Course description and objectives

British Life and Culture, if it has any coherence as an academic subject at all, is much too big for a summer of study. So this course is inevitably selective, with limited, specific objectives.

To give some focus, I have chosen to devote each week to a theme [sometimes more] which seems particularly important and distinctive. Exploring these themes will be our first objective and our preoccupation as a class.

Our approach will be, in William Blake’s words, “to see the world in a grain of sand” – or rather to see Britain in London. So each week, we will spend at least half our time exploring. Your primary homework will be to undertake other explorations in your own time. I will give you specific tasks that link these unsupervised visits with our class activities.

You should see your Study Abroad experience – not just this course -- as an inquiry into “British Life and Culture”. I hope you are here because you are curious about how people think and live in Britain, and I want to encourage you to link the discoveries you make for yourselves to your academic work in this class and in others. So your life at work, at the supermarket, on the Underground, at the club, even in other courses, should be material for analysis, discussion, comparison, and response.

Course assessment

Assessment will take two forms. First, you will each submit a weekly e-journal of your lives in London. The journal should include your observations of our class activities and of activities assigned as homework. It should also include your observations of experiences you have outside class; the best journals will make the subtlest and most profound connections between class material and extra-curricular life. The journal will be worth 60% of your final grade. Late submissions will not be accepted.

The second means of assessment is a take-home final exam, consisting of two essays. One will concern the main themes of the course; the other will invite a more personal response to your experience. Your journals should give you ample raw material to write these essays. The brief will be distributed in week 7, and answers will be due at the end of the course. The exam will be worth 40% of your final grade.

Reading list
No readings are assigned, but you may find the following interesting and helpful.

Peter Ackroyd  
*Albion: the origins of the English imagination*  
*London: the biography*

Jeremy Black  
*London: a history*

Bill Bryson  
*Mother Tongue*  
*Notes from a Small Island*

David Crystal  
*The Stories of English*

Kate Fox  
*Watching the English*

Andrew Marr  
*The Making of Modern Britain*  
*A History of Modern Britain*

Kenneth O Morgan  
*The Oxford History of Britain*

Jeremy Paxman  
*The English: portrait of a people*  
*Empire: what ruling the world did to the British*

Craig Taylor  
*Londoners*

Jerry White  
*London in the Twentieth Century*
**Course timetable**

Every class session will begin at Russell Square, unless we decide otherwise in advance. Absence and lateness will be penalized. At the start of each class session, we will briefly review the past week, plan the coming one, discuss the theme of the week, and introduce the day’s activities. Then we will go out.

The timetable below is very tentative and will no doubt change.

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<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Course introduction</strong>  &lt;br&gt; British Life and Culture: a geographical and historical orientation  &lt;br&gt; City Walk: from St Paul’s to Leadenhall</td>
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<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>The amoeba and the virus</strong>  &lt;br&gt; The off-centre centrality of London  &lt;br&gt; London riverside walk: Waterloo Bridge to Borough Market</td>
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<td><strong>5-6</strong></td>
<td><strong>The long march of globalization</strong>  &lt;br&gt; Visit: Victoria and Albert Museum, British Gallery  &lt;br&gt; Visit: National Maritime Museum</td>
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<td><strong>7-8</strong></td>
<td><strong>The UK: the first constitutional monarchy</strong>  &lt;br&gt; Walk: Whitehall and Westminster  &lt;br&gt; Visit: the National Portrait Gallery</td>
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<td><strong>9-10</strong></td>
<td><strong>The legacy of two world wars</strong>  &lt;br&gt; English: world language  &lt;br&gt; Visit: Imperial War Museum  &lt;br&gt; A play at Shakespeare’s Globe</td>
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<td><strong>11-12</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Empire and after</strong>  &lt;br&gt; Visit: Docklands Museum  &lt;br&gt; Walk: East End</td>
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<td><strong>13-14</strong></td>
<td><strong>The invention of suburbia</strong>  &lt;br&gt; Walk: Hampstead  &lt;br&gt; Visit: Kenwood House</td>
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<td><strong>15-16</strong></td>
<td><strong>A river adventure</strong>  &lt;br&gt; Walk: Richmond  &lt;br&gt; Visit: Ham House</td>
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