



**Boston University** International Programs  
London

**Boston University British Programmes**  
**Arts and Media in Britain**  
**IP 40X (Core class)**  
**Summer 2010**

**Instructor Information**

A. Name	Dr. Aleks Sierz
B. Day and Time	Wednesday and Thursday, 1.15 – 5.15pm
C. Location	TBA
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**Course Objectives**

To give an overall picture of contemporary British arts and media (including commercial media); to provide a broad study of the major developments in state funding of the arts and media over the past fifty years; to relate the arts and media to broad changes in British society and put them into a social context; to examine the work of specific arts and media institutions in detail; to stimulate critical analysis of artworks and media products through written work and discussion. The ultimate aim is to increase awareness of British arts and media, and to give an insight into how they are organised and why they have developed into their present form.

**Course Overview**

The course will introduce the student to the wide range of arts and media in London, from institutions such as the BBC and National Theatre to newspapers and museums. It will provide an overview of post-1945 arts and media, and offer a sound introduction to arts administration and the funding of this sector. The course will focus especially on the theme of Britishness, and on how national identity is expressed in the institutions, practices and products of the arts and media. What does it mean to be British today, and how is this identity projected by broadcast media, newspapers and the live arts? Such questions will be covered through lectures and visits to institutions which exemplify the broad spectrum of the subject. This course will prepare students for the wide breadth of opportunities that are open to them in the field of Broadcasting, Film, Theatre, Journalism and Arts Administration in London. It will cover issues such as government funding for culture, censorship and freedom, as well as the relationship between media and citizenship. The course will look at examples of the arts and media with the aim of stimulating critical analysis through written work and discussion.

## **Methodology**

This course will be taught over nine four-hour sessions. Lectures by Aleks Sierz will be supplemented with in-class video screenings, field trips and involve readings from key texts as well as other class exercises.

## **Assessment**

**50%** Final Paper (2,000 words), submitted in the final week of core phase.

**30%** Two short reviews of class visits.

**20%** Class presentation in week four.

## **Grading**

Please refer to the Academic Handbook for detailed grading criteria, attendance requirements and policies on plagiarism:

<http://www.bu-london.co.uk/files/images/ACADEMICHANDBOOKFA09.pdf>.

## **Course Chronology**

### **Session One**

#### **What are the arts and media in Britain?**

- 1) Course introduction. Overview of the arts and media in London and Britain, and questions about how you define culture and how these activities and institutions express national identity.
- 2) Historical overview from the 1950s until the present, situating recent changes in the arts and media in a broad perspective, including the moment of Cool Britannia and current government policy. The basic funding structures of the BBC, state-subsidised arts and commercially funded media are introduced, as well as the role of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Arts Council and the National Lottery.
- 3) The challenges of the digital age. How do the new media affect the traditional media and the arts?

[Preparatory reading: Robert Hewison's *Culture and Consensus* (1-21), and Jeremy Paxman's *The English* (1-23)]

### **Session Two**

#### **Auntie knows best**

##### **Mass media: the BBC**

- 1) The rise and rise of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC): when was it set up, how is it funded and what does it do? Questions of bias, neutrality and the broadcasting of events of national importance. The role of BBC radio in nation-building. Discuss: What is public-service broadcasting, and is there such a thing as a classic BBC programme?
- 2) Video of a selection of excerpts of typical BBC programmes from the past and present.
- 3) How does the BBC exemplify traditional British values and how does it contribute to improving the relationship between the citizen and the state?
- 4) Preparation of reviews.

##### **PLUS: CLASS VISIT TO BBC BROADCASTING HOUSE**

[Preparatory reading: James Curran and Jean Seaton's *Power without Responsibility* (Part II).

### **Session Three**

#### **The goggle box and the flicks**

##### **Mass media: television and film**

- 1) Overview of the creative and institutional role of commercial television: when was ITV set up, how was it funded and how did it differ from the BBC? The role of American television programmes in entertaining the nation. The case of Channel 4 and the challenge of Rupert

Murdoch's Sky. Discuss: is the desire to make profit incompatible with the need to create good citizens?

2) The British film industry: how do you define a national industry in a globalised world? What is a British film and how could it be said to construct a national identity?

3) Video of a selection of excerpts of typical commercial television programmes and British films from the past and present.

