



British Life and Cultures

[Faculty Contact Information](#)

Name:

Email:

Office Hour information:

[Course Information](#)

Course Description

This multidisciplinary course serves as the anchor of the study programme in London, offering students an opportunity to place what they are learning in their other courses into a larger, contemporary context. It also enables students to appreciate more of what they observe during their stay in Britain in regard to the underlying history, themes, and institutions of the UK.

Course Goals

The course provides a comprehensive examination of British life and multiculturalism past, present, and future. Students learn what makes Britain a nation via a range of topics on politics and monarchy, media and arts, and society.

Student Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will:

1. Have an understanding of British sociology and the cultures of "Britishness"
2. Understand the "peoples of the United Kingdom" as an integrated whole i.e. more than the sum of the parts
3. Acknowledge the differences between US, British, and European cultures, and the collective relationships that individuals have with their own societies
4. Understand the importance of sustainability for an island nation

[Course Assignments, Grading, and Assessment](#)

Assignment	Percentage	Grading Requirements
Attendance and Participation	20%	
Media Critique	10%	Please see rubric on MyStudy
Sustainability Assignment	15%	Please see rubric on MyStudy
Portfolio of vignettes	35%	Please see rubric on MyStudy
British Culture Critique	20%	Please see rubric on MyStudy

[Brief Assessment Overview](#)

Assessment 1: Media Critique (750 words)

Due:

Base your analysis on direct comparison of the exact SAME news story in two different media sources (i.e. two newspapers, two TV news broadcasts, two photographs, etc.). Look for a breaking news story where the facts are generally agreed but the interpretation is not. The idea is to compare the different coverage and engage in critical thinking, understanding how to identify sources and reading beyond the headlines.

Please compare only two media sources from politically opposed British press / media. Additional non-media sources may be used to strengthen your analysis.

Assessment 2: Sustainability Assignment – Independent Group Field Research and Group Presentation

Due:

This requires you to research the UK's governmental as well as local responses to the climate emergency. What is being done to tackle the many challenges that climate change creates for sustainability? Has the UK set significant targets and is it on track to meet these?

In small groups you will conduct field research in a London neighbourhood (to be assigned in class). You will examine how local areas are meeting (or not), the challenges created by the environmental crisis, alongside the wider Sustainability issues of social justice and inclusion. You will choose two areas - Housing / Transport / Green and Recreational Space / Waste and Recycling - to focus your research on, and combine your Field observations with some additional research on your Neighbourhood, and wider London and UK government targets and actions.

Questions to consider are:

- Does the UK in general and London in particular (via your Neighbourhood and wider research) appear to be meeting its environmental and sustainability targets?
- What examples of good practice did you discover? What challenges are not being met?
- How does what you have learned and experienced in the UK and London change or enlarge your own perspective on climate change and sustainability? How might these issues important in your personal and future professional life? Presentations should be 4 minutes per person in duration (a group of three - 12 minutes). 'Thorough research' should include at least 5/6 citations.

Assessment 3: Portfolio of vignettes (3,500 words)

Due:

During the term you will produce 7 Vignettes/Journals in response to the themes and ideas studied, you may include scholarly and personal reflections and responses to the issues raised, consider the field trips and make connections with your home country. Each vignette should be 500 words maximum. This assignment requires you to expand and build on your experiential learning. Before your final submission you will compose a 500 word concluding evaluation of all the vignettes in response to 'what you have learned'. There is going to be considerable flexibility on the conclusion both in terms of approach and format. You may wish to consider an overall theme or sense of connection between your pieces – it's important to bear in mind that this concluding vignette will be drawing together both your written work and your experience as a

whole. It will be an extension and development of your individual vignettes. You might like to consider how your experiences changed as your knowledge and confidence developed or how your understanding of the UK changed how you experienced the visits.

Please submit journals/vignettes as a Word/PDF document on MyStudy under the appropriate journal/vignette section. Each journal should have a heading, in-text citations clearly marked, and the post-text citations directly underneath. You're encouraged to use visuals as well as written text. Each journal should aim to have a minimum of two citations - better journals may go onto include more.

