The idea of British national identity has been built around a sense of united statehood within the confines of the four nations comprising the United Kingdom, ruling overseas territories. As such, it conveyed a sense of a multi-national empire ruled by monarchs, but developing over time into a benign, democratic, constitutional monarchy, generally through peaceful, not revolutionary change. The British have seen themselves historically as freedom-loving, independent, industrial, tolerant, Protestant and individualistic. These myths of national image have been forged partly through conflict with other nations over many centuries and reflect a nationalistic pride in military success and the maintenance of the largest empire the world has ever seen. Changes since 1945 have seen the collapse of that empire, membership in the European Union, large-scale immigration, changing gender politics, and the devolution of power to Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales. This has inevitably led to major challenges to traditional British views of their national identity.

Teaching is by a mixture of lecture, discussion sessions, video materials and includes fieldtrips to key sites.

On completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a knowledge and critical understanding of key issues in the changing views of British national identity, especially in the period since 1940

2. Comment critically and creatively on fieldtrips, using a blend of personal response and research to illuminate what the trip has contributed to an understanding of British national identity

3. Make a group presentation based on a chosen primary document source, which sets the text in its context and explains its importance in an understanding of British national identity.

4. Bring together a broad range of arguments and evidence in relation to key issues of the course.

1. Short Essay (800 words) on current images of national identity  By session 5 (27 Feb.) 10%
2. Presentation, Group or individual on a primary text * By session 9 (27 Mar.) 15%

3. Research Essay (1500-2000 words) By session 12 (24 April) 30%

4. Short (1,000 words max.) write-up on ONE of the field-trips usually 1 week after fieldtrip trip (see individual dates)

5. Final ‘seen’ examination Final week (15 May) 20%

6. Participation (based on contribution to discussions in class) 10%

Failure to submit or fulfil any required course component results in failure of the class.

*Turnitin not required on presentations

1. Short Essay (800 words approximately.) on current images of national identity in the printed media and on the internet. By session 5 (27 Feb.) 10%

Using current sources write a short essay on ‘How successfully are images of tradition and modernity balanced in the way that Britain presents itself?’

You may focus on any aspect of current British life, culture and representation (e.g. tourism, architecture, media, sport etc) and may illustrate your answer as you think appropriate, e.g. from websites, magazines etc. It works best in a short essay of this kind to hold to one focus or theme for your essay so that you can allow for some depth in your research for it.

The essay may be single-spaced, and should have references to sources used

2. Presentation, Group or individual on a primary text * By session 9. by arrangement (27 Mar.) 15%. Turnitin not required.

This is a short presentation, 10-15 minutes for individuals and 20 minutes for groups, plus time for questions. The aim is to make an interesting and informative presentation based around the document you choose from those given to you at the outset of the class. You should research the background to the document to show that you understand its authorship, and historical context, but you are free to make your commentary as creative as you can.

If you present as a team, it is expected that you divide the task between members appropriately. The grade will be the same for each member of the team, unless there is a clear evidence of differential participation by any member.

N.B. Please hand in a short (one side) written summary of the presentation or provide Powerpoint by email to me.

The following criteria apply:

a. ability to show an understanding of the overall meaning/import of the document and its historical context, including authorship, audience, date, etc..

b. ability to present in a lively, clear and creative fashion, using relevant supporting material, e.g. handouts, video, pictures as appropriate

c. ability to communicate with and involve the audience

3. Research Essay (1500-2000 words) By session 12 (24 April) 30%

Essays should be approximately 1500-2000 words long and should contain a bibliography and references where appropriate. These essays should be double-spaced. I am available for consultation on essays. Be
careful to avoid plagiarism as penalties are heavy (see me if in doubt). See additional advice on essay writing in ‘Course Documents’ on NYUClasses.

N.B. Unless you have my prior agreement in writing, you must answer the question exactly as set. You must not set a title of your own.

The reading list is predominantly for preparation for class discussion and has not been set with the essay questions particularly in mind so you should be aware of the need to read beyond the reading list for your essay preparation. I will be only too happy to advise on reading if you get into difficulty.

1. How far could it be said that a common British national identity was constructed in the period 1707 to 1837?

2. Assess the importance of the reign of any one British monarch to the development of a common British (or English prior to 1707) national identity? You should pay attention to the role of the monarch themselves and not just changes that took place during their reign.

3. Why did empire appear to have so much popular support in Britain in the period c. 1880-1940?

4. Did the British achieve an unprecedented degree of popular unity in the Second World War or is this part of what Calder calls the ‘Myth of the Blitz’?

5. Can the state use film to influence national identity? What is the evidence from the British use of film propaganda in the Second World War?

6. Why were amateurism and fair play such strong factors in the development of codified British sports?

7. In what ways has the British emphasis on public service broadcasting, especially through the BBC, contributed to the building of a common national identity?

