London: From ‘Great Wen’ to World City

This course offers a survey of the history of London through the study of its people, topography, and economic life. Over time, London has functioned as the capital of an emerging British nation and the hub of a commercial empire, which at its zenith spanned the globe. Its unique character can be explained only by examining the complexity of its past. It remains the vortex of an island nation whose inhabitants have been peculiarly ambitious, fractious, and united in their tolerance for these traits. By examining the 1650s to the 1960s, we can chart the spread of civic-mindedness and civility, along with greed and generosity; identities of class, gender, and race; concepts of public health and municipal responsibility; and the management of political and social conflict and warfare waged from within and outside the metropolis. We will also trace shifting attitudes of Londoners toward London itself, from a noteworthy mixture of awe and repulsion (hence, its nickname, the “Great Wen”) to a celebration of the city as an axis of cosmopolitan identity in the twenty-first century.

Requirements for the course:
- weekly and timely attendance (no more than two excused absences allowed)
- weekly posting on Canvas (due no later than midnight on Mondays) and participation in discussion that reflects thoughtful reading of each assignment (30%)
  - one 5-page essay, due on October 10 (30 %);
  - a final research paper of 15 pages, due on December 6, with a proposal due no later than November 14th (40%).

Required texts, as follows, are available for purchase at Book Culture:

Emily Cockayne, Hubbub (Yale UP).
Samuel Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners* (Longman)

**Recommended text**, most likely available at Book Culture or another local bookstore:


Other required readings (marked with *) will be posted on Courseworks or available through the Library Reserves link on that site.

**Learning objectives, or what you can expect to achieve through successful completion of this course:**

-- an appreciation for the diversity and complexity of human experience
-- a critical understanding of the relationship between past events and modern life
-- an ability to conduct close readings of key texts, primary and secondary
-- an ability to analyze and interpret historical material
-- the skill of responding constructively and critically to the views of others
-- the skill of presenting arguments cogently and logically in writing and speaking

Please refrain from using laptops and cell phones in any way during class. These activities create a barrier between you and other people, distract your classmates, and detract from your ability to listen, take notes, and participate in class. This fact is proven and guaranteed: you will learn more without your laptop in front of you.

I. **Introduction to course: What’s a Wen?** (September 5)

II. **London’s Walls Are Falling Down: War, Plague, and Fire** (September 12)

   Roy Porter, *London*, Chaps. 4 & 5. (Read this quickly; it is an overview, so push yourself along in order to save time for the next two assignments.)
   Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub*, Chaps. 1, 3, 6-8, 10.

III. **Citizens of the World: Commercial and Political Life in 18th-Century London** (September 19)

   [Assignment continues on next page]


Search this database with keywords of your choice and come to class ready to discuss your favorite case:  [http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/](http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/)

### IV. Culture in the Capital  (September 26)


*John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, Chap. 2, pp. 56-87 only. [E-Reserves]


[http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/burney/evelina/evelina.html#X](http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/burney/evelina/evelina.html#X)

### V. In and Out of London: Mobility, Migration and the English Way of Life  (October 3)

*Gretchen Gerzina, Black London*, Chap. 1, pp. 1-28; Chap. 5, pp. 133-64.


### VI. Cleaning Up the City: Health and Hygiene in the Metropolis  (October 10)

***essay due this week***

Porter, *London*, Chap. 10, pp. 246-7 only; Chap. 11, entire.


*Andrea Fredericksen, “Parliament’s Genius Loci.”


**VII. New Arguments around and about Nineteenth-Century London (October 17)**


**VIII. Outcast London (October 24)**

Skim Porter, Chap. 12. (By now, you will recognize the argument of this chapter, so read quickly!)


*Pall Mall Gazette* (Xeroxes on CourseWorks).


**IX. Suburban Expansion (October 31)**


George Grossmith and Weedon Grossmith, *Diary of a Nobody*. [available as an e-book through CLIO]


Election Day Holiday, Tuesday, November 7

X.  London Women, Old and New  (November 14)


Due no later than November 14th: a one-paragraph proposal of your research paper topic, listing three sources you plan to use.

XI.  Whose Metropolis? Imperial Types and Stereotypes  (November 21)

*David Feldman, “The Importance of Being English: Jewish Immigration and the Decay of Liberal England,” in *Metropolis London*, ed. by David Feldman and Gareth Stedman Jones, pp. 56-84.  [E-Reserves]
https://wikis.nyu.edu/download/attachments/62920128/Barringer%20The%20South%20Kensington%20Museum.pdf?api=v2

XII.  London: World City   (November 28)

Samuel Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*.

XIII.  Race and Class in the Twentieth Century:  A Retrospective Discussion (December 5)

Film and discussion.

Final research paper due on December 6th