



Study abroad.

SYLLABUS

LIVING IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LONDON

Instructor: Prof. Randall McGowen

Contact Hrs: 40

Language of Instruction: English

LONDON, ENGLAND (NCSA)

A. Content, Objectives, Methods, and Evaluations

In many respects, both the physical shape and the economic significance of modern London date from the eighteenth century. It was during this century that Britain emerged as the financial capital of the world and laid the foundation for a colonial empire that circled the globe. By the end of the century the Metropolis counted over one million inhabitants, and still it continued to spread its tentacles into the surrounding countryside. It sparked trade and manufacture in every corner of the kingdom. London saw the production of the earliest novels, and it spawned the world's first newspaper culture. In its shops one could find products from every continent. Yet even amidst the glamour there lurked poverty, crime, and death. Each year more people died than were born within the Metropolis, so London needed to draw upon the rest of the country to sustain its numbers. Eight times a year huge crowds assembled to watch condemned offenders die on the gallows at Tyburn. Duels were fought in the parks and riots regularly claimed the lives of participants. London was a dirty, dangerous, unhealthy place. It was a place of contradictions. Yet as one of its most famous inhabitants, Samuel Johnson, remarked if you grew tired of London you were tired of life.

The goal of this course is to arrive at a better understanding of this fascinating and creative place called eighteenth-century London. We will do so by reading memoirs and novels of the period in order to discover what Londoners thought and felt. We will visit some of the places they would have visited. We will study paintings and prints to search for illustrations of the behavior described in our books. The course will begin in the last years of the seventeenth century, with the history of the great struggle with Louis XIV of France that saw Britain rise to new prominence on the world stage. We will focus, in particular, upon the rise of the Bank of England and the Stock Exchange, the twin foundations for the financial revolution that transformed the nation. Then we will study the colonial trade that mushroomed in the first half of the century, the trade in textiles with India, in tobacco with the Chesapeake region, and, above all, in sugar and slaves with the Caribbean. The mid-eighteenth century saw two great colonial wars fought, once again, with France. Victory in these conflicts sealed Britain's success as a global power. Yet, just as many moralists had warned, within two decades, Britain would lose its American colonies and become engaged in a life or death contest with revolutionary France. This conflict would see the British arrive at a new understanding of their nation and its place in the world.

The course readings -- a combination of memoirs, novels, biography, and a brief textbook -- will be used to illuminate the changing mood and thought of this period. They will provide the central resource for our class discussions. Daniel Defoe participated in the intense controversies that grew out of the Glorious Revolution. We will be reading one of his early novels, Moll Flanders, a work

about the life of a woman who resorted to crime to survive in the busy Metropolis. Defoe knew London well, both as a writer and pamphleteer. Then we will turn to the more respectable career opened up to us by the diary of a mid-century shopkeeper named Thomas Turner. This remarkable document discloses the commercial calculation and psychological experience of an ambitious shopkeeper in the crucial decade of the 1760s. A man who came to love the pleasures and excitement of London was James Boswell. His early journal offers a charming portrait of the hopes and disappointments that the Metropolis could offer. Fanny Burney's novel, Evelina, provides us with a glimpse of how a young woman navigated the moral and economic dangers of bourgeois life. All of these texts are intended to provide students with a vivid sense of what it was like to live in eighteenth-century London.

The course will be conducted on the basis of lectures, discussions, class presentations, and excursions. In my lectures I will offer the background and chronological framework that will prepare the students to understand the readings. I will also make use of movies such as "The Madness of King George" and "Amazing Grace" to illustrate particular issues that troubled eighteenth-century London life. Much of our time will be devoted to class discussion, and students will be expected to comment on the assigned texts as well as the various class trips. Students will be evaluated on the basis of two short papers, a class presentation (on a topic chosen by them in consultation with the instructor), and a comprehensive final exam. They will also be asked to keep journals in which they will record their reflections and experiences that arise as a result of class excursions or their own visits to places that illustrate what it was like to live in eighteenth-century London.

B. Texts

Roy Porter, English Society in the Eighteenth Century

Daniel Defoe, Moll Flanders

The Diary of Thomas Turner 1754-1765

Boswell's London Journal 1762-1763

Fanny Burney, Evelina

Additional Bibliography: (for students who want further reading)

Paul Langford, A Polite and Commercial People, England 1727-1785

Donna Andrew & Randall McGowen, The Perreaus and Mrs. Rudd: Scandal and Betrayal in Eighteenth-Century London

E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class

C. Suggested Excursions

London itself will be the focus of most of our excursions. Early in the term we will visit the Museum of London so that we can gain a broad overview of the period under study. The following week we will visit Spitalfields, a place of vibrant economic activity in the eighteenth-century, as well as home to a vigorous religious culture that existed outside of the Church of England. In our walking tour of the City of London we will take in such crucial institutions as the Bank of England, the Stock Exchange, and the Mansion House. Our excursion to Greenwich will focus on the development of the navy, the institution that provided the foundation for colonial expansion and military success. The Sir John Soames Museum discloses the intellectual world of an eccentric mid-century Londoner, as does the home of the most celebrated talker of the day, Samuel Johnson. A tour of Pall Mall and the squares of the West End will show students the changing face of elite society in London. Later in the term we will visit Kenwood House, the home of the most important judicial figure of the age, Lord Mansfield, and the repository for some of the most glorious of the century's portraits.

D. Course Schedule

- Week I The birth of the "City of Capital"
class excursion -- Museum of London
- Week II Down and Out in 18th century London Moll Flanders
class excursion -- Spitalfields
- Week III People and politics in the Metropolis
class excursion -- Tour of City (Bank of England, Samuel Johnson's house)
PAPER DUE
- Week IV A shopkeeper's life Diary of Thomas Turner
class excursion -- West End squares and shops
- Week V The navy and the empire -- London at war
class excursion -- Greenwich
- Week VI Play and pleasure in the Metropolis Boswell's London Journal
class excursion -- Kenwood House
- Week VII London and its empire
class excursion -- Museum in Docklands PAPER DUE
- Week VIII The rise of respectable London Evelina
class excursion -- National Portrait Gallery
- Week IX The misunderstood monarch - George III and America
class movie -- "The Madness of King George"
- Final Examination – essay questions (study questions distributed in advance)