



**Boston University Study Abroad
London**

**Boston University Study Abroad London
Contemporary British Literature
CAS EN 388 (*Elective B*)
Spring 2016**

Instructor Information

A. Name	Julie Charalambides
B. Day and Time	Fridays, 9.30am-1.30pm PLUS Thursday 14th April and Tuesday 19th April
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F. Office hours	By appointment

Course Objectives

Through the intensive study of several recent literary texts students will learn more about the British psyche, culture and history that generated them. They will hopefully be confronted with some of the most important aspects of the human condition, both in a sense of that condition as peculiarly British and as a generality.

There are no prerequisites for the course beyond a love of reading and a total commitment to reading every one of the primary works in full; and, most importantly, an open mind.

Course Overview

The course constitutes a consideration of various significant texts from the late 20th Century and into the 21st by living writers. Many of the authors are well known to the British public but we will not necessarily be reading their most acclaimed or most recent work. Rather, the texts have been selected for their engagement with some of the major problems and contentious issues within contemporary British society, and their ability to provoke debate as to accepted definitions of literature and our expectations of such. We will be looking at the social and historical contexts of the texts and their authors, and dealing with the major themes of much late 20th century literature, including the impact of two world wars on the literary imagination, notions of Utopia/Dystopia, storytelling and sexuality.

Course Methodology

This course will run over 9 four-hour sessions. Some of the classes will incorporate a field trip and I will be using various media for presentation purposes, but the discussion group will form the basis of classes and will centre on the primary texts, which must be read in advance of the relevant

class. Classes will begin with lectures on the background to the texts followed by discussion on the assigned reading.

Assessment

1. Long Essay (2000 words minimum), on a topic to be decided by the tutor and individual student. The deadline for the essay will be Session 9. (40%)
2. A brief Creative Writing Assignment (max. 500 words) based on our experience of walking around Spitalfields, due the Session after the walk. (10%)
3. Participation and attendance. (10%)
4. Final Exam. (40%)

Grading

Please refer to the Academic Handbook for detailed grading criteria and policies on plagiarism: <http://www.bu.edu/london/current-semester>

** Final Grades are subject to deductions by the Academic Affairs Office due to unauthorised absences.*

Attendance

Important note for students on the Internship Programme:

The rules governing Internship Programme students' UK visas are strict and require, as a condition of the student's presence in the United Kingdom, that the student participates fully in all classes and in the placement. If a student does not attend classes or his/her placement as required the student will be considered to be in breach of the visa and can be deported. As the sponsor of our students' visas, Boston University has the legal obligation to ensure that each student complies with visa requirements.

For that reason Boston University Study Abroad London Programmes requires full attendance in classes and placements. Any student who does not comply with this policy may be sent home from the program at the discretion of the programme directors, and will result in a forfeit of credit and program costs for part or all of the semester.

Classes

All Boston University Study Abroad London Programme students are expected to attend each and every class session, tutorial, and field trip in order to fulfill the required course contact hours and receive course credit. Any student that has been absent from two class sessions (whether authorised or unauthorised) will need to meet with the Directors to discuss their continued participation on the programme.

Authorised Absence:

Students who expect to be absent from any class should notify a member of Academic Affairs and complete an Authorized Absence Approval Form 10 working days in advance of the class date

(except in the case of absence due to illness, for which students should submit the Authorised Absence Approval Form with the required doctor's note as soon as possible). **Please note: Submitting an Authorised Absence Approval Form does not guarantee an authorised absence**

Students may apply for an authorised absence only under the following circumstances:

- Illness, supported by a local London doctor's note (submitted with Authorised Absence Approval Form).
- Important placement event that clashes with a class (verified by internship supervisor)
- Special circumstances which have been approved by the Directors (see note below).

The Directors will only in the most extreme cases allow students to leave the programme early or for a significant break.

Unauthorised Absence:

Any student to miss a class due to an unauthorised absence will receive a **4% grade penalty** to their final grade for the course whose class was missed. This grade penalty will be applied by the Academic Affairs office to the final grade at the end of the course. As stated above, any student that has missed two classes will need to meet with the Directors to discuss their participation on the programme as excessive absences may result in a 'Fail' in the class and therefore expulsion from the programme.

