

**LNDN COLT 3311  
POSTWAR BRITISH POPULAR CULTURE**

**CAPA LONDON PROGRAM**



**Please note: This syllabus is for the in-country version of this course. It will be modified as appropriate for online learning, including the addition of co-curricular activities including virtual My Global City events. The updated syllabus will be available by June 15. Please contact CAPA with any questions about choosing your courses at 800.793.0334.**

**Course Description**

In the 1940s George Orwell and others feared that England was becoming too Americanised. In a few years their predictions came true when rock 'n' roll music first hit the British Isles. A new breed of people, affluent and impressionable, first appeared at this time: the teenagers. And these kids just wanted to dance. At early showings of the film *Rock Around the Clock* there were riots as cinema ushers tried to stop the rockers dancing in the aisle. Youth counterculture was born. And yet Orwell should not have been too concerned about an American invasion because there was something essentially British about British rock 'n' roll music especially in the hands of singers like Tommy Steele and Cliff Richard.

This course examines different countercultures and subcultures in Britain from the 1950s to the present day. We will be introduced to the rocker, the punk, the Goth, the New Romantic, the Raver and, Britain's newest counteridentity, the Hipster. Historically, subcultures appear to resist ideas of **globalization**, though, perhaps in the present day with the internet there is a sense of subcultural identities as global rather than local. Of course, these identities are connected to music, but we will go further and locate these identities as part of political movements and of political malaise. For instance, it could be argued that the many countercultures of the 1980s (the New Romantic, the Raver etc.) are modes of resistance against the Conservative Government led by Margaret Thatcher. The famous band The Smiths wrote songs of protest against the policies of Thatcher who, they thought, divided the nation between the rich and the poor. In this interplay of music, politics and class we can observe the complex **social dynamics** of the 1980s.

By the mid 1990s, and with the rise of the opposition, New Labour, British music had become more optimistic mirroring the excitement many felt as Conservative rule came to an end. After Thatcher there were attempts to embrace **diversity**. 90's Britpop is interwoven with politics and the artwork of the Young British Artists (YBAs) such as Tracey Emin and Chris Ofili. In the 90s Britain was thought to be the music and art centre of the world.

While these identities are based on fashion and music, we will also look at cultures which are based on ethnicity and sexuality. For instance we will learn about the black community in Notting Hill during the 1950s, and the gay community of Soho in the 1980s as well as ideas concerning **diversity** and hate crime. The influence of these subcultures has been extensive, and Britishness would not be what it is today without these subcultures' continued fight for equality.

To better understand these subcultures the course is complemented with field trips which will take us to important **urban environments** in the city and beyond. Some of these sites like Soho and Shoreditch still harbour these subcultures but both are struggling against the homogenizing effects of **globalization**, while at other sites it is hard to find any traces of these subcultures. For instance there is little evidence that the Punk movement started in the King's Road, so, instead we will make a pilgrimage to the grave of Malcolm McLaren, the inventor of Punk. These field trips will help contextualise these subcultures both historically and politically.

### Course Aims

This course is designed to introduce students to popular culture in Britain since 1945.

To understand what popular culture means, and how subcultures and countercultures resist or support this definition. Students will learn about the **social dynamics** of subcultures and their relationship to the mainstream.

To enable students to appreciate that popular cultures are closely connected to politics, class and ethnicity, and to allow students to have an understanding of postwar politics and **social dynamics**.

We will be studying many different texts: academic essays, autobiography, newspaper reports, films and music videos. This course will enable students to develop the ability to read across different genres and still engage in critical and scholarly debate.

Academic essays will encourage students to source and analyze information in a well-structured form, while the reflective papers will allow students an opportunity to develop their own voice.

Field Studies will enable the students to analyze the **urban environment** and how it shelters (or repels) subcultural groups. Also students will be able to witness the direct results of **globalization** at these sites.

### Requirements and Prerequisites

None

### Learning Outcomes

- a. To understand the advantages and disadvantages of **globalization** on culture. To question whether **globalization** is making culture the same the world over.
- b. To appreciate how subcultures are linked to the **urban environment** and that many subcultures are city-based.
- c. To recognize that Britain's **diversity** has influenced the national culture, but to understand that there are still inequalities
- d. To demonstrate through **social dynamics** that subcultures are inescapably linked to the mainstream.

## Developmental Outcomes

Students should demonstrate: responsibility & accountability, independence & interdependence, goal orientation, self-confidence, resilience, appreciation of differences.

## Class Methodology

Reflective Essays  
Academic Essays  
Films  
Lectures  
Field Studies  
Readings

## Field Components

CAPA provides the unique opportunity to learn about the city through direct, guided experience. Participation in field activities for this course is required. Furthermore, you will have the chance to collect useful information that will be an invaluable resource for the essays/papers/projects assigned in this course.

