Kingston

University

London

**British Culture and Society**

**Summer School 2025**

**Module Guide**

**Course Code: SS1801**

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**SUMMER 2025**

**BRITISH CULTURE AND SOCIETY**

**Course Code SS1801**

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**MODULE AIMS**

1. To provide the opportunity for students to develop an understanding and appreciation of key aspects of contemporary British culture and society, within an historical context
2. To introduce students to key cultural and historical sites in England and to encourage students to visit additional sites independently and to view such places in an informed and critical way.
3. To encourage students to make informed, critical comparisons between what they observe and learn of British society and culture and their own home societies and cultures
4. To provide the inspiration and methodologies to pursue an understanding of other cultures, languages and ideas.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**On completion of the course students should:**

1. Know and understand some of the main historical antecedents of key aspects in British culture and society
2. be familiar with some of the major social, political, economic and cultural issues in contemporary Britain
3. be able to compare and contrast their home culture and society with British culture and society.
4. Research cultural institutions independently and write findings clearly, interestingly and critically, using basic academic referencing

**TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES**

The course is delivered through a multidisciplinary programme consisting of:

1. Formal lectures/workshop sessions - sometimes integrated with field activities;
2. Excursions/tours led by members of the Kingston Faculty or contracted professionals
3. Self-guided visits to other sites of historic and cultural interest in the London area

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Time** | **Place** | **Lecture** | **Lecturer** |
| Fri 4 July  | 10am-12pm | KTPTK | IntroductionBritish National Identity | Elly Bavidge |
| Mon 7 July | 1pm -4pm | KTPTK | The Rise and Fall of The British Monarchy & English Theatre | EB |
| Wed 9 July | 10am – 1pm **7.30pm** | KTPTK**Globe Theatre** | The Mother of All ParliamentsClass Debate: Should the British abolish the monarchy? | EB |
| Wed 16 July | 8am -8pm | **Middle Mill** | **Stonehenge and Bath**Coach leaves at 8:15am  | EB |
| Fri 18 July | 10am - 2pm | **Parrs Boat****Landing** | **Hampton Court Palace**Boat leaves 10am | EB |
| Mon 21 July | 1pm - 4pm | KTPTK | British Pop Culture: Music & Sport | EB |
| Wed23 July | 10.40am - 1pm | **Westminster** | **Westminster Palace** **Westminster Abbey** | EB |
| Wed 30 July | 12.15pm | **Tower of London** | **Tower of London**  | EB |
| Fri 1 Aug | 2pm – 5.30pm | KTPTK | British Cinema | EB |

**FIELDTRIPS**

*Globe Theatre:* a visit to watch a play performed in the round in the replica of Shakespeare’s original theatre. You will be a “groundling”. <http://shakespearesglobe.org/>

*Stonehenge & Bath:* a visit to Stonehenge, a world heritage site,and then a visit toBath where the Roman Baths and outstanding Georgian architecture can be seen.

<http://exn.ca/mysticplaces/stonehenge.asp> <http://www.romanbaths.co.uk/>

*Hampton Court Palace:* one of Henry VIII’s favourite palaces, which clearly demonstrates the magnificence of his reign. <http://www.hrp.org.uk/webcode/hampton_home.asp>

*Westminster Palace:* The *Houses of Parliament*, a guided tour of the home of British Politics. <http://www.explore.parliament.uk>

Westminster Abbey: the location for coronations since 1066 <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/>

*Tower of London:* a visit to this 11th century site which hasserved numerous functions throughout its long history, acting as a fortress, a royal residence, a prison, a menagerie, an armoury, a treasury, home of the Royal Mint and the Crown Jewels. <https://www.hrp.org.uk/tower-of-london/>

**The lectures and fieldtrips described are indicative only. The University reserves the right to vary or revise the content at its discretion.**

ATTENDANCE: You are expected to attend all lecture sessions and group trips. Up to a maximum of 20% will be deducted from the final overall grade for non-excused absences from lectures and field trips. This will be at the rate of 3% for each **unexcused** absence.

