

## BRITISH CULTURAL STUDIES IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

### OBJECTIVES

This seminar aims to introduce the students to the transformations and developments which the major concepts of British cultural studies underwent throughout the ages. Working with a wide range of primary as well as secondary texts, fiction and non-fiction, we will examine the way in which the constituent factors of the notion of a unique English national identity and later British culture emerged in and were affected by interaction with other peoples and cultures.

### MATERIAL AND PROGRAMME

- i ( 3.10.)     Introductory session: themes, approaches, procedure

#### 1. Us and the Others I: Inventing the English nation

Danish invasions, Norman Conquest and the wars on the Continent, Elizabethan Age, Civil War. The images of England and Englishness in contemporary writings and in later histories of these periods.

- i (10.10.)     Venerable Bede: Coming of the Angles, Saxons & Jutes (*Historia Ecclesiastica* I/XV)  
Alfred's Prose Preface to *Pastoral Care*  
*Battle of Brunanburh*
- ! (17.10.)     **NO CLASS** (strike)
- ii (24.10.)     Layamon: *Brut* (selection)  
(31.10.)     Alliterative *Morte Darthur* (selection)
- ! ( 7.11.)     **NO CLASS** (Dean's Sports Day)
- iii (14.11.)     Edmund Spenser: *Faerie Queene* (selection)
- iv (21.11.)     William Shakespeare: *Richard II*, 2/1  
*Henry V*, Prologue, 1/2, 3/1, 3/5, 4/3; 3/2
- v (28.11.)     Gerard Winstanley: *A New Year's Gift for the Parliament and Army*
- vi ( 5.12.)     Green, J.R.: *A Short History of the English People* (selection)  
Walter Scott: *Ivanhoe* (selection)

#### 2. Us and the Others II: Representing the neighbours

Wales, Scotland, Ireland – from slaves of the Anglo-Saxons to noble savages of the Romanticism and beyond.

- i (12.12.)     Venerable Bede: *Historia Ecclesiastica* I/XV, I/XXII, II/II
- ii (12.12.)     Edmund Spenser: *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (selection)
- iii (19.12.)     Walter Scott: *Waverley* (selection)

#### 3. Us and the Others III: The new worlds

The English in the colonies

- i ( 2. 1.)     Richard Hakluyt: *The Principal Navigations of the English Nation* (selection)  
Thomas Morton: *New English Canaan* (selection)  
John Winthrop: *A Model of Christian Charity*  
William Bradford: *Of Plymouth Plantation* (selection)
- ii ( 9. 1.)     Rudyard Kipling: *In the Rukh, Selected Poems*

## PROCEDURE AND ASSESSMENT

The seminar will combine Moodle forum with class sessions.

To make the longer texts more manageable and their discussion more streamlined, students will be divided into groups, each group focusing closely on a given section of the text.

The forum is designed to serve as a preparation for the class discussion. Members of the group will take turns introducing the respective passage to their colleagues through a brief summary. There will also be questions for discussion posted in the forum, which the members of the group should consider and respond to briefly (picking one problem and commenting on it in the space of 1-2 sentences), while everybody is invited to join in.

The class session will expand on this initial debate, allowing all participants to interrogate, compare and combine their individual insights and conclusions.

Further details will be discussed during the first introductory session.

Credit requirements include:

- active participation (Moodle forum discussion – contributions in at least 6 sessions required; class meetings – the general allowance of 3 absences applies, with potential allowances for unpredicted developments; should this happen, individual arrangements will be made),
- 2 successful written assignments of 300-500 words (of 3 in total) in the form of a critical reading test done over the week at home
- a brief oral presentation (ca 10-15 minutes) illuminating the historical/conceptual context of a given text or some of its statements (accompanied by a handout or slideshow depending on the presenter's preference – these will be posted in the Moodle for everybody's reference).

### Presentation topics

1. ii The way of Arthurian themes into English literature; Brutus as founding father (18.10.)
1. iii
  - a) Allegories in *Faerie Queene* (1.11.)
  - b) Arthuriana in Tudor propaganda (1.11.)
1. iv
  - a) The real Henry V; historical background to the period (8.11.)
  - b) The play in the context of Elizabethan politics (8.11.)
1. v
  - a) Religious and political thought in the Civil War (15.11.)
1. vi
  - a) England after the Norman Conquest – Normans and Anglo-Saxons (22.11.)
  - b) Anglo-Saxonism in English political thought 1500-1900 (22.11.)
2. ii
  - a) The English in Ireland – pre-Tudor ("Old English") (29.11.)
  - b) The English in Ireland – post-Tudor (plantations) (29.11.)
  - c) Spenser in Ireland (29.11.)
2. iii The 1715 and 1745 Risings; origins, ideology, results (6.12.)
3. i
  - a) English Renaissance voyages of discovery; Raleigh's colony (13.12.)
  - b) Puritan settlement in the New World: ideology (13.12.)
3. ii
  - a) The East Indian Company and the Raj (20. 1.)