



Boston University Study Abroad London

Class, Politics and the Making of British Identity **CAS HI 252 (Elective A)**

Instructor Information

A. Name	Dr Michael Thornhill
B. Day and Time	
C. Location	
D. Telephone	
E. Email	mtt@bu.edu
F. Office hours	By appointment

Course Description

This course offers an historical understanding of the evolving politics of the state in England – and later Britain – between Henry VIII’s break with Catholic Europe in 1534 (‘the first Brexit’) and Britain’s 2016 referendum vote to leave the European Union (a ‘second Brexit’). The economic, social and cultural developments connected with these shifts in power will also be assessed, with students using field trips to the National Portrait Gallery, St Paul’s Cathedral and the Imperial War Museum to explore how a ‘national story’ has been deliberately ‘invented’ by the state. In addition, the connection between the British imperial project and national identity at home will be evaluated. Attention will be paid to the scholarly views that the British empire was far less powerful than is often thought, but was nevertheless a hugely significant influence on globalization. By examining the evolution of British identity in the midst of historically significant events (the aforementioned ‘second Brexit’), students will be encouraged to use this ‘study abroad’ course to think about the wider applicability of how the triangular relationship between state, territoriality, and peoples is a process that can be reversed. Student learning will also be furthered via the consideration of four television documentaries (on Winston Churchill and George Orwell’s Britishness; the politics of evensong; the industrial revolution; and empire), resulting in reflections on the epistemological status of history presented in this medium. Above all, this course seeks to hone the key transferable skill in studying history, namely critical thinking. To this end, students will be required to make a class presentation wherein they interpret a portrait painting as a ‘primary source’, situating both the artist and the sitter in their historical context; they will write a 2000-word paper which aims at constructing a logical historical argument, using persuasive evidence gleaned from a range of ‘secondary sources’; and they will sit an end-of-session exam which tests their ability to deploy historical learning in a mentally flexible and intellectually independent way.

Course Objectives and Hub Outcomes

These course objectives fulfil the academic requirements for two Hub Capacities:

Philosophical, Aesthetic, and Historical Interpretation Area: 'Historical Consciousness'

Diversity, Civic Engagement, and Global Citizenship Area: 'Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy'

1. Students will demonstrate a knowledge of when and why power shifted in the evolution of Britain's political system over a 500-year period, and the impact these shifts had culturally within the British Isles and in the 'formal' and 'informal' parts of the British empire. [Historical Consciousness Learning Outcome 1]
2. Students will construct historical arguments concerning the modern history of Britain, domestically and externally, based on evaluative interpretations of secondary source scholarly materials. [Historical Consciousness Learning Outcome 1]
3. Students will demonstrate an ability to interpret a portrait painting as a primary source, situating both the artist and the sitter in their historical and cultural context e.g. the extent to which what is being projected in the painting accurately reflects the power and social structures of the day. [Historical Consciousness Learning Outcome 2]
4. Students will demonstrate an ability to interpret St Paul's Cathedral, the Imperial War Museum, and the National Portrait Gallery (and the adjacent Trafalgar Square) as historically-important buildings, institutions, collections and spaces, all of which are used today in Britain's national life to tell a contemporary version of Britain's 'Island Story' through the selective presentation of past material culture. [Historical Consciousness Learning Outcome 2]
5. Students will demonstrate, through comparative analysis of the roles played by the commercial empire of the city of London, the white dominions, and the sub-imperialism of a greater India, a knowledge of historical arguments concerning the nature of the British empire. [Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy Learning Outcome 1]
6. Students will demonstrate, through comparative analysis, the role of rival 'national stories' within the British Isles in seeking to create a connection between a set of governing institutions, a 'national' territory, and the people living in a 'national' homeland. [Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy Learning Outcome 1]

Additional Course Objectives

7. To encourage students to reflect on the wider applicability of how the triangular relationship between state, territoriality, and peoples is a process that can be reversed.
8. To make students historically aware that 'progress' is not inevitable and that rights acquired by individuals often followed a prolonged struggle, and that constant vigilance is needed to protect acquired rights.
9. To prompt students to use the 'source criticism' mindset of the historian in everyday life.