**ASSESSMENT**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Deadline** | **Assessment** | **Length** | **Weighting** |
| **Mon 14 July****Wed 23 July****Fri 25 July****Wed 30 July****Fri 1 Aug****Fri 1 Aug****Mon 4 Aug** | Globe Theatre Stonehenge or Bath Hampton Court Palace Westminster Palace or Abbey Independent field trip Final EssayTower of London | 850 words850 words850 words850 words850 words1000 words850 words | 30%30%30%30%30%40%30% |

**2 x field trip essays= 30% each (60% overall)**

**Final Essay = 40%**

**1. TWO FIELD TRIP ESSAYS (30% each, 60% overall) 1000 words**

Write a short essay on how the group visits listed below have increased your knowledge and understanding of British society and national culture. All papers are due by 11.59pm on the day of the deadline via Canvas. In case of emergency, you may email the work to me directly, to arrive on the same day

**Due date:**

**Mon 14 July** if you select Globe

**Wed 23 July** if you select Stonehenge **or** Bath

**Fri 25 July** if you select Hampton Court Palace

**Wed 30 July** if you select Westminster Palace or Abbey

**Fri 1 Aug** if you select the Independent field trip

**Mon 4 Aug** if you select Tower of London

* write about an **aspect of the visit** that impressed you and developed your understanding of British life and culture.
* you can be creative in your approach to the essay and its presentation
* illustrate and lay it out as you wish, you can use your own photographs or web images
* do some research for the article, references a minimum 3 sources
* use whatever referencing style you choose but make sure you have a final list of sources and reference any direct quotations
* You can only write an essay on a visit that you have attended.

If you choose the **independent visit paper** it must be within the UK and should be somewhere that has contributed to your understanding of British life and culture. This may include museums, galleries, sporting events, theatre visits etc.

**2. ESSAY (40%) FRIDAY 1 AUGUST**

Write a essay (40%) on **one** of the following questions:

1. Is there such a thing as a British national identity?

2. Should the monarchy be abolished if Britain is to modernise itself?

3. Discuss the main causes of Brexit.

4. Is Britain still a society dominated by class divisions?

5. Discuss one genre of British pop music in relation to musical style, fashion and politics.

6. Do sports reflect national cultures? You may answer with reference to one or more British sports.

7. What does British theatre still have to offer in the age of Internet and film?

8. Do we need a national cinema? Discuss with reference to one or two British films.

 **FRI 4 JULY INTRODUCTION: NATIONAL IDENTITY 10am-12pm**

An overview of the course format, lecture and fieldtrip schedule and an explanation of how you will be assessed. We will then move on to ask if Britain, which comprises four separate nations, has a united national identity? How has this identity been formed historically, especially in the world wars of the twentieth century, and how has this identity been fractured since 1945?

***Discussion: What characteristics do you associate with Britain and Britons? Where did your images come from? Do they match up to reality? Is there a united national identity?***

**MON 7 JULY THE RISE AND FALL OF THE BRITISH MONARCHY 1pm-4pm**

An overview of the development of the institution of constitutional monarchy.

***Discussion: What are the powers of the monarch?***

We examine what makes theatre such a distinctive form of the arts and save some time for a discussion of Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*. We will cover a basic summary of the play and of the history of the Globe Theatre to help you prepare before your visit in the evening.

***Discussion: What makes theatre a special experience? What are the unique characteristics of theatre as an art form?***

 **WED 9 JULY PARLIAMENT & MONARCHY DEBATE 10am – 1pm**

An overview of the Westminster parliamentary system.

***Discussion: In what way do the two major political parties, Labour and Conservative differ? What were the causes of Brexit?***

Please prepare your arguments either for or against and be ready to present a couple of key points to support your side.

***What are the arguments for and against the British monarchy?***

**See Canvas for Set Reading for our class debate:** Norton, P., 2010, ‘The Crown' in Jones, B., et al. *Politics UK***,** Harlow: Longman, 7th Edition

**MON 21 JUL MUSIC & SPORT 1pm-5pm**

This session examines two aspects of British popular culture, pop music and sport. It asks how distinctive British popular culture is, particularly by looking at how it has been influenced by and remains distinct from the powerful influences of American cultural values and practices. We examine what makes theatre such a distinctive form of the arts and provide a background for the play that students will be attending*.*

***Discussion: Have the British developed distinctive popular music since the 1960s?***

**See Canvas for Set Reading:** **Alexis Petridis, 2014, *The Guardian*, 'Youth Subcultures: what are they now?'**

***Discussion: What makes theatre a special experience? What is special about British theatre?***

**FRI 1AUG BRITISH CINEMA 2pm-5.30pm**

We examine the British contribution to cinema, focusing especially on the importance of having a national cinema in the face of the global dominance of Hollywood. See section on assessment for details about the final essay.

***Discussion: Is there a distinctive British cinema? Can it avoid being dominated by Hollywood?***

**See Canvas for Set Reading:** Hill, J., 2002, ‘British Cinema as National Cinema: Production, Audience & Representation’ in Turner, G. (ed.) *The Film Cultures Reader,* London, Routledge

**Recommended Films:**

The 39 Steps (Alfred Hitchcock, 1935) Classic Hitchcock

Brief Encounter (David Lean, 1945) our Casablanca, British repression at its best

Oliver Twist (David Lean, 1948) Read the novel if you never have too.