[Assessment 4: British Culture Critique](#)

Due:

An illustrated 1500 words / short film (7-10mins) / podcast (7-10 mins) / about your chosen cultural producer. Choose one contemporary British cultural figure from politics, history, business, music, film, literature, visual arts, entertainment. What is it about them that interests you, and why? What do they offer the public by way of insight / innovation / entertainment / cultural insight / inspiration/ contemporary social relevance What does their work reflect more generally about British Culture Consider the way their work ties into our class and course themes. What do they represent in terms of modern Britishness? What is distinctively British about them and their work? Has their work given you any insights into aspects of Britishness?

Please include: Two (or more) citations that include: reviews / writings / extracts of work/ interviews with them about their work (make sure this is not the majority of your piece) If you are creating a written version then do include some visual aspects (this will depend on the kind of figure you have chosen) If you are producing a podcast then include an extract / example of their work / or them discussing their work as part of your piece If you are producing a film version then include some of your subject's work (If your file is too large to upload to MyStudy please upload a cover sheet with your name, the title of your Critique and a very short synopsis. If you are creating a written version, then please prepare a short abstract of your paper that you can present to the class alongside the films and podcasts. This should not be longer than 1-2 minutes in length.

[Grading](#)

Alternative formats of the FIE Grading Rubric are available in the Student Resources area of MyStudy@FIE.

	Relevance Questions are interpreted correctly; Argument/thesis is clear and developed throughout; Discussion is focused on topic of the questions; Irrelevant content and discussion are not included	Knowledge and Understanding Recommended literature and/or research guidelines are used and interpreted appropriately; Selection and use of evidence shows understanding and insight; There is evidence of study beyond the recommended literature and that introduced in the module	Analysis, Critical Thinking and Integration of Experiential Learning Approach shows evidence of analysis and independent reasoning; Originality in argument; Evidence of critical insight and reasoned questioning of assumptions; Integration of connections and experiences outside of the formal classroom	Scholarship and Style Conclusions are well justified and complete; Facts reported and statements made are accurate; Writing is clear and fluent; All sources are appropriate, accurately acknowledged and formatted in recognised style; All work is the student's own
A 93-100%	Totally appropriate interpretation and relevant; Excellent and thorough thesis development	Comprehensive understanding and mastery of core evidence and extensive wider reading	Excellent analytical skills, outstanding evaluation of evidence, independent and original critical insight; Meaningfully integrates experiential learning where appropriate	Exceptional fluency and accurate writing using appropriate language, conclusions are well-justified; Accurate and thorough referencing
A- 90-92%	Almost wholly appropriate interpretation and relevant; Very strong thesis	Very strong understanding of evidence and clear evidence of appropriate wider reading	Well-developed analytical skills, excellent evaluation of evidence, shows strong critical insight; Effectively integrates experiential learning where appropriate	Almost wholly accurate and fluent writing using appropriate language, conclusions are full and justified; Accurate referencing

B+ 87-89%	Appropriate interpretation and relevant; Good thesis throughout	Strong understanding of evidence and appropriate wider reading	Very good analytical skills, strong evaluation of evidence; Shows critical insight; Acknowledges and compares experiential learning and other perspectives	Largely accurate and fluent writing using appropriate language; conclusions are justified; Accurate referencing
B 83-86%	Largely appropriate interpretation and relevant; Thesis is clear	Good understanding of evidence and some appropriate wider reading	Good analytical skills, good evaluation of evidence; Shows critical insight; Acknowledges and compares experiential learning and other perspectives	Largely accurate and fluent writing using appropriate language; Conclusions are justified; Accurate referencing
B- 80-82%	Mostly appropriate interpretation and relevant; Thesis is underdeveloped but clear	Sound understanding of evidence and some wider reading	Sound analytical skills; Sound evaluation of data; Shows some critical judgement identifies experiential connections	Sound level of accuracy and written fluency and some use of appropriate language; Conclusions are coherent; Sound use of referencing conventions
C+ 77-79%	Some appropriate interpretation and relevant;	Evidence is largely understood and some wider reading	Sometimes inconsistent analytical skills; Some evaluation of data;	Sound level of accuracy and written fluency and some use of appropriate language;