Educational Strategies

This course pulls together the teaching objectives and methods associated with an academically-rigorous history course, the cross-cultural learning gained from studying in a different country, and Boston University's 'Signature Cross-College Challenge' for students to acquire Hub Capacities. The upshot should be a synergy which creates an intellectually challenging and highly relevant learning experience.

Function of Lectures (in all 10 sessions from 1.15 pm to 2.45 pm)

This is the main mechanism for delivering Course Objectives 1 and 6. Given that no prior knowledge of British history is required for this course, their purpose is: i) to convey an understanding of defining moments and how they relate to each other; ii) to provide definitions of key terms and concepts; and iii) and to stimulate an appreciation of major historical arguments. The methodology is for each lecture to take a theme (see Course Timetable below) and make connections to a timeline of established in the first class. Thus, students will be presented with the same set of defining moments on multiple occasions, while thematically looking at different justifications and impacts. This grafting approach is tailored to students remembering and understanding the course material as the classes proceed, which is essential in the short timeframe of course delivery. Class schedule and lecture methodology thus work together. This approach also challenges students to make connections between cause and effect, to think across sub-disciplines of history, and to understand that the very act of choosing a set of defining moments is evaluative.

Seminars (in six out of the ten sessions typically from 3 pm to 4 pm)

The second part of six of the sessions will entail a seminar discussion based on assigned readings, and these are especially targeted at Course Objectives 1, 2 and 5. Three types of readings are assigned: extracts from a course set text; academic articles of a historiographical nature; and primary source essays. The set text – which is narrative-based – is aimed at bolstering thematically-based lecture content. The evaluative nature of historical understanding is further developed with historiographical readings concerning British imperialism. The third type of assigned reading is of a 'primary source' nature. Those utilised include extracts from key works of political philosophy and a propagandistic essay written at the height of the Blitz.

Television Documentaries (sessions 1, 2, 6 and 7 from 4 pm to 5.15 pm)

Student learning is further supported by four television documentaries presented by leading historians and shown in the third part of the designated sessions. These documentaries are discussed immediately after the showing with an emphasis, first, on students detailing key points from the documentary and, second, on the epistemological status of history presented in this medium. We will be particularly focused on the BBC's commissioning of the four programmes and how they relate to ideas of 'public history' and 'national history'.

Field Trips: London as a 'Primary Source' (sessions 3, 4 and 8 from 2.45 pm to 5.15 pm)

Field trip 1 (session 3): National Portrait Gallery

The main purpose of this trip is to conduct research for a class presentation. A second purpose is for the class as a whole to discuss how the NPG tells a national story via each of its room

spaces. We will do this after the presentations in session 5. This directly relates to Course Objective 3.

Field trip 2 (session 4): St Paul's Cathedral

The main purpose of this trip is to attend Evensong and gain first-hand experience of the sacred music produced in the wake of England's protestant reformation. We will treat the sacred music as a primary source and evaluate what it can tell us about the time it was produced, and how this connects with evolving national identity. A second reason for visiting St Paul's is to climb to its highest point, the Golden Gallery on the outer dome. In so doing, we will be interested in reflecting upon the economic, political and social spaces connected with the Thames artery. The third reason for the field trip will be to consider the monuments and statues within the cathedral and ask what they suggest about national culture in relation to religious belief. This field trip helps fulfil Course Objectives 4 and 6.

Field trip 3 (session 8): Imperial War Museum

The purpose of the field trip is to consider how this national museum projects the impact of two world wars in relation to the politics of British identity. Students are encouraged to reflect on the following: How are the events of the First World War depicted? What kind of overarching narrative is developed: for instance, was it a futile war of attrition or did it achieve something worthwhile? Are there distinctions in this regard between different theatres of war? In what ways is joint endeavour between allies shown? Is this enough? (Remember this a national museum in Britain.) Similarly, how are the events of the Second World War depicted? A traditional narrative would be that the Second World War was a 'good war' while the First World War was a futile one: in what ways does the IWM challenge this conventional wisdom? How does the empire figure in the Second World War exhibits? This field trip helps fulfil Course Objectives 4 and 6.

