

Britain Today Autumn 2008

EXPECTATIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Britain Today is the core course of the ILACA London programme. It aims to provide a context for your study options; equip you with tools to make sense of Britain's past, its politics, culture and society; and offer you a broader canvass against which you may evaluate your British experience. There are three blocks: history and nationality, government and politics, and Identity in the UK. Topics within the blocks are handled via class meetings, visits, video tapes. Every effort will be made to exploit London's matchless resources as a world city which is also a centre of government.

While there is a formal structure to the course we will not live in isolation from the world outside. There will certainly be events which illustrate *or contradict* what has been discussed in class: you are encouraged to bring your thoughts on these into class discussions. If you put your energy into this class and follow, systematically, the course of study and reading you can expect to go back home with a good general understanding of Britain, its character, the paramount influences upon it, even a better sense of the extent to which its history is also United States history.

The standards for this course will not be lower than at home. An A will be awarded only for the best quality work; poor work will be appropriately graded. Please conform to the rudiments of scholarship by giving references in the style which is usual at your home school. Include a bibliography. USE THE RESOURCES WHICH ARE GIVEN TO YOU, ESPECIALLY THE VISITS YOU MAKE; IF IN DOUBT – ASK ME. DO NOT USE ENCLYCLOPAEDIAS AND ABOVE ALL DO NOT USE WIKIPEDIA. Bear in mind that you are expected to attend all meetings of this class. Non-attendance without good reason, even of one class, will affect your grade.

COURSE WORK

You will do two equally-weighted assignments each worth 30 per cent of your total marks.

1. Thursday 16 October: discuss **one** of the following statements:

- 'Religion, rather than politics, shaped the course of British history in the 16th century.'
- 'Politics, rather than religion, shaped the course of British history in the 17th century.'
- 'In the Twentieth Century the biggest impact on British society came from war rather than from political change'
- 'Wales is a nation and will demand its independence in the end'

2. Wednesday 3 December: discuss **one** of the following statements:

- 'Britain's government is too centralised'.
- 'The prime minister has too much power'
- 'In contemporary Britain, traditional class divisions have been eclipsed by other differences'
- 'The British economy is too market-orientated'

In each case your sources will be class meetings, the reading list on this syllabus, recommended websites, your observations on study visits and the press. Assignments should be between 1000 and 1500 words in length. Don't forget the bibliography.

There will be a Final examination on the whole course on Wednesday 5 December which will account for 40 per cent of the marks.

MEETING TIMES

The Britain Today class meets on Tuesdays from 3.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. and on Wednesdays from 12.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. The Wednesday class may include an excursion which lasts all afternoon. If there is an excursion the class may meet on site: make sure you know in advance if this is to be the case.

NEWSPAPERS

Get into the habit of reading a newspaper (helpful hint: **The Metro, London Lite** and **thelondonpaper** are not newspapers). The meatiest are **The Telegraph, The Times, The Financial Times, The Guardian, The Independent**. The tabloids are **The Sun, The Mirror, The Star, The Express** and **The Mail**, not forgetting London's paper **The Standard** which is in effect a national paper

THE NEWS

Watch or listen to the news. Everybody does. The main TV news bulletins are on BBC1 at 6pm and 10pm and Channel 4 at 7pm. The best current affairs analysis is on Newsnight (BBC2) at 10.30 p.m. In the morning most people listen to the Radio, sometimes local news but mostly The Today Programme which runs from 6.30am to 9am on BBC Radio 4 (93.5fm). The best website news is that of the BBC (www.bbc.co.uk); if you download the BBC iplayer you can get podcasts too.

WEBSITES

It goes without saying that websites should be used with care (see Wikipedia warning above). The following are reliable sources because they have reliable owners:

The BBC and Channel 4 www.bbc.co.uk and www.channel4.com world class news sources with excellent links. The BBC also has good history sources (follow home page links)

The British Government www.direct.gov.uk (a portal through which to find information on any aspect of British society – Wales included)

The British Parliament www.parliament.uk (direct information on politics plus links to the political parties)

BOOKS

The recommended reading is organised the three study blocks. General introductions to many topics may be found in **A Visitor's Britain, but be careful of outdated chapters**. The following books, all of which are in your student library, offer more specialised reading. **DON'T use out-of-date books or encyclopaedias.**