	Thesis is underdeveloped and lacks clarity		Shows some critical judgement though often descriptive; Identifies experiential connections	Conclusions are coherent but not fully supported; Sound use of referencing conventions
C 73-76%	May contain some misinterpretation and/or irrelevant material; Thesis lacks clarity	Evidence is largely understood; Limited reading beyond material introduced in module	Mostly inconsistent analytical skills; Some evaluation of data; Scant critical judgement mostly descriptive; Identifies experiential connections	Some level of accuracy and written fluency and some use of appropriate language; Conclusions are coherent but not fully supported; Sound use of referencing conventions
C- 70-72%	Limited interpretation and relevance; Thesis is inconsistent	Weak understanding of evidence; Limited reading beyond material introduced in module	Mostly inconsistent analytical skills; Some evaluation of data; Lacks critical judgement; Little integration experiential learning	Inconsistent written fluency; Weak use of appropriate language; Weak justification for conclusions; Adequate use of referencing conventions
D 60-69%	Limited interpretation and relevance; Lacks thesis	Weak understanding of evidence and limited, inappropriate wider reading	Inconsistent and weak analytical skills, poor evaluation of evidence, lacks critical insight; Little integration of experiential learning	Inconsistent written fluency; No justification for conclusions; Inaccurate use of referencing
F	Significant misinterpretation	Lacks understanding of evidence and	Lacks analytical skills, lacks	Poorly written with little fluency;

0-59%	and irrelevant material	inappropriate or no wider reading	evaluation of evidence, lacks critical judgement; Lacks integration of experiential learning	No justification for conclusions; Poor referencing; Evidence of plagiarism or inappropriate use of AI
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Policies specific to this course

- **Co-curricular Activities and Field Trips:** Field trips for your FIE courses have been planned to help students achieve the learning objectives of the course and are required. They take place during class time unless otherwise notes. Details about required visits appear on the class by class schedule below. Please note that any make up for missed co-curricular activities are at the personal expense of the student.
- **Late submission of work:** Written work may be submitted later than the due date only with express permission in advance of the due date from the course instructor. Late work will receive a 5% reduction in points for each 24-hour period handed in past the deadline, including each weekend day. Work submitted a week late will be marked at a C or lower. Any extensions made beyond the last class meeting must be requested in writing to the faculty and include any information on the circumstances that require the extension, the nature of work yet to be submitted, and the date by which the work will be received. If said work is not received by the agreed extension date, barring further exceptional circumstances, the work will not be given credit.
- **Late arrivals to class or site visit:** Please arrive on time. Lateness, particularly on days with co-curricular visits, results in missed course material. Faculty may use their discretion to mark a student as 'Absent' if they feel the student has arrived too late or left too early to be considered 'Present' for that session.
- **Trigger Warnings:** Some topics covered in class may expose students to past traumas and evoke a negative reaction. Sensitive topics can vary, such as sexual violence, death, racism, or xenophobia. I want this to be an inclusive space where every student feels comfortable; therefore, I will provide content warnings before lectures for sensitive subject matters. Content warnings are meant to give students a forewarning so they can prepare for their emotional safety. It is important to note that anything in the environment could be a trigger for someone's trauma, such as smell, sound, or texture; it is impossible to account for all possible triggers, and ask for grace as I do my best as an educator to warn students of potentially distressing content during lectures, assignments and/or discussions.

Attendance and Participation

- Regular attendance is essential in order to pass a course. A class constitutes lectures, student presentations, discussions, seminars, co-curricular activities, tests, and examinations. In addition, under UK Home Office regulations class attendance is mandatory.

- Class attendance and participation is formally recorded and incorporated into a student's final grade.
- In addition to physical presence in class, a student's participation in a class is evaluated on the mastery of assigned course readings as reflected in a consistent, valid contribution to class discussions, in-class exercises, and in asking questions that enrich the on-going discourse. Consistency and validity in participation is expected in every class. Limited participation will have a negative impact on a student's participation score.
- When unexpected events cause students to miss a class, it is the student's responsibility to initiate contact with the faculty member to notify them in advance, or as soon as is reasonably possible.
- Absence from class does not relieve a student of responsibility for assignments. Students bear the ultimate responsibility for all missed class material and assessment.
- If a student misses 25% or more of a course, then they may be awarded a failure for the course and/or not permitted to finish the course.
- [See the full attendance policy here](#)

[Required Readings](#)

Upham, Martin (2017). Britain Explained. John Harper Publishing.

In addition, students need access to a smartphone or MP3 player to listen to recorded walking tours.

[Additional Resources and Readings](#)

Additional readings are available on MyStudy@FIE.