Assessment Methods

Class participation:	10%
Class presentation:	10%
2000-word paper/essay:	40%
Exam:	40%

Class Participation (10%)

This is an active learning course which requires students to prepare for class with set readings and to participate in class discussions. The basic measurement of class participation is essentially expository: by the end of the course students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the meaning and significance of a set of 'defining moments' in the evolution of British identity. At the same time, however, all class members are strongly encouraged to challenge the lecturer's selection of 'defining moments' by advancing their own alternatives. The aim is to prompt debates about the relative weight of political, economic and social narratives and, in so doing, stimulate critical thinking and intellectual independence. Thoughtful (and sceptical) questions will count as much towards the class participation grade as perceptive answers to questions. To facilitate class participation, break-out sessions will be a regular feature allowing historical arguments to be first tested in small group settings.

Student Presentation in Session 5 (10%)

This is targeted specifically at the Course Objective 3, namely that students must demonstrate an ability to interpret visual primary sources, using a range of interpretive skills and situating the material in its historical and cultural context. The learning outcome should be a 5-minute presentation utilising research from the class visit to the National Portrait Gallery, plus research in relevant secondary materials. A handout on Blackboard for Class 3 details exactly what is required for this assignment e.g. the type of questions to be asked about a likeness. It also states how to structure the presentation and offers guidance on the secondary sources. Comments and a grade will be given to students in Class 7.

Paper/Essay worth (40%)

The paper, submitted at the start of class 8, should be 2000 words in length (about 8 typed pages, double-spaced in 12-point font) and MUST answer as comprehensively as possible one of the set prompts on Blackboard. This assessment method aligns with Course Objectives 1, 2 and 5. Writing a comprehensive, cogent and ultimately persuasive paper, which draws extensively upon effective research, is one of the key transferable skills when studying history. Historians, moreover, must develop the ability to evaluate often contradictory evidence and make sense of it in a highly creative way using subtle language and arguments. These are great skills to hone. Given that it might have been a while since you last wrote a 'history paper', I will remind the class at the start of session 7 of the mechanics of essay writing. Special attention will be paid to the following: the functions of the introduction; the deployment of analytical thinking within single-themed paragraphs; the use of historical evidence to back up assertions including an appreciation of other view points; the role of topic sentences and linking sentences; the methods for developing an argument between paragraphs; when to cite; the role of the conclusion; and, finally, why a bibliography is needed in addition to citations. The paper, with a grade and comments, will be returned to students in the final class for review purposes in anticipation of the end-of-session examination.

End-of-Session Exam (40%)

There is a two-hour examination which requires two essay-type questions from a selection covering all aspects of the course. It is thus a key mechanism for measuring the historical knowledge and understanding covered in this course, and for demonstrating an ability to construct historical arguments (see Course Objectives 1,2,5 and 6). All the topics covered in the essay prompts on Blackboard - see previous assessment method – will also feature in the exam, albeit with a different phrasing and emphasis. Thus, the research and experience of writing the 'term paper' element of the assessment methods will also greatly assist you with at least one of the questions in the exam. It should be stressed that effective understanding is demonstrated not by masses of rote learning, but by being able to apply your historical knowledge in a mentally flexible way. Intellectual independence and critical thinking underpin the historian's craft, and the exam is geared to assessing your ability in these regards. Marks will be awarded for structuring your exam answers so that the mechanics of a history paper (signposted above and detailed in class 7) are adhered to under exam conditions.

