

SYLLABUS FOR ND 250: ENCOUNTERING LONDON

Fall, 2010 – Patricia Alden, Director

“Why, Sir, you find no man, at all intellectual, who is willing to leave London. No, Sir, when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford.”

Samuel Johnson (1777)

This is the one course required of London program participants. It is taught by the director, and it falls into two parts. Running concurrently with the electives for the first 10 weeks of the semester, part one is effectively a half-unit course intended to orient students to London as a salient example of a global city, to provoke some thinking about what that epithet means, and to assist students in having a unique and transformative “encounter” with London. An important dimension of that encounter comes in the final four weeks of the program (part two), when each student commits to a 40-hour a week “work placement.” The work schedule is complemented with reflective and analytical writing assignments and with several meetings with other students and the director. This is, effectively, the other half-unit of this course.

Our “Encountering London” course includes two away-from-London study tours, several walking tours of the city, four theatrical performances, several guest speakers, two assigned books plus other readings, some research, class discussion and a considerable amount of self-designed, experiential learning. It’s a hodge-podge, but not in a bad way, and you pretty much can’t escape learning a whole lot about London, about the British, and about globalization.

How can a director put a grade on this kind of learning? How can I know about the transformations and growth you experience – when not even you will be in a position to appreciate fully how this semester has changed you, at least not for several years? (Indeed, one might go further and suggest that no grade ever can capture what a student has learned.) This is a heavily experiential course. For some elements, simply showing up, being interested and engaged, and participating appropriately will earn you full credit. Other elements involve writing assignments to be assessed by the general standards for college writing and by your willingness to think beyond the obvious, to be open and attentive to new experiences and to dig for information to expand your understanding. Over the semester, I will form an impression of how much you work at being an active learner, an active participant, a person who tries to get the most out of your opportunities. That impression will be based on the kind of thinking you put into your class participation and into your writing, but it will include casual conversation as well. I’ll make mental notes when you have something insightful to say about comparing US and UK cultures, about plays we see, about daily life. I’ll try to be both fair and generous, and that said, I urge you not to fret very much about your grade in this course. Dive in, be interested, show up for everything, ask questions, pay attention to the world around you and you’ll do fine.

You’ll be getting handouts for each writing assignment in this course. They have the following weights.

- Participation – in class, on our walks, on study tours – everywhere! – 15%
- One-page on Kate Fox and some “rules” that describe English verbal behavior – 5%
- Museum of London assignment – 10%
- Interview assignment – 10%
- White Teeth assignment – 10%
- Second Study Tour – preparation and group presentation – 10%
- Linked In assignment – 10%
- Work placement – supervisor’s assessment – 10%
- Reflective and analytical writing about work-placement – 20%

Course Themes and Organization

The focus for your off-campus study experience in the U.K. and for this course in particular is the city of London. London has been known as a world capital for centuries, but in different eras this has meant different things. For more than two centuries, London was the capital of an empire “on which the sun never set,” its reach extending around the globe. Today London is being transformed by migrations from former colonies as well as by all the processes we associate with globalization. More than 300 languages are spoken here.

Walk from our office to the Centre Point where Tottenham Court and Oxford Street intersect and see how many languages you can hear. Listen to the many variations of English. Note as you ride the tube and bus with whom you share the city. Count the number of ethnic restaurants in your neighborhood. Find out who owns prime real estate and who lives in council flats in stagnating parts of the city. What processes push development here? What push renewal? Look as well at the monuments in White Hall and in Trafalgar Square, Westminster Abbey and St. Paul’s, and the myriad ways in which London tells the stories of its past.

Our course will begin with attention to the history of London, a history which has always involved the mixing of peoples and languages and the activity of trade, stemming from its advantageous location on the tidal Thames River connecting the docks of London to the sea. The principal venues in which we will study this history are the replica of Shakespeare’s Globe Theater, the Museum of London, Westminster Abbey and our study tour to Stonehenge (prehistory), Salisbury (medieval cathedral town) and Bath (established by the Romans as a spa, developed as a destination city for the fashionably well-to-do by the 1700’s).

In October our attention will turn more to contemporary London, multicultural and multiethnic, and to specific communities within London: Brixton, Brick Lane/Banglatown, Hoxton and Shoreditch. Here your reading of White Teeth will provide a window into some of these communities. Our second study tour has you traveling in groups of 4-6 to cities that provide interesting contrasts with and comparisons to London, each small group going to one of the following: Edinburgh, Glasgow, Belfast, Dublin, Brussels. And you will end your term here by joining the workforce in this amazing city!

