

**CORE-UA 549, CULTURES AND CONTEXTS:
MULTINATIONAL BRITAIN**



**SPRING 2021
MW 3:30-4:45 + R (recitations)**

Professor Ortolano | ortolano@nyu.edu
Office hours by appointment; Zoom link via NYU Classes
If you would like to meet in person, we can arrange that.

Preceptors:

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Course description:

*“It just goes to show,” said Alsana, revealing her English tongue, “you go back and back and back and it’s still easier to find the correct Hoover bag than to find one pure person, one pure faith, on the globe. Do you think anybody is English? Really English? It’s a fairy-tale!” – Zadie Smith, *White Teeth* (2000).*

What is the relationship between England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the state that contains all four, the United Kingdom? What is the relationship between that multinational polity and the one that, until 2020, contained it, the European Union? And what is the role of history and mythology, conquest and consent, race and religion, war and music, language and cuisine in fostering and fracturing these overlapping polities? With the UK's recent departure from the European Union ("Brexit"), and Brexit's implications for the unions between England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, these questions figure centrally in British culture and politics today.

Yet the British Isles have long been home to a variety of peoples, kingdoms, religions, nations, states, and migrations. In this course we will learn about the ways that Britain has always been a fractious, multi-ethnic, multi-national formation – made and remade through centuries of invasions, encounters, and migrations, beginning before the Romans and continuing after Brexit. And, while focusing upon the particular case of Britain, we will learn to apply pressure upon claims about cultural integrity, ethnic homogeneity, and historical stability more generally.

This course assumes no prior knowledge about Britain or British history. It is divided into four units, each of which introduces a different way of thinking about Britain as a multi-ethnic formation:

- I. Invasions**, focusing upon the peoples who arrived in the British Isles during ancient and medieval times.
- II. Kingdoms**, focusing upon the four nations of Wales, England, Scotland, and Ireland, and how they came to form today's United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland.
- III. Empire**, focusing upon the ways in which British culture was shaped by the experience of imperialism.
- IV. Foundations**, examining the multi-ethnic, multi-racial foundations of some of the most iconic institutions in British life today, from music to the monarchy.

Evaluation:

- 10%, Quiz**, including a map and brief (2 pages) essay, at the conclusion of Part I.
- 20%, Essay #1**, about 1,000 words (4 pages) in response to a prompt at the conclusion of Part II.
- 20%, Essay #2**, about 1,000 words (4 pages) in response to a prompt at the conclusion of Part III.
- 40%, Final essay**, about 2,000 words (8 pages) drawing on the course material to analyze a claim about national identity in Britain today.
- 10%, Participation**, including regular attendance at, and thoughtful participation in, recitations.

Course policies:

These policies are subject to discussion pending challenges and disruptions related to the virus. In those unfortunate circumstances, please be in touch with your preceptor and professor as soon as you are able so that we can plan accordingly.

1. Academic integrity: Intellectual integrity is the university's fundamental commitment. Plagiarism of any kind – whether intentional or not – will be penalized without warning or exception. For NYU's plagiarism policy, see:

➤ <https://cas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/cas/academic-integrity.html>

2. Recitation attendance: You are permitted 1 absence from recitation without notice or explanation; 2-3 absences will be reflected in your participation grade; no student with 4 absences will normally pass. This policy takes effect from the first recitation, regardless of when you enroll. There are no make-up assignments in place of recitation attendance.

3. Lecture attendance: Since there is no textbook for this course, attendance at lecture is essential to your learning. Periodically there will be unannounced writing exercises during lectures. These exercises count towards the participation credit.

4. Writing: Writing should be double-spaced, with one-inch margins and numbered pages, strictly following any standard referencing style. Late papers lose 1/3 of a grade per day: e.g. a B paper, submitted the morning after it was due, will receive a B-. Papers more than 72 hours late will receive an F. If you are not familiar with any particular citation style, we recommend following the Chicago Manual of Style:

➤ <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/turabian/citation-guide.html>

5. Accessibility: Students requiring accommodations should work through the Moses Center, notifying their preceptor during the first two weeks of the semester:

➤ <https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/student-accessibility.html>

6. Religious holidays: NYU accommodates observances of religious holidays. Notify the instructors of any necessary accommodation during the first two weeks of the semester. Details on NYU's policy on religious holidays can be found at:

➤ <https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/university-calendar-policy-on-religious-holidays.html>

Zoom policies:

Class meetings will be synchronous and, to facilitate free discussion, unrecorded.

Access all Zoom meetings through NYU Classes.

Please make a habit of treating Zoom meetings as professional activities:

1. Include your full name in your Zoom window.
2. Activate your video, unless you need to step away.
3. Set aside your phone, and refrain from having other windows or applications open during class. Students browsing other applications will be marked absent.

While you are encouraged to turn your cameras on during lecture, you are required to do so during recitations. However, if circumstances require you to turn off your video, please discuss it in advance with your preceptor.

Books:

Except when noted, all readings and viewings should be completed before recitation.

As in all humanities classes, you are expected to have ready access to that week's readings so that you can refer to particular passages.