4) Other media: Publishing in Britain. The Penguin paperback as an example of British cultural innovation.

5) Class discussion of the BBC field trip.

[Preparatory reading: Steve Blandford's *Film, Drama and the Break-Up of Britain (19-46)*]

#### **Session Four**

##### **Broadsheets and redtops**

##### **Mass media: newspapers and journalism**

1) Overview of the history and structure of the national newspapers in Britain. What is the difference between broadsheets and tabloids? The Fourth Estate: how is the news created and what is its political agenda? Discuss: do British newspapers wield power without responsibility?

2) Demonstration of the variety of ways in which newspapers report the same story. From Fleet Street hacks to citizen bloggers: how the new digital age affects traditional media organisations.

##### **PLUS: CLASS VISIT TO A NATIONAL NEWSPAPER**

[Preparatory reading: James Curran and Jean Seaton's *Power without Responsibility (Part I)*].

#### **Session Five**

##### **Mass media: friend or foe?**

1) Overview of the British mass media. Using examples of current television programmes, films, newspapers, this class will examine the issues that have arisen in previous lectures and visits, with especial focus on the definition of British identity and questions about the relationship between mass media and citizenship.

2) Preparation of presentations, end-of-semester papers.

3) Other media: PR and advertising.

4) Plus: pop music and its hidden subsidies.

5) Class discussion of the newspaper field trip.

[Preparatory reading: James Curran and Jean Seaton's *Power without Responsibility (Part V)*].

#### **Session Six**

##### **Changing stages**

##### **High culture: Theatre, dance and opera**

1) Overview of the live performance sector, including the arts of theatre, dance and opera. When was the National Theatre set up, how is it funded and what does it do? Questions of high art versus mass entertainment. The role of theatre, dance and opera in creating cultural identity. Discuss: Are the arts in Britain caught between the risk of being too elitist and the urge to dumb down?

2) Video of a selection of excerpts of typical theatre, dance and opera from the past and present.

##### **GUEST SPEAKER: Member of the Arts Council England TBC**

##### **PLUS: CLASS VISIT TO THE NATIONAL THEATRE**

[Preparatory reading: Robert Hewison's *Culture and Consensus (22-49)*]

#### **Session Seven**

##### **The tourist gaze goes cultural**

##### **High culture: museums, music and art galleries**

1) The rise and rise of museums and art galleries in Britain: when were places such as the National Gallery, V&A, the Natural History Museum and Tate Modern set up, how are they funded and what do they deliver? Questions of education and entertainment: how important is

interactivity in the museum and gallery? The museums and galleries in creating community pride and popularising values. Discuss: Can traditional museum spaces compete with the onward march of virtual museums and collections?

2) Presentation on the architecture of traditional and contemporary museums and art galleries.

3) Other media: Classical music and the concert hall.

5) Class discussion of the National Theatre field trip.

Assessment: Class presentations by students.

[Preparatory reading: Caroline Lang, John Reeve and Vicky Woollard's *The Responsive Museum* (Introduction)]

## **Session Eight**

### **Strange bedfellows**

#### **Mass media and high culture**

1) Revision of the main areas covered by the course, with particular attention given to the themes of how a national British identity is constructed through the media and the arts, how the tensions between commercialisation and citizenship are embodied in the media, and how the high arts are funded and protected. Special topic: discussion of the role of censorship in the past and the present.

2) Revision of end-of-semester papers, feedback on presentations and reviews.

#### **PLUS: CLASS VISIT TO TATE MODERN.**

[Preparatory reading: Lisa Appignanesi's *Free Expression Is No Offence* (1-20)]

## **Session Nine**

### **Cruel Britannia**

#### **New Labour and the arts**

1) Overview of the cultural policies promoted by the New Labour government of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown over the past 12 years. How have these policies affected the mass media and the high arts? What new social challenges have arisen, and how have these fed into debates about citizenship, censorship or dumbing down? How has the election of a new government affected the areas under discussion?

2) Other media: fashion and London Fashion Week. Plus: Are restaurants a form of culture? Is shopping a new cultural form?

3) Class discussion of the Tate Modern field trip.

4) Quiz on what you have learnt this semester.