Lateness

Students arriving more than 15 minutes after the posted class start time will be marked as late. Any student with irregular class attendance (more than two late arrivals to class) will be required to meet with the Assistant Director of Academic Affairs and if the lateness continues, may have his/her final grade penalised.

Course Chronology

Friday 26th February

Session 1: Introduction and The British Library

After a brief introductory session we will go to The British Library the class will meet to discuss the contents of the library and its role in illustrating a history of literature.

Reading: Students should have started reading *Small Island* by Andrea Levy

Friday 4th March

Session 2: A Small Island

Introducing the idea of a post-colonial Britain which led to the multicultural society in which Levy and I grew up and which our fathers helped to create.

Reading: *Small Island*, by Andrea Levy

Friday 11th March

Session 3: Britain at War

Sessions 3 and 4 will be given over to an examination of the effects of the First and Second World Wars on the psyche of the late 20th century writer through a reading of two of novels. The first is part one of a recently completed trilogy dealing with the impact of WWI on a group of British artists by Pat Barker, best known for her Regeneration trilogy to which I will be referring.

Reading: *Toby's Room*, by Pat Barker

Friday 18th March

Session 4: Undone in Time

The second 'war' novel is Martin Amis' remarkable *Time's Arrow* which takes a very different approach to the Second World War and forces us to consider the morality of writing Holocaust fiction.

Reading: *Time's Arrow*, by Martin Amis

Friday 1st April

Session 5: Facilitating Evil

'Africa,' according to a former Prime Minister, Tony Blair, 'is a scar on the conscience of the West.' How have writers in a post colonial Britain dealt with this legacy of guilt? We will be discussing the book and the film of *The Last King of Scotland*, looking at significant scenes in the film and considering the reasons for the changes.

Reading: *The Last King of Scotland*, by Giles Foden.

Friday 8th April

Session 6: Brave New Worlds

Examining ideas of Englishness, of Utopia and Dystopia through the work of one of the most paradoxically 'English' contemporary authors.

Reading: *Never Let Me Go*, by Kazuo Ishiguro
AND
Brave New World, by Aldous Huxley

Thursday 14th April

Session 7: Writing your long papers

This session will be given over to individual tutorials during which we will discuss topics and sources for your paper.

Friday 15th April

Session 8: The City as Text

We will be undertaking a walking tour of Spitalfields and Brick Lane as an exercise in reading the city. A brief writing assignment will be handed out, to be completed in situ shared in class on Tuesday.

Meeting at Liverpool Street Station - details to follow.

Tuesday 19th April

Session 9: Being Both

Love, Sex and Death

Reading: *Written on the Body* by Jeanette Winterson
AND
How to be Both by Ali Smith

***Contingency Class Date: Wednesday 20th April.** Students are obligated to keep these dates free to attend class should any class dates need to be rescheduled.

FINAL EXAM Thursday 21st April Exam times and locations will be posted on the BU London website and in the Student Newsletter two weeks before exam dates.

Readings

Required reading is noted above in the Course Chronology. It is essential that all students read and reflect upon the relevant reading *before* each class. All texts will be available in the BU London library.

Primary Texts

Small Island, by Andrea Levy, 2005

Toby's Room, by Pat Barker, 2012

Time's Arrow, by Martin Amis, 1991

The Last King of Scotland, by Giles Foden, 1998

Never Let Me Go, by Kazuo Ishiguro, 2005

Brave New World, by Aldous Huxley, 1932

Written on the Body, by Jeanette Winterson, 1993

How to be Both, by Ali Smith, 2014

Supplementary and Secondary Reading:

The following texts will be referred to in the course of discussion of the primary texts.

Strange Meeting, Susan Hill, 1971

War Horse, Michael Murpurgo, 1982

Regeneration, Pat Barker, 1991

The Eye in the Door, Pat Barker, 1993

The Ghost Road, Pat Barker, 1995

The Remains of the Day, Kazuo Ishiguro, 1989

Nineteen Eighty Four, George Orwell, 1949

The Zone of Interest, Martin Amis, 2014