Course Timetable

1. POLITICS: 'THE RISE OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY'

This class begins with a discussion on where political power resides in Britain today, with reference to the referendum vote of 2016 as a 'second' Brexit. We then examine how Britain's political system evolved to get to this position from Henry VIII's 'first Brexit' in 1534. Key moments discussed include the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588; the dynastic change of 1603; the English Civil War and interregnum in the mid-seventeenth century; the Glorious Revolution of 1688; the impact of industrialization on the political process, especially the reform acts of 1832 and 1867; the extension of the vote to women in 1918 and 1928; and the impact of total war between 1939 and 1945. The slow, largely evolutionary nature of political change will be assessed, along with the role of group and class struggles in this process.

Readings: There are no assigned readings for this first session.

Class documentary: Lucy Worsley, 'Elizabeth's I's Battle for God's Music', transmitted BBC 2017

Class discussion: We will discuss the politics of evensong having watched the above documentary. (This programme also connects with the field trip to St Paul's in class 4 during which we will attend evensong.)

2. POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY: 'THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE STATE FROM HOBBS TO KEYNES'

This lecture considers the shifts in political power detailed in Class 1 in the context of key philosophical – and later economic – works, beginning with Thomas Hobbes and the English Civil War. Other great thinkers placed in their historical contexts are: John Locke and the Glorious Revolution; Adam Smith on the state vis-à-vis industry and empire; John Stuart Mill on the educational functions of extending the vote; Karl Marx on private property; and John Maynard Keynes and the rise of the interventionist state. Extracts from primary source texts will be discussed as part of the lecture session.

Readings: George Orwell, 'England your England' in *The Lion and the Unicorn* (1941); and, as background for the class documentary, J. Chapman, 'Seeing the Past: Simon Schama's A History of Britain and public history', *Reviews in History*, Dec 2002. <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/296>

Seminar discussion: How, and in what context, does Orwell define English (and British) identity?

Class documentary: Simon Schama, 'History of Britain: Orwell and Churchill', transmitted BBC, 2001

3. ART: 'THE POLITICS OF LANDSCAPES AND PORTRAITS' / FIELD TRIP TO NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

This lecture again assesses the defining moments in Britain's political evolution (as detailed in Class 1), albeit from the perspective of the commissioning of paintings and what this indicates about where power and wealth resided. Consideration is given to the role of the court between 1534 and 1642, the impact of coffee house culture after 1660, and the shift to the public sphere between 1768 and 1838.

Readings: John Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 1997, pp. 15-54. This reading is intended as background not only for this lecture, but for the first four classes. It is

consequently also important for essay research and exam preparation. See also: Jenkins, *A Short History of England*, pp. 11- 102. This covers the history of the British Isles before the course starts. Please be prepared to discuss the following question: If you were to teach the period from 600-1534, what three political, economic or cultural 'defining moments' would you emphasise and why in the creation of a British identity? (Please do not include the Magna Carta of 1215 as this was covered in Class 1.)

Field trip: We will leave for National Portrait Gallery after a 60-minute lecture in the usual classroom, followed by 30 minutes discussing the Jenkins assigned reading. A guidance document for the field trip is included on Blackboard.

4. **ARCHITECTURE: 'WHO PAYS FOR THE BUILDINGS?' / FIELD TRIP TO ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL**

This lecture considers how shifts in power and wealth having shaped architectural commissioning. We move from the building of palaces and stately homes in the sixteenth century to the impact of commerce in the seventeenth century. With the advent of industrialization, it will be shown how architecture increasingly becomes an instrument rather than a representation of power.

Readings: There are no assigned readings for this session.

Field trip: We leave for St Paul's after an hour-long lecture. A guidance document for the field trip is included on Blackboard. Should you wish, you can also use the field trip to discuss your presentation (due in the next session) on a one-to-one basis with the lecturer.

5. **STUDENT PRESENTATIONS** based on previous week's field trip to the National Portrait Gallery; and class discussion of St Paul's field trip.

Seminar discussion: following the presentations, we will have a group discussion relating to St Paul's.