While most readings will be made available through NYU Classes, **the following three books are required.** To facilitate common reference, these editions are recommended; in the case of Gerald of Wales, this particular edition - identifiable by its ISBN - is required.

Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings* (Penguin, 2003). ISBN 0142437166.

Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales & The Description of Wales* (Penguin, 1978). ISBN 0140443398.

William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, ed. Barbara Mowat (Simon and Schuster, 2004). ISBN 9780743484879.

INTRODUCTION

Week 1 | Feb. 1-4 | Brexit Britain

Reading:

- Nigel Farage, “Why We Must Vote LEAVE in the EU Referendum” (2016).
- Alberto Nardelli, “This Is Why Everybody Is Going on about Turkey in the EU Referendum Debate” (2016).
- Zadie Smith, “Fences: A Brexit Diary” (2016).

PART I: INVASIONS

Week 2 | Feb. 8-11 | Ancient Britain

Reading:

- Hannah Devlin, “First Modern Britons Had ‘Dark to Black’ Skin, Cheddar Man DNA Analysis Reveals” (2018).
- Kathryn Krakowka, “Prehistoric Pop Culture: Deciphering the DNA of the Bell Beaker Complex” (2018).
- G. M. Trevelyan, “Social Life in Roman Britain” (21 pages).

Week 3 | Feb. 17-18 | Angles, Saxons, Vikings, Normans

There is no lecture on Monday, and no recitation on Thursday. Instead, there will be lectures from 3.30-4.45 on both Wednesday and Thursday.

Reading for Wednesday: “Anglo-Saxon Chronicle” (7 pages).

Reading for Thursday: “Conquest” (3 pages).

PART II: KINGDOMS

Week 4 | Feb. 22-25 | Wales

- Take-home quiz, distributed last week, is due to your preceptor by noon on Monday, Feb. 22.

Reading: Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales* (about 70 pages, specified on NYU Classes).

Week 5 | Mar. 1-4 | England

Reading: *Henry V* (entire).

Week 6 | Mar. 8-11 | Scotland

Reading:

- Linda Colley, *Britons* (8 pages).
- Franklin Foer, *How Soccer Explains the World* (30 pages).

Week 7 | Mar. 15-18 | Ireland

No recitations; no readings.

- **Essay #1 due to your preceptor by the end of Thursday, Mar. 18.**

PART III: EMPIRE

Week 8 | Mar. 22-25 | Encountering Islam

Reading:

- Linda Colley, “The Crescent and the Sea” (30 pages).
- Christopher Herbert, “Jingoism, Warmongering, Racism” (about 13 pages).

Week 9 | Mar. 29-Apr. 1 | Slavery and Anti-Slavery

Reading: Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative* (1789), Ch. 1, 2, 5, 6, 12 (about 80 pages).

Week 10 | Apr. 5-8 | Imperial Culture

- **Complete the online plagiarism quiz, emailing the result to your preceptor before recitation, in order to receive credit for attendance.**

Reading:

- Andrew Thompson, “Women and Children” (28 pages).
- George Orwell, “Shooting an Elephant” (8 pages).
- Mark Hampton, “Chinese Britishness” (20 pages).

PART IV: FOUNDATIONS

Week 11 | Apr. 12-15 | Warfare

- **Essay #2 due to your preceptor by noon on Monday, Apr. 12.**

Listening, reading, viewing:

- Winston Churchill, address to the House of Commons, 18 June 1940.
- Stephen Bourne, *The Motherland Calls: Britain's Black Servicemen & Women, 1939-1945* (21 pages).
- Andrea Levy, *Small Island* (58 pages).
- Christopher Nolan, dir., *Dunkirk* (2017), theatrical trailer.

Week 12 | Apr. 21-22 | Welfare

No university classes on Monday, Apr. 19.

Reading:

- Clair Wills, *An Immigrant History of Post-war Britain* (17 pages).
- Kennetta Hammond Perry, *London Is the Place for Me* (24 pages).
- Nicole Longpré, “Anti-Immigrationism and Conservatism in Britain” (50 double-spaced pages).

Week 13 | Apr. 26-29 | Politics

Reading:

- Enoch Powell, speech to the West Midlands Area Conservative Political Centre (the “Rivers of Blood” speech), 20 April 1968.
- Amy Whipple, “Letters to Enoch Powell” (18 pages).
- David Holland, “The Social Networks of South Asian Migrants” (36 pages).

Week 14 | May 3-6 | Culture

Film: *This Is England*, dir. Shane Meadows (2007).

CONCLUSION

Week 15 | May 10 | Multinational Britain

The final class meeting is the lecture on Monday, May 10.

- The final essay is due to your preceptor by the end of Monday, May 17.

A note on copyright

Materials in this course are protected by U.S. copyright law and NYU policy. Distribution of recorded or written materials associated with this course is not permitted to any information-sharing platform without written consent.

A note to international students

I encourage students based in any site that monitors internet use to carefully consider how you participate. If you have any concerns about your safety, please email me so that we can discuss the best way to proceed together this semester.

A note on flexibility

In light of the pandemic, I reserve the right to modify course requirements and policies as circumstances may require. I will provide notification of any changes to all students as soon as possible. Any changes will also be posted on NYU Classes.