Block One: history and nationality

A Visitor's Britain chapter 12 and then chapters 1,2,3,8

For the Tudors

P Collinson, **The Sixteenth Century 1485-1603**

S Brigden, **New Worlds, Lost Worlds**

For the Stuarts

M. Kishlansky, **A Monarchy Transformed**

For Empire

P Langford, **The Eighteenth Century, 1688-1815**

N. Ferguson, **Empire**

L. Colley, **Britons: forging the nation, 1707-1837**

Colin Matthew, **The Nineteenth Century – The British Isles 1815-1901**

For war and the 20th century

P Clarke, **Hope and Glory: Britain in the 20th Century**

For nationality

J. Davies, **The Making of Wales**

Block Two: government and politics

A Visitor's Britain, chapter 7, then chapter 3

B Jones, **Politics UK**

Block Three: Identity in the UK

A Visitor's Britain, chapters 1 and 11. Possibly also 6

M Storry & P Childs, **British Cultural Identities**

For specific aspects of UK society

J Eldridge et al, **The Mass Media and Power in Modern Britain**

F Mount, **Mind the Gap**

D Mason, **Race and Ethnicity in Modern Britain**

Y Alibhai-Brown, **Who do we think we are?**

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Date	Activity
BLOCK ONE	History and Nationality
Tuesday 9 September	Tower of London <u>Take a notebook</u>
Wednesday 10 September 10.00 – 12.30 p.m.	Introduction to course Island Britain to the Norman Conquest Visit to British Museum to view Roman and Saxon exhibits
Tuesday 16 September 3.30-4.30 p.m.	The English Reformation
Wednesday 17 September 12.30-2.30 p.m.	The English Reformation Religious conflict Study Visit to the churches of St Sepulchre and St Etheldreda
Friday 19 September	The English Reformation Monarchy Study Visit to Hampton Court Palace
Tuesday 23 September 3.30-4.30 p.m.	The English Revolution The British Wars DVD with Simon Schama
Wednesday 24 September 12.30-2.30 p.m.	The English Revolution Early stirrings of democracy Study Visits to St Mary's Church, Putney, site of the Putney Debates.
Tuesday 30 September	The First British Empire:

3.30-4.30 p.m.	Anticipating Greenwich
Wednesday 1 October 12.30-2.30 p.m.	The First British Empire: How a small maritime nation became the first global power Study Visit to National Maritime Museum, Queens House and Royal Observatory and Planetarium, Greenwich. <u>Worksheet.</u>
Tuesday 7 October 3.30-4.30 p.m.	Twentieth century Britain Time grid of the age of total war
Wednesday 8 October 12.30-2.30 p.m.	Nationality in the United Kingdom: Looking ahead to Wales – presentation
Thursday 9 October – Saturday 11 October	Nationality in the United Kingdom: Study Visits in Wales: Tintern Abbey, National Assembly Wales, Brecon Beacons National Park, Big Pit, Tretower Court, Brecon, Caerleon Roman camp, Chepstow Castle <u>Worksheets and notebooks</u>
Tuesday 14 October 3.30-4.30 p.m.	Nationality in the United Kingdom. Debrief from Wales.
Wednesday 15 October 12.30-2.30 p.m.	Twentieth century Britain Military and social impact of total war. Study Visit to The Imperial War Museum. Worksheet Assignment in
Mid-term	
BLOCK TWO	
Government and Politics	
Tuesday 28 October 3.30-4.30 p.m.	British government and constitution I: parliamentary sovereignty
Wednesday 29 October 12.30-2.30 p.m.	British government and constitution II: unitary government Anticipating Bath.
Friday 31 October ALL DAY	Roman, Medieval and 18 th century England Study Visit to Bath
Tuesday 4 November 3.30-4.30 p.m.	British party politics: lecture with campaign materials English Music: anticipating Saturday
Wednesday 5 November 12.00-2.30 p.m.	Britain's centralised government and the power of the prime minister. Beginning with Prime Minister's Questions live on TV Study Visit to House of Commons chamber for a debate
NOTE EARLY START	
BLOCK THREE	
Identity in the UK	
Thursday/Friday 6/7 November ALL DAYS	The English countryside Study Visit to Stratford-upon-Avon and Warwick Castle
Saturday 8 November 7.30 – 9.30 p.m.	Study Visit - Choral Concert of English Music: Ralph Vaughan Williams, A Sea Symphony (setting of Walt Whitman's poem); Gustav Holst, Hymn to Jesus
Tuesday 11 November 3.30-4.30 p.m.	The City, capitalism and markets
Wednesday 12 November 12.30-2.30 p.m.	The City, capitalism and markets Study Visit: the Bank of England Museum
Tuesday 18 November 3.30-4.30 p.m.	Class, health and housing Anticipating the Mayor of London
Wednesday 19 November 10.00 a.m.-12.00 p.m.	The City Study Visit to Mayor of London's Question Time
NOTE EARLY START	
Tuesday 25 November 3.30-4.30 p.m.	The 'Britishness' debate: racial difference, religious diversity and immigration
Wednesday 26 November 12.30-2.30 p.m.	Education and its social distinctions Anticipating Cambridge: images and reality
Friday 28 November ALL DAY	Study Visit to Cambridge: Trinity College library, The Backs, Fitzwilliam Museum, Kings College Chapel
Tuesday 2 December 3.30-4.30 p.m.	The Media: Newspapers, radio and television
Tuesday 2 December 7.30 p.m.	The Media Study Visit: Gethsemane Sir David Hare's latest play - exploring links between politics, business and the media
Wednesday 3 December 12.30-2.30 p.m.	The Media: The British Broadcasting Corporation. Study Visit to the BBC's Television Centre
Tuesday 9 December 3.30-4.30 p.m.	Review.
Wednesday 10 December 12.30-2.30 p.m.	Final Examination