6. **THE NOVEL: 'THE RISE AND CULTURAL IMPACT OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES IN THE 18th AND 19th CENTURIES'**

This lecture connects the impact of new class structures in Britain with the rise and development of the novel, exploring key themes e.g. the marriage market, wider social conditions, and empire. As a prelude to the seminar discussion and class documentary, the lecture will also detail historiographical arguments concerning the role of the state vis-à-vis (i) the causes of the industrial revolution and (ii) the rise of empire.

Readings: Jenkins, *A Short History of England*, pp. 103-189 (again, please be prepared to discuss three political, economic or social developments which you think deserve greater emphasis in this course for the period between 1534 and 1815); and Andrew Porter, "'Gentlemanly Capitalism' and Empire: The British Experience since 1750?" in *Journal of imperial and Commonwealth History*, Volume 18, No 3, 2008.

Seminar discussion: Should capitalism in Britain be understood in terms of three distinct groups – 'gentlemanly', industrial and commercial? Why was the British aristocracy so politically resilient?

Class documentary: Jeremy Black, 'Why the Industrial Revolution Happened Here', transmitted BBC, 2013.

7. EMPIRE: 'DEBATING THE IMPACT OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE' (RETURN OF PRESENTATIONS)

Rather than seeing the British empire as a great monolithic structure, this lecture engages with recent British scholarship and instead assesses the distinct roles played by the commercial empire of the city of London, the white dominions, and the sub-imperialism of a greater India. It further considers the nature of the empire in different periods and how this affects debates about whether it should be viewed by the British with pride or shame. The relative roles of race and social hierarchy in the development and management of the empire are also assessed.

Class readings: John Darwin, 'Britain's Empire' in Sarah Stockwell (ed.), *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives* (2008), pp. 1-20; Dane Kennedy, 'The Imperial History Wars', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 54, Number 1, Jan 2015, pp. 5-22.

Seminar discussion: Was the British empire a giant con trick? Why do American historians emphasise race when discussing the British empire and British historians social class? How should the empire be viewed in the age of Brexit?

Class documentary: Jeremy Paxman, 'Empire: *play up...*', transmitted BBC, 2012.

8. WAR IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: 'BRITAIN IN THE AGE OF TWO WORLD WARS' / FIELD TRIP TO THE IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM (ESSAYS DUE 1:15 pm)

The lecture considers the main domestic and international consequences of WWI and WWII. Emphasis is placed on the rise of the interventionist state domestically, and the decline of empire internationally.

Class readings: Jenkins, *A Short History of England*, pp. 190-251 (as previously, be prepared to discuss three political, economic or social developments which you think deserve greater emphasis in this course between 1815-1945); for the field trip assignment, see Vincent Trott, 'Britain and France in Two World Wars: Truth, Myth and Memory', <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1621>.

Field trip: We leave for the Imperial War Museum after an hour-long lecture, followed by a 30-minute discussion of the Jenkins set text. A guidance document for the field trip is included on Blackboard.

9. POPULAR CULTURE: 'THE POST-WAR STATE, MULTICULTURALISM, AND EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY'

Having assessed high culture (art and architecture in classes 3 and 4) and middlebrow culture (the novel in class 6), this lecture examines popular culture in the age of 'Keynesian Social Democracy' between 1945 and 1979. Emphasis is placed on film, television, sport and music. The impact of end of empire and migration to Britain is also considered. The contention is that the post-war state largely failed in its goal of creating equality of opportunity for its increasingly diverse population. Nevertheless, Britain was more meritocratic in the period between 1964 and 1997 than it was either before or since.

Class readings: Jenkins, *A Short History of England*, pp. 252-295 (be prepared to discuss three political, economic or social developments which you think deserve greater emphasis in the

course for the period between 1945 and 2011; also Geoff Mulgan, 'Culture', in David Marquand and Anthony Seldon (eds), *The Ideas that Shaped Post-war Britain* (1996), pp. 66-90.

Seminar discussion: Why and with what consequences did the post-war state fail to bring about equality of opportunity?