Kind Hearts and Coronets (Robert Hamer, 1949) Ealing Studios black comedy

Passport to Pimlico (Cornelius, 1949) Ealing comedy, Pimlico declares itself a free state.

Peeping Tom (Michael Powell, 1959) Nasty voyeuristic serial-killer thriller.

The Third Man (Reed, 1949) British film noir, Oliver! (Reed, 1968) brilliant musical version

Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (Reisz, 1960) Albert Finney rages in social realist drama

Cathy Come Home (Ken Loach, 1965) Homelessness.

Alfie (Gilbert, 1966) cheeky chappy Michael Caine breaks the fourth wall

Blow-Up (Antonioni, 1966) classic sixties ‘swinging London’, heavy use of mime artists

If (Lindsay Anderson, 1968) counter- culture satire of English public schools

Kes (Ken Loach, 1969) a boy and his bird (a kestrel not a girl) face the hardships of life up North

Performance (Donald Cammell and Nicholas Roeg, 1970; Mick Jagger stars) 70s weirdness

A Clockwork Orange (Stanley Kubrick, 1971) beware of this dystopian vision

Don’t Look Now (Nicolas Roeg, 1973) a bereaved couple are haunted in Venice

Jubilee (Derek Jarman, 1977) Futuristic punk wasteland weirdness.

Monty Python's Life of Brian (Terry Jones, 1979) once banned religious satire

An American Werewolf in London (John Landis, 1981) Entertaining & interesting use of London locations.

The Long Good Friday (John McKensie, 1980) Classic London gangland drama.

A Room with a View ( 1985), Howards End (1992), The Remains of the Day (1993) Merchant Ivory loveliness, beautiful sets and the best British actors around

My Beautiful Launderette (Stephen Frears, 1985) Still powerful evocation of Thatcher’s Britain.

Withnail and I (Robinson, 1987) black comedy about the squalid life of two British actors

London (Patrick Keillor, 1994) static camera gazes steadily at different parts of the city

Naked (Mike Leigh, 1994) Intense, violent but very good

Four Weddings and a Funeral (Mike Newell, 1994) Chelsea romance

Trainspotting (Danny Boyle, 1996) dynamic film about drug addiction in Edinburgh

Beautiful Thing (Hettie McDonald, 1996) Thamesmead romance

Mrs Dalloway (Marleen Gorris, 1997) adaptation of Woolf’s study of post WW1-London

Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels (Guy Ritchie, 1998) London fantasy-gangland drama

Sliding Doors (Peter Howitt, 1998) Tube-door related romance.

Wonderland (Michael Winterbottom, 1999) features an entire scene shot at a Crystal Palace match

This Year’s Love (David Kane, 1999) Interlinked love and tragedy.

Notting Hill (Roger Michell, 1999) Strangely white Notting Hill romance.

A Room for Romeo Brass (1999) Dead Man’s Shoes (2004) Dir. Shane Meadows – terrifying but brilliant, watch between your fingers.

Nil By Mouth (Gary Oldman, 1999) heart-breaking drama set in the Elephant and Castle.

24 Hour Party People (Michael Winterbottom, 2002) Manchester’s music scene in 1980s

28 Days Later (Danny Boyle, 2002) Sublime first 20 minutes in a deserted, plague-ridden London

Dirty Pretty Things (Stephen Frears, 2002) Immigration, exploitation, the anti-Notting Hill.

Kidulthood/Adulthood (Menhaj Huda, 2006) Energetic treatment of London youth culture

Fish Tank (Andrea Arnold, 2009) spirited but swear-y girl lives life on the margins of London Sightseers (Ben Wheatley, 2012), a camping trip gone wrong

A Field in England (Ben Wheatley, 2013), hallucinogenic visions of the Civil War

**Recommended music: (Most obvious not included Beatles, Stones, Bowie etc)**

Black Sabbath ‘Black Sabbath’

Led Zeppelin ‘Houses of the Holy

Dusty Springfield ‘Dusty In Memphis’

Queen ‘Bohemian Rhapsody’

Sex Pistols ‘Never Mind The Bollocks’

The Clash ‘London Calling’

Blondie ‘Parallel Lines’

Kate Bush ‘Hounds of Love’

Nick Drake ‘Bryter Later’

Billy Bragg ‘Brewing up with Billy Bragg’

The Pogues ‘Rum, Sodomy and the Lash’

The Specials ‘The Specials’

The Jam ‘All Mod Cons’

The Smiths ‘The Queen Is Dead’

The Cure ‘Galore’

