who repeatedly demonstrate unsatisfactory performance on these quizzes and exercises will be penalized in the participation grade.

Grading Rubric

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	
B	83–86	
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	
C	73–76	
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.
D+	67–69	
D	60–66	
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

Assignments	Percentage of Grade
Participation	20%
Story in the news (1,000 words)	20%
Field Study Paper (1,500-2,000 words)	25%
London Presentation	15%
Iconic Britain Presentation	20%
Overall grade	100%

Course Content

Unit 1

Introduction to Modern Britain and British Culture

- Introduction to the main themes of the course

Unit 2

Arts & Culture on the South Bank (FIELD CLASS)

- Walking Tour of the South Bank – from the London Eye to St. Paul’s
- **Meet at Entrance to Embankment Stn – 10 o’clock**
- **Reading:** Asa Briggs, “Exhibiting the Nation,” *History Today* (January 2000)16-25.
 - Michael Frayn, “Festival Spirit” (2001)
 - Jerry White, “London Remade” in *London in the Twentieth Century: A City and Its People* (New York, Penguin, 2002) 46 -87.

Unit 3

Constructing National Identity - Politics, Pomp, & the Palace

- Seminar - The New Palace of Westminster and the Evolution of the Nation
- Film: Britain’s Best Buildings – “The People’s Palace”
- **Reading:** Walter Bagehot, from *The English Constitution* (1867)
 - David Cannadine, “The Palace of Varieties” from *In Churchill’s Shadow: Confronting the Past in Modern Britain* (London: Penguin, 2002): 3 -25.
 - Linda Colley, “Britishness and Otherness: An Argument” *Journal of British Studies* 31 (October 1992): 309 –329.
- **FIELD CLASS: Guided Tour of the Houses of Parliament**
- **Westminster Tube** - Meet at Visitor’s Entrance **NB: Date tba**

Unit 4

Imperialism and Multicultural Britain

- Seminar: The Legacy of Imperialism and the Impact of Immigration Film: "A Night on Brick Lane"
- **Reading:** Diane Abbott, *Multi-racial Britain*
 - Peter Ackroyd, "Maybe it's because I'm a Londoner," in *London, The Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000) pp. 701 -16.
 - Ed Glinert, *East End Chronicles: Three Hundred Years of Mystery and Mayhem* (London: Allen Lane, 2005) 117 -147, 242 – 69.
 - Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain* London: Abacus, 2004. "Introduction" and "Identity Parade," 1 -16, 455 - 80.

Unit 5

Walking Tour of the East End (FIELD CLASS)

- Meet at exit to Whitechapel stn. (tbc.)
- **Reading:** Tarquin Hall, from *Salaam Brick Lane: A Year in the New East End* (London: John Murray, 2006).
 - Rachel Lichtenstein, *On Brick Lane* London: Hamish Hamilton, 2007, selections.

Unit 6

Walking Tour of 2012 Olympics Sites (FIELD CLASS)

- Meet at exit to Pudding Mill Lane station (tbc.)
- **Readings:** Selected web and newspaper resources:
 - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/2012>
 - www.guardian.co.uk/uk/olympics2012
 - www.londonolympics2012.com

Unit 7

London neighbourhood presentations

Unit 8

Mid Term Break

Unit 9

The Wartime Nation: World War Two & Commemoration

- Seminar: Churchill's Finest Hour and Commemorating World War Two
- **Reading:** Peter Ackroyd, "Blitz" in *London – The Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000), 737 - 750.
 - A. N. Wilson, "Churchill in 1940", in *After the Victorians* (London: Hutchinson, 2005), 383-393.
 - Selected news articles

Unit 10

Churchill War Rooms & Churchill Museum (FIELD CLASS)

- Meet at Museum Entrance: Westminster or St James" Park stn.
- **Reading:** Angus Calder, "Spitfire Summer: April to September 1940," in *The People's War: Britain, 1939 –1945* (London: Pimlico, 1994), 77 – 105.
 - A. N. Wilson, "Bombers and Bombed," in *After the Victorians* (London:Hutchinson, 2005).

Unit 11

Anarchy in the UK – The Rolling Stones, Punk, Thatcherism

- Seminar - Political & Cultural Dissent from the 60s to the Present
- Film: Andrew Marr, "A History of Britain" - The 1990s
- **Reading:** Tariq Ali, "1968" in *Street Fighting Years: An Autobiography of the Sixties* (London: Verso, 2005).
 - Dick Hebdige, from *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1995).

- Susan Kingsley Kent, “The end of consensus: “Permissiveness” and Mrs. Thatcher’s reaction, 1963-1990,” in *Gender and Power in Britain, 1660-1990* (Routledge, 1995)

Unit 12

The Celtic Fringe – Scotland, Ireland, and Wales

- Seminar: National Myths, Regional Cultures, and Contemporary Society in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales
- **Reading:** John M. MacKenzie, “„The Second City of Empire”: Glasgow – imperial municipality,” in *Imperial Cities* 215- 37.
 - Dermot Keogh, “Ireland 1945 -2001: between “Hope and History”” in Kathleen Burk, ed. *The British Isles Since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003).