8. How and why did British attitudes to defining nationality and to non-white immigration to Britain change in the period 1948 to 1972? Was it politicians or the British people who drove these changes?

9. Examine the challenges of either the Sikh or Muslim community in Britain in fitting in to a British national identity since the 1950s.

10. Why has the support for Scottish nationalism increased so rapidly in the last four decades?

11. EITHER (a) Does the British vote in 2016 to leave the European Union reflect much longer-term British distancing from the whole European project? OR (b) Why did Britain not join the European common currency (EURO)? Was this a sensible choice?

12. What was at stake in the Northern Ireland ‘Troubles’ (c.1969 to 1998) and why was it possible to bring peace in 1998 (Belfast/Good Friday Agreement)

13. FREE CHOICE. You may write on a topic of your choice but you must have my prior written agreement (on a hand-in form) to the question.

4. Short write-up (max 1000 words) on ONE of the field-trips*

One week after the fieldtrip

This is a short response paper (1000 words max.) to any ONE of the fieldtrips: Parliament, Southall, and Lord’s Cricket Ground.

Parliament essay due 6 March  (essay Q6 excluded if you write on this trip)

Southall essay  due 27 March

Lord’s essay  due  8 May

You are encouraged to be creative in your approach to this essay and its presentation. You should write about an aspect of the visit that impressed you and developed your understanding of British culture and identity. 1
works best if you hold to some part of the visit or a theme for your essay rather than trying to provide a description of the whole visit.

The best essays will blend some personal response with informed insight. You need to do some research for the essay, perhaps from guide books, the library, or the internet.

Sources, including internet sources, should be listed in a bibliography at the end, and any direct quotations should also be referenced.

You may write up as many of these visits as you like, but only the best ONE will count.

5. Final ‘seen’ examination

Final week (15 May) 20%

At the end of the semester there will be a two hour examination in which you are required to answer two of the following questions which will be designated at random on the day of the exam. These questions have been set to encourage you to think about wider and more comparative issues throughout the course. You are not allowed to bring any notes or other materials into the examination. There will be an opportunity to revise and practice for this examination.

1. Can governments successfully mould a sense of national identity? Use examples from the course.

2. What legacies of empire do you think feed into Britain’s sense of its national identity today?

3. Do British sports reflect a distinctive national culture?

4. Is Britain a truly multicultural society today?

5. ‘Britain has lost an empire but not yet found a role’ (Dean Acheson)

Discuss this view of Britain's changing understanding of its world role since 1945.

6. Do you agree with the view of those who believe that Britain as a unified state cannot survive in its current form?

Assessment Expectations

Grade A: Excellent work. Shows a full mastery of the topic. Is well researched, well organised and well referenced. It shows the stamp of an individual or original approach to the problem set.

Grade B: Good work. Has done the necessary research and made a clear answer to the problem set, using reasonable referencing. Shows some insights.

Grade C: Satisfactory work. Has done necessary research but no more. Makes attempt to answer the problem but perhaps not always very clearly. Rather mechanical and lacking individual insights.

Grade D: Passable work. Meets minimum requirements but may not be very coherent or well argued. Perhaps not very well focused on the problem.

Required Text(s)

David Morley & Kevin Robins (eds.) British Cultural Studies: Geography, Nationality, and Identity, Oxford University Press:2001 (0-19-874206-1)

Paul Ward, Britishness Since 1870, Routledge: 2004 (0-415-22017-3) [useful for historical background]

N.B. These are suggested texts which will be useful throughout the class. Purchase of them will make weekly preparation much easier but there is no penalty for the use of alternative readings.

Supplemental Text(s) (not required to purchase as)

Linda Colley, Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837, Yale University Press; 3rd edn. 2009 (978-0300152807)

Internet Research Guidelines

The careful and critical use of internet resources is encouraged and a list of recommended websites will be given. A guide to referencing these sources will be provided.

Additional Required Equipment

None

Session 1

Introduction to the course: Images of British national identity: what are they and how have they been created? Tradition versus modernity in representations of national identity.

For discussion: What are the obstacles to the maintenance of a united British identity? Is British national identity too fixated on its past and its heritage? Find examples of where Britain successfully manages to combine tradition & modernity.

Primary sources: Tourist literature/websites; film; heritage sites; political use of national identity

Videos: The Union Flag (BBC:3.8.06) from Philip Woods

London 2012 Olympic Games. Opening Ceremony (BBC DVD) from Academic Office at 6 Bedford Square

Required Reading:


Using these and other websites of your choice, prepare to discuss how well Britain manages to balance images of tradition and modernity in the way that it presents itself to the world.