Attached is your copy of the **Calendar for “Encountering London.”** Generally, we meet on Monday mornings or Fridays. Meeting times and venues for this course are quite irregular, but that is because we are doing really interesting things while working around the schedules of our local faculty and guest lecturers, plus opening up two FREE FRIDAYS for you to use as you wish. Those Free Friday dates will not be changed. You can count on them. Please put all the other class meetings into your diary (that’s English for “calendar”) right away. There will likely be some changes and some additions (such as three more plays) to this schedule.

STUDENT CALENDAR FOR ENCOUNTERING LONDON

Orientation includes a walking tour of our area and two afternoons at the Globe Theater, plus a performance. Attendance and participation in these is part of “Encountering London,” as is attendance at three additional theatrical performances scheduled throughout the term. You are expected to be at every event and class meeting and to participate; unexcused absences will lower your final grade.

Tuesday, August 31 – 2:15-2:45 – Organizational meeting and short writing assignment

Friday, Sept. 3 – 9:30-10:30 – Class meeting on Watching the English and the short writing assignment

Monday – Sept. 6 – 10:00-11:45 – Review of assignments for this course. Discussion of the Globe in London. Discussion of work placements.

12-1 p.m. – Professor Sheila Fox will introduce “Earthquakes in London”

Evening – Attend a performance of “Earthquakes in London” - 7:30, Cottesloe Theater (part of the National Theater)

Friday, Sept. 10 – 9:30-12:00 – Discussion of Museum of London assignment, followed by a tour of New London Architecture, a planning office close to Gower Street. We’ll walk over. Today you submit the topic for your interview along with the name of the person whom you will interview, the confirmed time/date for interview, and some questions you will pursue.

Monday, Sept. 13 – A walking tour of Westminster Abbey. **Group A [see posted list on board downstairs] meets John Mufty and me at the Abbey at 9:50 a.m. Group B meets there at 11:50 a.m.**

Friday – Sept. 17 – FREE FRIDAY. (An optional day trip will be scheduled. Weekend homestays in minority communities (Asian and Black British) available.

Monday, Sept. 20 – **Group A will meet from 12-1 p.m., Group B from 2-3 p.m.**

Thursday, Sept. 23 – Submit interview assignment.

Friday, Sept. 24-25 – Overnight study tour to Stonehenge, Salisbury, and Bath.

Monday, Sept. 27 – **Group A will meet from 12-1 p.m., Group B from 2-3 p.m.**
Begin discussion of White Teeth.

Friday, Oct 1 – **Whole group meets at 10:00** for guest presentation by Professor John Eade, followed by a walking visit to Brick Lane, a predominantly Bengali/Bangladeshi community. Weekend homestays in minority communities (Asian and Black British) available. Class and walking visit will be finished by 2 p.m.

Monday, Oct. 4 – 10:00-11:30 – Follow up with Professor Eade, continuing discussion of White Teeth

Friday, Oct. 8 – **Brixton visit and discussion with Mark Norfolk and Jason Rose. Group A meets in Brixton at 10 a.m., Group B at 1 p.m.**

OCT. 9-17 – BREAK

Monday, Oct. 18 – Group A will meet from 12-1 p.m., Group B from 2-3 p.m.

Preparations for small group study tours.

Thursday, Oct. 21 – Whole group sees the Shakespeare class perform scenes at the Globe around six p.m.

Friday, Oct. 22 – Walking tour of Hoxton/Shoreditch by Professor Andrew Harris. Topic: Gentrification and Culture-led Urban Regeneration. Weekend Homestay option. Tour should be finished by 1 p.m.

Monday, Oct. 25 – 10:00- 12:00 – Follow-up with Professor Harris.

Thursday-Saturday, Oct. 28-30 – Study tours.

Monday, Nov. 1 – Reports on study tours. **Group A will meet from 12-1 p.m., Group B from 2-3 p.m.**

Friday, Nov. 5 – FREE FRIDAY. Optional day trip.

Monday, Nov. 8 – Group A will meet from 12-1 p.m., Group B from 2-3 p.m.

Friday – Nov. 12 – Group A will meet from 12-1 p.m., Group B from 2-3 p.m.

WORK PLACEMENT

The final month of the semester is spent in your work placement and in writing assignments and evening class meetings. This represents the other half of “Encountering London.” More information will come in due course.