



**Boston University Study Abroad**  
London

**Boston University Study Abroad London**  
**British Journalism, Culture & Society**  
**COM JO 358 (Core)**  
**Spring 2016**

**Instructor Information**

A. Name	Alexander MacLeod
B. Day and Time	Wednesday and Thursday, 1.15-5.15pm
C. Location	George & Peto Room, 43 Harrington Gardens, SW7 4JU
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F. Office hours	By appointment

**Course Objectives**

This course offers Journalism students an introduction to British information systems that they will encounter in their internships, and in pursuit of careers in a field that are increasingly global in scope, and professionally competitive.

**Element One** of the course essentially will be an intensive study of British media in the context of the political, cultural and social life of the United Kingdom. We are in the midst of rapid change in the means of delivering and receiving mass media, and as a class we shall address the rate of change and the future implications for British culture and society. British political life has entered a period of instability and uncertainty, typified by the outcome of May 2015 general election result and the struggle for control of the opposition Labour Party.

An adequate amount of reading of set texts is required. Issues addressed will include freedom of the press, and ownership patterns of the media industry. There will be emphasis on the extent to which British media reflect and influence the audiences they serve.

As well as assessing how well the British media inform the audience, we shall seek to determine whether British print and electronic journalism enhances the lives of readers and viewers.

Attention will be paid to the European political, economic and social setting within which Britain operates as a nation. Britain's future in the European Union of 28 nations is in doubt: we shall consider the reasons for this and the implications.

**Element Two** of the course will give special attention to the future of the Internet and its impact on British and international society. Social Media will be closely studied. **Students will be expected to contribute actively to all sessions on the above themes. Students' performance will be monitored and graded accordingly.**

Element Two will be covered partly in normal class sessions and partly in out-of-class time.

The programme will include specially arranged field trips, details of which will be made available early in the semester.

## Assessment:

**There will be a compulsory final examination on Monday 15 February. It will consist of questions relating to Elements One and Two.** Exam arrangements will be posted on the BU London website and in the Student Newsletter two weeks before exam dates.

There will be **two** compulsory written assignments: (1) an essay on a key issue relevant to journalism, culture and society in the UK, and (2) a journalistic report based on a field trip to a designated area of London. Deadlines for the two assignments will be announced shortly after the semester begins.

There will also be in-class tests, either written or oral, during the semester.

Students are invited to contribute items to the BU London Student Newsletter, based on their experiences in London and elsewhere.

Particular attention will be paid to class attendance (including punctuality) and participation; roll calls will be routine. A reasonable standard of dress must be maintained at all times. Eating or drinking during class will not be permitted.

**Overall marking:** 1/3rd class participation, including Newsletter contributions; 1/3rd written assignments; 1/3rd final examination.

## 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 Policy

### **Classes**

All Boston University London Programme students are expected to attend each and every class session, seminar, and field trip in order to fulfil 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. This may result in the student having to take a medical leave of absence from the programme or withdraw from 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 more than one day. In this situation 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 (first day of sickness): If a student is too ill to attend class, the student must phone the BU London Student Affairs Office (who will in turn contact the student's lecturer).
- Illness (multiple days): If a student is missing more than one class day due to illness, the student must call into to the BU London Student Affairs Office each day the student is ill. Students must also provide the Student Affairs office with a completed Authorised Absence Approval Form and sick note from a local doctor excusing their absence from class.
- 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 (subject to amendment)**

- Thu 14 Jan** Course introduction. Britain: culture and society. A dis-United Kingdom?
- Wed 20 Jan** The UK Polity: the outcome of the 7 May General Election  
How the UK is governed; its future in Europe
- Thu 21 Jan** Field Trip (to be arranged)
- Wed 27 Jan** Social media – personal and international  
Facebook – Zuckerberg’s world
- Thu 28 Jan** Globalization and its impact on mass media  
Magazine journalism (guest speaker)
- Wed 03 Feb** Field trip (to be arranged)
- Thu 04 Feb** The Tabloid ethic: How far can it go?  
Crisis at the Beeb
- Fri 05 Feb** What is news, actually? Where is it heading?

\* **Contingency Class Date: Friday 5 February.** Students are obligated to keep this date free to attend class should any class dates need to be rescheduled.

**Wed 10 Feb** Revision

**\*\* Please note: students will have their first Internship Seminar on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> February with Julian Putkowski. See Internship Seminar Timetable for time and location.**

**Thurs 11<sup>th</sup> Feb** – No class (make up on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> February)

**Mon 15 Feb** Final examination

**\*\*All students must attend a mandatory drop-in session (to sign Internship Agreement and for any questions about placement, social programme, travel and academics) on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> February in the Boston Room, 43 Harrington Gardens, SW7 4JU. Food will be served!**

## **Readings**

Please purchase and read:

**McNair: News and Journalism in the UK**

**Andrew Keen: The Internet is Not the Answer**

**Selected texts on the Internet and World Wide Web. These will be accessible by students online.**

## **Additional Reading**

Students will be issued with a reading list consisting of compulsory texts and recommended texts. Nobody can expect to achieve a good result in the course if he/she fails to do necessary reading.

Students will be required to take a lively interest in news developments in the UK.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Reading of British daily and Sunday newspapers is a non-negotiable element of this course, as is regular accessing the Internet. Each week of the course, students will be required to read one daily newspaper and one Sunday newspaper, and be prepared to answer questions about them during classes. Newspapers will be available on some class days; and students are strongly advised to read newspapers available each day in the Library at 43 Harrington Gardens.

**PLEASE NOTE ALSO:** Students will be required to view a range of British television programmes, with some – but not exclusive – emphasis on news and current affairs programmes. They will also be expected to surf the Internet on a regular basis. They must be prepared, during classes, to answer questions about their TV viewing and Internet surfing.

Failure to read reasonably widely in British newspapers and magazines, to access the Internet on a regular basis, and to view British TV programmes will be a cause for demerits. Any student who does not have access to a working TV set or Internet-accessible computer must report this to me immediately.

Obviously, students must also take full account of how life is led in the UK. To do this effectively, they should try to reach out as much as possible to the wider community in which they are temporarily living and learn as much as possible about lifestyles, living conditions and social distinctions. In other words: **Keep your eyes and ears open!**

You have the distinct privilege of visiting a country different in many respects from your own. I urge you to take advantage of that privilege and be on the lookout for comparisons.

**Plagiarism is expressly forbidden and, if discovered, will be punished severely. Random checks on this issue will be made. Please read carefully the official BU rules below**

In every case, when assigned written work, students must retain a hard copy of their paper in addition to submitting the paper for marking. If by special arrangement it is agreed that you may e-mail material for marking to me or Academic Affairs, it is mandatory that you retain a hard copy of what is sent.

## **Terms and Conditions**

Students will be permitted to use laptops during class, but for class-related purposes only. Use of laptops during class for any other purpose is strictly forbidden and may result in withdrawal of the facility.

Guest lecturers will be invited to explore with the class some of the themes mentioned in this statement. Video presentations will be included in class work, **but these will not substitute for regular out-of-class viewing of and British TV.**

It cannot be stressed too strongly that to make this course effective, all class members must be prepared to adopt a lively, **proactive** approach throughout. This includes positive and creative participation in class discussions. Shrinking violets\* will be at a distinct disadvantage!

Good luck!

ALEXANDER MacLEOD Email: [macleodinlondon@aol.com](mailto:macleodinlondon@aol.com)

\*A shrinking violet is someone who is unwilling to be proactive in class.