10. BREXIT AND REVIEW SESSION / RETURN OF ESSAYS

This final lecture reflects on the development of British identity in the context of commercial, industrial and imperial successes and argues that the decline of British identity is a reverse of this process. The way in which the UK's 2016 decision to leave the European Union fits into this narrative will also be discussed.

Class readings: Harold D. Clarke, Matthew Goodwin and Paul Whitely, 'Beyond Brexit' in *Brexit: Why Britain Voted to Leave the European Union* (2017), pp. 204-29; recent newspaper or magazine feature article tbc.

Seminar discussion: Will the UK's union of constituent nations survive Brexit?

Review session: For second half of class.

EXAM: Exam times and locations will be posted on the BU London website and in the Student Newsletter two weeks before exam dates.

**** Contingency Class Date: TBC** Students must keep this date free to attend class should any class dates need to be rescheduled

Readings:

Course set text: Jenkins, Simon, *A Short History of England* (2012)

For background reading and essay research, the following titles are especially recommended:

Brewer, John, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (1997)

Cannadine, David, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (1999)

Cannadine, David, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (2002)

Cannadine, David (ed), *What is History Now* (2004)

Cannadine, David, *Victorious Century* (2017)

Colley, Linda, *Forging the Nation* (2009)

Colley, Linda, *Acts of Union and Disunion* (2014)

David, D. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to The Victorian Novel*, (2012)

Darwin, John, *Empire Project* (2011)

Darwin, John, *Unfinished Empire* (2013)

Davies, Norman, *The Isles* (1999)

Edgerton, David, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nation: A Twentieth Century History* (2018)

Ferguson, Niall, *Empire* (2004)

Furtado, Peter, *Histories of Nations* (2017)

Gott, Richard, *Britain's Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt* (2011)

Harris, Jose, *Civil Society in British History: Ideas, Identities, Institutions* (2005)

Jackson, Ashley, *The British Empire: A Very Short Introduction* (2013)

Kennedy, Dane, 'The Imperial History Wars', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 54, Number 1, Jan 2015

Kennedy, Dane, *The Imperial History Wars* (2018)

Imperial History by the Book: A Roundtable on John Darwin's *The Empire Project*, *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 54, Number 4, Oct 2015

Kumar, Krishnan, *The Making of English National Identity* (2010)

Kumar, Krishnan, *The Idea of Englishness: English Culture, National Identity and Social Thought* (2016)

Marr, Andrew, *A History of Modern Britain* (2009)

Orwell, George, *The Lion and the Unicorn* (1941)

Oxford DNB – see group articles and feature articles (on pdfs on Blackboard)

Morgan, Kenneth O. (ed.), *The Oxford History of Britain* (Revised edition 2010)

Paxman, Jeremy, *Empire: What Ruling the World Did to the British* (2011)

Paxman, Jeremy, *Empire* (2001)

Parker, Philip, *History of Britain in Maps* (2017)

Porter, Andrew, "'Gentlemanly Capitalism" and empire: The British Experience since 1750?' in *JICH*, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03086539008582819>

Reynolds, David, *Britannia Overruled* (2000)

Richetti, J. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to The Eighteenth Century Novel* (2008)

Said, Edward, *Culture and Imperialism* (1994)

Savage, Jon *England's Dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock and Beyond* (2002)

Schama, Simon, *A History of Britain Volumes 2 and 3: 1603 – 1776* (2001/2)

Schama, Simon, *The Face of Britain: The Nation through its Portraits* (2015)

Simms, Brendan, *Britain's Europe* (2017)

Starkey, David, *Crown and Country: A History of England through the Monarchy* (2011)

Storry, Mike and Childs, Peter (eds), *British Cultural Identities* (2012)

Tombs, Robert *The English and their History* (2015)

Vallance, Edward *A Radical History of Britain: Visionaries, Rebels and Revolutionaries* (2010)

Watt, Ian *The Rise of the Novel* (2000 edition)

Terms and Conditions

Failure to produce essays at the allotted time may result in the lowering of the grade. Punctuality for class is essential.

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

MTT 28 Jan 2019 (final version as submitted BU hub)