Field classes form an important element of the course; attendance at these classes is mandatory. Field classes present a valuable opportunity for students to immerse themselves in the varied spaces and places of contemporary Britain and provide direct interaction with a wide range of **culturally diverse environments**. In these classes we will learn about the forces which have structured, and continue to influence, British culture, politics and society. We will interpret the sites we visit through class discussion as well as in written work. Field studies for this course include: walking tours in Soho and Camden and one that follows the footsteps of the Beatles in London. We will also visit the Museum of Childhood, the Victoria and Albert Museum and Somerset House..

**Please Note: Students are responsible for ensuring that they arrive at field studies classes on time. I will email directions to field study sites in advance of the class – please consult the Transport for London website to plan your travel arrangements: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/>**

## The assigned field component(s) are:

See below in weekly schedule.

Students are also strongly encouraged to participate in **co-curricular** program activities, as they can provide further information on the subcultures which we study in class.

## Assessments

Weekly Responses	20%
Midterm Paper	30%
Final Essay	40%
Presentation	10%

### Weekly Responses 2 pages double-spaced

After some field trip students are required to write a two-page response incorporating academic sources and their personal reaction to the site visited. Attention must be given to the history of the site, and thought given to who uses the site now. Is the site connected to ideas of class, ethnicity, age or gender?

### Midterm Paper 4 pages double spaced

From a selection of questions the student is required to write a paper on ideas discussed in class so far. Papers should be academically sourced and presented. They should make use of the class discussions and show independent research.

## **Final Essay    6 pages double-spaced**

Each student should concentrate on one aspect of Britain's popular culture from the period 1945-2013 linking it to some of the following ideas: imperialism, history, immigration, art, culture, patriotism, American culture, war and memory. The paper should be independently researched and academically presented. It is important that the students form an original thesis. Sources can include, but cannot be limited to, interviews with Londoners who engage in this aspect of popular culture. Interviews must be supported by respectable academic sources.

Papers should be analytical rather than descriptive, based on a well-defined argument, and supported by specific details from the field classes, class handouts and readings, and your own observations. You may also incorporate an analysis of photographs and other visual material. Please feel free to contact me for topic advice and suggestions.

## **Presentation – Britain in Music    In Class**

It is often said that Britain is the music centre of the world. In the final week of class each student is required to choose one piece of music that they think encapsulates a feature of popular culture in the years 1951-2013. It is not enough to select a favourite song: there must be rigorous attention to how the song connects with politics, memory, identity, race, sexuality and gender. Examples could be 'God Save the Queen' by The Sex Pistols, or 'Relax' by Frankie Goes to Hollywood, or 'Do They Know It's Christmas' by Band Aid. Other examples could include soundtracks from British films such as *Chariots of Fire*, or TV programmes such as *Dr Who*. Students could also record their own sounds which they think are typically British (noise from the underground, the hubbub of a pub) but, again, they must be academically framed.

Presentations should last for ten minutes including time for discussion and set-up, on the chosen topic, outlining its significance for British culture and society today and its relation to the key themes of the course.

## **Assessment/Grading Policy**

Descriptor	Alpha	UK	US	GPA
Excellent	A	75+	93+	4.0
	A-	70-74	90-92	3.7
Good	B+	66-69	87-89	3.3
	B	63-65	83-86	3.0
	B-	60-62	80-82	2.7
Average	C+	56-59	77-79	2.3
	C	53-55	73-76	2.0
Below Average / Poor	C-	50-52	70-72	1.7
	D+	46-49	67-69	1.3
	D	40-45	60-66	0.7 1.0
Fail	F	<40	<60	0

## **Grade Breakdown and Assessment of Learning Outcomes**

Assessment Task	Grade %	Learning Outcomes	Due Date
Reflective Papers	20%	a, b, c, d	After 4 trips
Oral Presentation 1 X 8 min	10%	a, b, c, d	Week 7

Mid-term exam	30%	a, b, c, d	Week 14
Final Research Paper	40%	a, b, c, d	Week 14

### Required Readings:

Required readings will be distributed in class or through email. It is imperative that all readings are undertaken before the next class. Readings will be newspaper articles, short stories, interviews, youtube videos and academic articles. A knowledge of George Orwell's *1984* will also be useful.

### Recommended Reading(s):

This is just a selection from a long list:

Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000).

John Benson, *Affluence and Authority: A Social History of Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005)

Boy George, *Take it Like a Man: The Autobiography of Boy George* (London: Harper Collins, 2012)

Christopher Beward, *Fashioning London: Clothing and the Modern Metropolis* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London: Routledge, 2002).

Ed Glinert, *The London Compendium* (London: Penguin, 2004).

James Hampshire, *Citizenship and Belonging Immigration and the Politics of Demographic Governance in Postwar Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

John Harris, *The Last Party: Britpop, Blair and the Demise of English Rock* (London: Harper Perennial, 2004)

Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1995).

Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.)

Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918 – 1957* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

Ian Inglis (ed.) *Popular Music and Television in Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010)

Derek Jarman, *At Your Own Risk: A Saint's Testament* (London: Vintage, 1993)

Susan Kingsley Kent, *Gender and Power in Britain, 1640-1990* (London, Routledge, 1998).

Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (London: Macmillan, 2008).

Jeremy Paxman, *The English: A Portrait of the People* (London: Penguin, 2007)

Mike Phillips and Trevor Phillips, *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: HarperCollins, 1999)

Erica Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Sheila Rowbotham, *A Century of Women: The History of Women in Britain and the United States* (London: 1999).

Roger Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What?: The Cultural Legacy of Punk* (London: Routledge, 1999)

Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had it So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (London: Abacus, 2006).

Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties* (London: LittleBrown, 2006).

Dominic Sandbrook, *State of Emergency: The Way We Were: Britain 1970-1974* (London: Allen Lane, 2010).

Dominic Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun: The Battle for Britain 1974-1979* (London: Allen Lane, 2012).

Sue Tilley, *Leigh Bowery: The Life and Times of an Icon* (New York: Open Road, 1997)

Nick Tiratsoo, ed., *From Blitz to Blair: A New History of Britain since 1939* (London: Phoenix, 1998).

Wendy Webster, *Imagining Home: Gender, 'Race' and National Identity, 1945 -1964* (London: UCL Press, 1998).

Jerry White, *London in the Twentieth Century: A City and its People* (London:Penguin,2001).

Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain* (London: Abacus, 2005).

### **Useful Websites for British History & Contemporary Culture:**

Victoria and Albert Museum

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/exhibitions/exhibition-from-club-to-catwalk-london-fashion-in-the-80s/>

BBC history <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/>

The Times Online <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/>

The Guardian <http://www.guardian.co.uk/>

The Museum of London <http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/london-wall/>

The Museum of Childhood <http://www.museumofchildhood.org.uk/>

The Design Museum <http://designmuseum.org/>

Tate Blog: Youth and Art <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/blogs/tate-debate-what-importance-youth-art>

British Life, Culture, and Customs <http://projectbritain.com/>

Life in the UK test (British citizenship test) [www.lifeintheuk.net/test/](http://www.lifeintheuk.net/test/)

## Attendance, Participation & Student Responsibilities

**Attendance:** CAPA has a mandatory attendance policy. Attendance is taken at the beginning of every class. Unauthorized absence from class will result in a reduction of the final grade and potentially a failure for the course.

**Missing classes for medical reasons:** If you need to miss a class for medical reasons or for a family emergency, **you must send an e-mail** to let the Associate Director of Academic Affairs (ADAA) know at least one hour in advance of your class or meeting at the following e-mail: [excused.absence@capa.org](mailto:excused.absence@capa.org). Note that calling the CAPA Centre (0207 370 7389) is acceptable only if you do not temporarily have access to the internet. An e-mail is still required as quickly as you can get access to the internet again. You will need to provide evidence of the reason for your absence. Unexcused absences will result in a grade reduction. In the event of a missed class or field trip, it is your responsibility to contact your instructor and make up any missed assignments.

**Class Participation:** Students are expected to participate actively and critically in class discussions, and the participation portion of the class will be graded accordingly. Students must read assignments BEFORE the class, and come in on time. Participation is a vital part of your grade: students are expected to participate orally in seminars and in online forums and discussions in a critical and evaluative manner; to interact with the faculty and fellow students with respect and tolerance; and to actively engage in discussion. Derogatory or inflammatory comments about the cultures, perspectives or attitudes of others in the class will not be tolerated.

**Academic Integrity:** A high level of responsibility and academic honesty is expected. Because the value of an academic course depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work and class behavior. Plagiarism and cheating will result in dismissal from the program. See the Handbook of CAPA Academic Policies for more information and resources on plagiarism.

**Technology:** All students are expected to use a laptop or other appropriate electronic device with a reliable internet connection and a camera for participation in all classes, group activities, and co-curricular events. All courses use Zoom and Canvas (LMS) technology. If you require an accommodation regarding your use of electronic equipment, please speak with the faculty member or Academic Affairs.

**Use of Electronic Translators:** In Language courses students are NOT allowed to use electronic translators for writing texts in the target language: those submitting compositions and texts of whatever kind translated in such a fashion will receive a final F grade for the course.

**Late Submission:** Late submission of papers, projects, journal entries, pieces of homework and portfolios is only permitted with prior approval. A request must be made to the relevant Faculty member no later than two days prior to the due date. Late submission without prior approval will result in a full alpha grade penalty. In either case, work cannot be submitted after feedback has been provided to the rest of the class on the relevant assessment or one week after the due date whichever comes first, after which point a grade of F will be given for the assessment.

**Behaviour during Examinations:** During examinations, you must do your own work. Unless specifically instructed by the lecturer or instructor, talking during an exam is not permitted, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any failure to abide by examination rules will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and disciplinary action.