Websites: http://www.britannia.com/

http://www.thisengland.co.uk/
http://www.visitbritain.org/ [see the section on Campaigns; also the research section]

Session 2

Debates on the formation of British national identity: Issues of British exceptionalism (a) pre-1837
How can one define ‘national identity? Does it reflect innate national qualities or is it a social construct which has changed over time? Why does Norman Davies emphasise the importance of the nineteenth century construction of a ‘Whig’ triumphal nationalism based on events in the years 1688 to 1713?

For discussion: Why does Linda Colley believe that a British national identity was constructed in the period 1707 to 1837? On which characteristics does she believe that British identity was formed? Does the loss of these characteristics since 1945 explain the crisis of British identity today? Can you find any arguments critical of Colley’s views? How well does Ireland fit into this British identity?

Required Reading
Linda Colley  
Forging the Nation 1707-1837; pp. 1-54 especially Introduction (pp.1-9) [resources] and Conclusions (pp.364-375)

Open University  
‘National Identity in Britain and Ireland 1780-1840’ [resources]

Paul Ward  
Britishness Since 1870, Intro. ‘Being British’

Further Reading
Joseph Hardwick  
review of Linda Colley’s Britons  
http://www.york.ac.uk/ijup/projects/britishness/discussion/colley.html [opens up links to other critiques of Colley]

David Willetts,  
‘England and Britain, Europe and the Anglosphere’, in Gamble & (eds.) Britishness: Perspectives on the British Question, pp. 54-61

T.M. Devine (ed.)  

Norman Davies  

Debates on the formation of British national identity: (b) 1837-1980

This session looks at the way that British national identity was forged on top of existing national identities for the four nations. It looks at the way in which these different national identities developed, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It also examines the reasons why Ireland did not fit into the Union.

For discussion: how can national identity be ‘invented’? what is needed to establish national identity? What symbols, icons institutions? What are the equivalent myths of national identity in your own country historiographically? Consider ideologies, heroes, institutions etc.

Required Reading
Paul Ward  Britishness Since 1870; esp. chs. 1&2 or


Further Reading  Ireland: Nationalism, North & South

Marc Mulholland The Longest War: Northern Ireland’s Troubled History, OUP: 2002

R.F. Foster Modern Ireland 1600-1972, Allen Lane, 1988, 0713990104, chs 18 &19

Political Institutions and national identity- Parliament and Monarchy
For discussion: Why has Britain been able to keep such a traditional form of monarchy for so long whilst many other European countries have either become republics or have slimmed down or modernised their monarchies? In the same vein, why have British Parliamentary institutions held to traditional forms for so long? Do both monarchy and Parliament require radical overhaul if Britain is to modernise? Does the design of the Palace of Westminster (Houses of Parliament) symbolise an outdated view of British democracy?

Required Reading

Bruce Coleman  
Monarchy and Nation in Britain Since the Eighteenth Century’ in Keith Cameron (ed.) *National Identity*, Intellect Books, Exeter, 1999 (1871516056) [Resources]

OR

David Cannadine  

Further Reading

Jeffery Richards,  

Required Parliament Fieldtrip. Meet outside Houses of Parliament- times to be confirmed

Session 5

War and the height of national unity- the People’s War? The Welfare State.

First short essay due

For discussion: Did the British achieve an unprecedented degree of cross-class unity in the Second World War or is this part of what Calder calls the ‘Myth of the Blitz’? How much did Government propaganda contribute to this sense of a unified national identity during the war? To what extent did a national consensus build around the development of a welfare state, especially as envisaged in the Beveridge Report (1942)?

Required Reading

For the Myth of the Blitz - see an outline of the debate in  [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/britain_wwtwo/blitz_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/britain_wwtwo/blitz_01.shtml)


Further Reading
Fieldtrip essay on Parliament due

Film and British National Identity in the Second World War

For discussion: Did the British achieve an unprecedented degree of cross-class unity in the Second World War, part of what Calder calls the ‘Myth of the Blitz’? How much did Government propaganda contribute to this unified national identity during the war? To what extent did a national consensus build around the development of a welfare state, especially as envisaged in the Beveridge Report (1942)?

Required Reading

Jeffrey Richards Film and British National Identity: from Dickens to "Dad's Army, ch. 1 ‘National Identities’ [Resources]

Nicholas Reeves The Power of Film Propaganda: Myth or Reality? (London: Cassell, 1999) ch. 4 ‘Official Film Propaganda in Britain During the Second World War’ [resources]

Further Reading


Humphrey Jennings Listen to Britain; The Heart of Britain (DVDs- ask in Academic Office NYUL 3rd floor)

Session 7

7. Multicultural Britain

Final date for Presentations on Primary text

Is Britain truly multicultural? How would you judge this?
Why has ‘multiculturalism’ come under increasing criticism since 2005?
How good are race relations in Britain? How do they compare with your own country?
In what policy areas does racial discrimination still seem problematic?
Why have some ethnic communities apparently succeeded more than others?