Unit 13

Comedy, Politics and British Culture

- Selections from film, tv clips, comedic writing

Unit 14

Group Presentations and Debate – Iconic Britain

Participation in seminars and field classes is an expected component of the course and will enhance student’s understanding of the material for their written work and presentations. Lectures, seminars and field studies encourage discussion based on course materials and insights from students’ observations. Students are expected to have completed the readings prior to each class and to contribute to discussion in an informed manner through relevant comments, questions, and analysis.

Current News Story Analysis- Max. 4 PP. Double-Spaced (Due Week 4)

For this short assignment, choose a current news story about British society, politics or culture which provides insight into how the contemporary nation is experienced, imagined or represented. Your story should be sourced from a quality British newspaper, such as The Guardian, The Observer, The Financial Times, The Times, The Daily Telegraph or The Independent. In approx 1000 words, your paper should briefly summarise the main points of the story and explain how it illustrates or exhibits a particular aspect of contemporary Britain and British identities. Be sure to consider how your chosen story relates to the concepts of

national identity discussed in class. You may choose one article or follow a developing story that is emerging over the period up to week 4 (i.e. a selection of articles about the same story). Please attach a copy of the story to your assignment and provide accurate referencing for any material used in your paper.

News stories can be found in the newspapers listed above and in online sites such as BBC news <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/>, guardian unlimited www.guardian.co.uk/ political news at <http://www.politics.co.uk/>.

Presentation: London Neighbourhoods & Boroughs (Week 7)

Working with a partner, students will give a brief presentation based on an analysis of a specific London borough or neighbourhood, such as Camden Town, Southall or Greenwich. Students should visit their chosen location in order to gain insight into its character more fully. Presenters will address the character, main points of interest, and significance of their location in terms of such themes as: society, culture, historical development, architecture, environment, crime, and demographics. Collectively, these presentations will provide insight into the diverse nature of the city and its inhabitants. Presentations should be approx.10 minutes duration, and students are encouraged to be creative in their presentation technique through the use of audio/visual display etc. Students will be evaluated on their ability to creatively introduce and analyse their location, assess its significance for an understanding of London's character, connect the topic to the main theme of the course, and generate discussion with the class.

Sources: www.londonprofler.org; www.london.gov.uk, www.timeout.com/london, <http://www.londononline.co.uk/> plus class readings and students' own observations.

Field Class Analysis 6-8 PP. Double-Spaced (Due no later than Week 11)

You may choose to write on one of the following:

1. South Bank Walking Tour
2. The Palace of Westminster
3. Tour of the 2012 Olympic Sites
4. Walking Tour of the East End and Brick Lane
5. Churchill War Rooms & Museum

This essay involves an analysis of one of the field classes for this course. Consider the ways in which a specific field class provides insight into British society and culture in historical and/or contemporary perspectives: how does it enhance your understanding of modern Britain? Your paper should analyse your chosen field class in relation to the main themes of the course and consider how the field class showcases a specific icon or ideal relating to British culture. For example, consider the Palace of Westminster as an iconic structure: what British ideals does it represent? How do the 2012 Olympics demonstrate ideals of 21stC Britain? In what ways is

Churchill's status as a British icon constructed at the Churchill War Rooms and Museum? How do Brick Lane or the Southbank showcase British culture today?

Papers should be analytical rather than descriptive, based on a well-defined argument, and supported by specific details from the field class, class handouts and readings, and your own observations. You may also incorporate an analysis of photographs and other visual material. Specific assignment details and questions will be provided for each field class. Students are advised to submit their paper within two weeks of the field class upon which they are writing.

Group Presentations- Iconic Britain (Week 14)

In the final week of the course, we will have an in-class competition to determine the feature or characteristic that best represents the nation. Students will deliver group presentations based on an analysis of a specific icon or ideal -person, place, thing, event, characteristic - of Britain and British identity. You may select, for example, an exhibition, event, building, design, festival, television programme, film, ritual, or individual figure– including fictional characters, which showcases or exhibits the nation and national identities. Examples include: the monarchy, The Beatles, James Bond, the BBC, the Battle of Britain, Brick Lane Festival, devolution, Speaker's Corner, "Coronation Street," and the 2012 Olympics. How does your specific topic challenge and/or reinforce ideas about contemporary Britishness?

Each group will present for approx. 15 mins. including time for discussion and set-up, on their chosen topic, outlining its significance for British culture and society today and its relation to the key themes of the course. Presentations will be marked individually, but it is important that co- presenters work effectively together and should contribute equally. Topics will be determined in week 7.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the borrowing, appropriating, or using of another author's words or ideas without acknowledging their source. Whenever you use words or ideas that are not your own, you must provide a reference (either footnote or endnote). If you have any questions about plagiarism, or want to determine if you are referencing your work correctly, please consult the student handbook.

All assignments should be submitted directly to the instructor at the beginning of class according to the due dates listed below. Electronic copies of written work will not be accepted. Please keep a hard copy of all written work.

Policies

Attendance Policy

Regular attendance and punctuality are mandatory in order to earn full marks. The final grade will take into consideration preparation required for class (i.e. readings) and participation in class discussions. If you miss any meetings without an excused absence from the on-site director, your final grade will be dropped accordingly. In the case of absences, it is the student's responsibility to find out what information was given in class including any announcements made.

University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found [on the Learning Abroad Center website](#).