[Preparatory reading: Munira Mirza's *Culture Vultures* (13-9, 111-29) and John Holden's *Cultural Value* (Conclusion)]

## **Required Reading**

### **Main textbooks:**

Jeremy Paxman, *The English* (Penguin, 1999)

Robert Hewison, *Culture and Consensus: England, Art and Politics since 1940* (Methuen, 1997)

James Curran and Jean Seaton, *Power without Responsibility: Press, Broadcasting and the Internet in Britain* (Routledge, 2009)

### **Suggested additional readings:**

Lisa Appignanesi, *Free Expression Is No Offence* (Penguin, 2005)

Andrew Beck, *Cultural Work: Understanding the Cultural Industries* (Routledge, 2003)

Michael Billington, *State of the Nation* (Faber, 2007)

Steve Blandford, *Film, Drama and the Break-Up of Britain* (Intellect, 2007)

Bernard Casey, Rachael Dunlop and Sara Selwood, *Culture as Commodity? The Economics of the Arts and Built Heritage in the UK* (PSI, 1996)

Derrick Chong, *Arts Management: Critical Perspectives on a New Sub-Discipline* (Routledge, 2002)  
Jamie Cowling, *For Art's Sake: Society and the Arts in the Twenty-First Century* (IPPR, 2004)  
Terry Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture* (Blackwell, 2000)  
Kate Fox, *Watching the English* (Hodder, 2004)  
AA Gill, *The Angry Island: Hunting the English* (Phoenix, 2006)  
John Holden, *Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy* (Demos, 2006)  
Caroline Lang, John Reeve and Vicky Woollard, *The Responsive Museum: Working with Audiences in the Twenty-First Century* (Ashgate, 2006)  
Munira Mirza, *Culture Vultures: Is UK Arts Policy Damaging the Arts?* (Policy Exchange, 2006)  
Mark Perryman, *Imagined Nation: England after Britain* (Lawrence & Wishart, 2008)  
John Pick, *Managing the Arts? The British Experience* (Rheingold, 1986)  
Chris Rojek, *Brit-myth: Who Do the British Think They Are?* (Reaktion Books, 2007)  
Sara Selwood, *The UK Cultural Sector: Profile and Policy Issues* (PSI, 2001)  
Dominic Shellard, *British Theatre Since the War* (Yale University Press, 1999)

#### **Useful websites:**

The Arts Council: [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

The BBC: [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

The library also has DVDs and videos of British films, television programmes as well as movie versions of significant theatre plays.

Additional readings may be posted on the course webpage:

<http://www.bu-london.co.uk/academic/> ????? (you must be logged in to view materials).

#### **Terms and Conditions**

**\*\* Attendance at all classes and visits is mandatory. Students missing lectures without a doctor's letter or authorisation from the Director will automatically be docked a – or a + from their final grade. Persistent lateness will also be penalised in the final grade.** A register of attendance will be taken at the beginning of each session. Absence can be conveyed either by advising a senior member of staff in the Academic Affairs Office with a request that the information be passed on to the lecturers; or by emailing faculty teaching the course (see the contact details at the top of this syllabus) prior to class. Leaving it to another class member to convey messages will not be acceptable. Appointments for interviews for internships should not conflict with attendance at classes. \*\*

Any student who is unable to attend a class, or take part in an assignment because of religious reasons, must give notice of the fact in advance. He/she will be required to make up for time lost. In this situation arrangements must be made with another student for class notes to be shared. Written papers must be delivered before agreed deadline, failure to hand in the paper will result in deducted marks.

Aleks will make some time available in each session for students to raise questions etc. Should students wish to discuss matters with faculty in person he will also be available during the break mid-lecture and at the end of class. Alternatively, please feel free to e-mail him with questions. If you have problems with the availability of reading materials (all of which should be in the library) please contact him either through the Academic Affairs Office or via e-mail.

Students must check their email and the weekly Student Newsletter for field trip updates and reminders, if any are to be included.

**Note:** Please turn off all mobile phones in class; laptops can only be used for note-taking in exceptional circumstances and only after permission has been given by faculty.

**SCHEDULE OF CLASS VISITS Summer 2010**

**Visit 1: BBC BROADCASTING HOUSE**

**Visit 2: A NATIONAL NEWSPAPER TBC**

**Visit 3: NATIONAL THEATRE**

**Visit 4: TATE MODERN**

**I really do hope you enjoy the course, Aleks Sierz, Summer 2010**