[MyStudy@FIE](#)

MyStudy@FIE is FIE's virtual learning environment based on the open-source platform Moodle. Students are required to access MyStudy@FIE for course information, readings, link to resources, assignment submissions and communication with faculty.

[FIE's Values in the Curriculum](#)

A unique aspect to FIE's curriculum is our courses reflect an engagement with values of 1) knowledge and inclusivity, 2) ethics and human rights, 3) social and cultural engagement, and 4) sustainability. For information about each of these values and how each of FIE's courses aligns with them, please see [Our Values](#).

[Topics](#)

- The Multiculturalism of the United Kingdom
- British Politics
- The Monarchy
- Britain and International Relations

- Art and Leisure in Britain
- Sustainability in the UK

Co-curricular activities

- **Parliament Tour:** Tour of the building and the two Houses (Lords & Commons) when not being used for debates. The building is a Victorian fantasy with extraordinary decorative motifs linked to UK history and government so it has a visual dimension regardless of the commentary. The requirement for BL classes is to discuss the tour the students went on during orientation using [this worksheet](#) as a discussion guide.
- **Brick Lane Tour:** The area is historically associated with the social deprivation of London's East End (garment workers, sex workers, dock workers, charitable missions, and low-quality housing) and has been the place of entry into British life for waves of foreign immigrants. French Huguenots gave way to Irish, Jewish to Bangladeshi settlers connected with the restaurant and clothing trades. As industry departed Brick Lane became an artistic hub, and in the last decade a global hotspot for street art. More recently – and controversially – the area has been rapidly gentrifying. A good field trip for sampling the sights, smells, cultures and tastes of an area very different from Kensington.
- Museum visits, such as Museum of London Docklands, Imperial War Museum, British Museum, TATE Britain, National Portrait Gallery
- Neighborhood walking tours such as Notting Hill, City of London
- Sustainability walking tours such as Cutting Edge Green Tour, “Rubbish Trip” with Dotmaker Tours
- History walking tours such as Six in the City Slavery Tour

Academic Integrity

By enrolling at FIE, you have joined an academic community and you are expected and required to act honestly regarding the work you submit for assessment in your courses. Academic integrity is closely related to the concept of good academic practice.

Any attempts to Cheat; Fabricate; Plagiarise; Collaborate without Authorisation; Participate in Academically Dishonest Activities; and/or Facilitate Academic Dishonesty will be viewed as a breach of this regulation.

[Please see FIE's Academic Integrity Policy in full.](#)

Most students do not have any problems understanding the rules and expectations about acting honestly at university. If you have any questions you must talk to your faculty or a member of FIE's Academic Team.

Writing and Language Support

FIE's Writing Support Tutors are available to assist students of all levels of expertise with all phases of the writing process. Available year-round and to all students. To book an appointment or for more information visit www.fie.org.uk/wst.

Please note that FIE allows the use of a foreign language/English dictionary in exam situations for students where English is not their primary language UNLESS the use of the dictionary would give the student a significant advantage (e.g. where the exam is aimed at getting the students to define terms that might be found in the dictionary).

Accommodations for Students

Students who wish to use academic accommodations at FIE can register to do so via FIE's Administration Team, by providing the appropriate supporting documentation. Students who have approved FIE academic accommodations should discuss them directly with their faculty member(s) within or around the first few class sessions, or via email. Exams are facilitated by FIE faculty and students should give 2 weeks' notice to faculty members if use of approved exam accommodations is required. The Administration team can assist students and faculty with liaison and facilitation as needed.

Additional Policies and Resources

Mental Health and Stress Management Support

FIE offers mental health support. If students wish to seek this support, including with FIE's counsellor, simply email studentlife@fie.org.uk. If you have a counsellor from back home that you are seeing, we strongly encourage you to maintain contact with them throughout your time studying abroad with FIE.

Diversity and Inclusivity

FIE regards its housing and classroom facilities as safe spaces to live, study, and work with students, faculty, and staff who are understanding, supportive, and trustworthy. Inappropriate, derogatory comments and/or actions, harassment, bullying, victimisation and discrimination are not tolerated. Any such behaviour will be investigated and dealt with appropriately. Students must be respectful of diverse opinions and of all class members regardless of personal attribute and use inclusive language in written and oral work.