Joy Division ‘Unknown Pleasures’

Depeche Mode ‘Songs of Faith And Devotion’

New Order ‘Technique’

Primal Scream ‘Screamadelica’

The Stone Roses ‘The Stone Roses’

Blur ’Parklife’

Pulp ‘Different Class’

Aphex Twin ‘Richard D James Album’

PJ Harvey ‘Stories From The City, Stories From The Sea’

Radiohead ‘The Bends’

The Prodigy ‘Music for the Jilted Generation’

Leftfield ‘Leftism’

Happy Mondays ‘Pills ‘N’ Thrills & Bellyaches’

Portishead ‘Dummy’

Tricky ‘Maxinquaye’

Orbital ‘Untitled I’

Soul II Soul ‘Club Classics Vol 1’

MIA ‘Arular’

Arctic Monkeys ‘Whatever People Say I Am, That’s What I’m Not’

Hudson Mohawke ‘Butter’

The Libertines ‘Up the Bracket’

Roots Manuva ‘Run, Come Save Me’

Rustie ‘Glass Swords’

SBTRKT ‘SBTRKT’

The Young Knives ‘Voices of Animals of Men’

The XX ‘The XX’

Rudimental ‘Home’

Dizzee Rascal, ‘Boy Da Corner’

George the Poet, ‘The Chicken & the Egg’

James Blake, ‘Overgrown’

Skepta, ‘Konnichiwa’

Stormzy, ‘Gang Signs & Prayers’

Kano, ‘Made in the Manor’

Little Simz. ‘Grey Area’

**You should also explore London as much as you can on independent trips. Places to visit in London:**

**Camden Market** Everyday, Camden Town or Chalk Farm tube, can walk from the market to see views from Primrose Hill

**Brick Lane Market** Fashion, furniture, jewellery, vintage, on Sundays, Aldgate East Tube or Shoreditch Overground station

**Columbia Road Market** Flower market on Sundays, Hoxton or Shoreditch High Street Tube Station

**Portobello Road** Saturday street market in trendy Notting Hill, Ladbroke Grove tube

**Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese** Dickens’ boozer which dates from 1538, the Rhymers Club also hung out here, 145 Fleet Street, Temple Tube, The Black Friar pub, similar, is nearby, 174 Queen Victoria St, Blackfriars tube

**Sir John Soane’s House** free and brilliantly weird treasure collection, 13 Lincoln’s Inn Fields, Holborn Tube

**Barbican Art Centre** beautiful or ugly centre (you decide) with tropical rooftop and conservatory, Silk Street, Moorgate tube

**Speakers’ Corner** who needs Twitter? Go and debate with the great British public in person just as Marx, Lenin and George Orwell did. Northeast corner of Hyde Park, Marble Arch tube, Sunday mornings are best

**Hampstead Heath** escape the city and explore 800 acres of outdoors, ponds for swimming when/if the weather improves, Hampstead tube, Hampstead Heath rail. Visit beautiful, Victorian Highgate cemetery nearby (Archway tube)

**Shri Swaminarayan Mandir** (Neasden Temple), enormous Hindu temple on a suburban street in north London 105 – 119 Brentfield Road, Stonebridge Park tube

**Royal Botanical Gardens** Kew, gorgeous glasshouses and hothouses, a bit pricey, Kew tube.

**V & A Museum** fab arts and design museum with all the best bling from ancient times. It is in the fabulously posh Kensington. You can visit the **Science Museum** and the **Natural History Museum** which are both close by. The Natural History Museum has a beautiful main hall, massive dinosaur skeletons and Darwin’s own specimens that are of such historic importance.

**Somerfield House** just on the north side of the Thames, good fashion exhibits and nice square for coffee

**The Vaults** theatre, art, club space, hang out that is under Waterloo station

**Afternoon tea,** the Ritz, Claridges, Hotel Café Royal, Brown’s, Fortnum & Mason or more likely the more affordable Cavendish

**Wilton’s Music Hall:** London’s oldest music hall in all its crumbling beauty, free olde tunes on Mondays

**The Old Operating Theatre:** site of early surgeries for the ghouls among you, London Bridge (Wellcome Collection is also usually worth a visit, Kings Cross)

**Al fresco swimming:** Hampton or Richmond, if you can stand the temperatures

**Rooftops:** Sky Bar, Rumpus Room, Culpeper Roof Garden, Notch, if someone else is paying Radio Rooftop Bar

**Live comedy:** Comic Mondays is held in the bar at Theatre Royal Stratford East and is London’s longest running free comedy night

**Table tennis:** Bounce in Shoreditch is stylishly turning ping-pong into a hipster activity