**Required Reading**

Paul Ward  
*Britishness Since 1870*, ch. 6 ‘A New Way of Being British: Ethnicity and Britishness’

A. Adonis. A & S.Pollard,  

**Further Reading**

Kathleen Paul.  

David Goodhart  
*The British Dream: Successes and Failures of Post-war Immigration* (Atlantic: 2013) 1843548054, ‘Part 2 How Did We Get Here?’ [has good material using 2011 census data]

M. Phillips & T. Phillips  

http://movinghere.org.uk/ Moving Here: 200 Years of Migration in England

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**20 March**

Fieldtrip to Southall. Meet at Southall mainline train station, 10 am. (group 1)  
2pm (group 2)

**Session 9**

Fieldtrip essay on Southall trip due

**Empire & its Legacy**

*For discussion:* How was empire ‘sold’ to the British people in this period? What evidence is there that British people of all classes bought into the imperial idea? What legacies of empire are apparent in Britain today?

**Required Reading**

Paul Ward  
*Britishness Since 1870*, ch. 1 ‘Monarchy and Empire’

Catherine Hall  
‘British Cultural Identities and the Legacy of the Empire’ in Morley & Robins (eds.) *British Cultural Studies: Geography, Nationality, and Identity*, pp 27-39

OR

Denis Judd,  
‘Britain: Land of Hope and Glory?’, *History Today*, 49, 4, April 1999, pp.18-24 [resources]

OR John M. Mackenzie  

**Further Reading**

Seumas Milne, ‘Britain: imperial nostalgia,’ *Le Monde Diplomatique*, May, 2005,  
http://mondediplo.com/2005/05/02empire

Wendy Webster  
*Englishness and Empire 1939-1965*, OUP:2007 (978-0199226641) introduction
Session 10

Cultural Institutions and British National Identity: the BBC, the Arts Council and Museums/Galleries.

In what ways does the BBC support ideas of British national identity? Should Britain continue with a licence-based public broadcasting system in an era of multi-channel digital broadcasting? Are the arts an popular culture Britain’s current way of expressing its national identity? Is it right that the state should fund the arts?

Required Reading

BBC
Johann Hari  ‘If We Care About the BBC We Must Fight to Defend It’, Independent, 2.10.09, http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/johann-hari/johann-hari-if-we-care-about-the-bbc-we-must-fight-to-defend-it-1796270.html, accessed 16.4.13

Eamonn Butler  ‘Abolish the licence fee and end this privileged status, says Eamonn Butler, Observer, 3 Nov. 2013, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/03/bbc-faces-many-challenges


Further Reading

BBC

Andrew Crisell  An Introductory History of British Broadcasting (Routledge, 2nd edn. 2002) 0415247926

Arts Policy
R. Hewison  The Heritage Industry. Britain in a Climate of Decline (Methuen:1987, 0413161102) SH

Andrew Sinclair  Arts and Cultures: The History of the Fifty Years of The Arts Council of Great Britain. (Sinclair-Stevenson:1995, 1+85619342x)

J. Minihan  The Nationalisation of Culture: the development of state subsidies to the arts in Great Britain (Hamilton: 1997, 0241895375) SH

Fieldtrip to British Museum in 2nd half of class (no assignment on this visit)

Session 11

Devolution- the challenge of Scottish and Welsh nationalism
**For discussion:** Why did Scottish and Welsh nationalism grow in the period since 1945 and why did the Government finally agree to devolution in 1997? Has devolution succeeded in reducing the chances of a complete breakaway of Scotland or Wales? Will Britain hold together in the future?

**Required Reading**

- Paul Ward *Britishness Since 1870*, ch. 7 ‘Outer Britain’
- OR

**Further Reading**

- Christopher Harvie *Scotland and Nationalism: Scottish Society and Politics 1707 to the Present*, Routledge, 4th edn. 2004 (0415327245)

**Future of the Union**

- Paul Ward, *Britishness Since 1870*, conclusion [optimistic that Britain will hold together]

**Session 12**

**Research Essay Due**

**British Sports and Sporting Culture**

**For discussion:** Can one identify different national sporting cultures and on what bases? What is distinctive about your national sporting culture and sports? How does it compare with Britain’s? Has the impact of big money undermined traditional sporting values?

**Required Reading**

- Peter Wilby ‘Aside from football, sport in Britain is still a game for the elite’, *Guardian*, 1 Aug.2012, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/aug/01/sport-britain-elite-privilege-schools

**OR**

Further Reading:
Holt, R. *Sport and the British: A Modern History*, OUP 1990

Session 13

**Lord’s cricket Ground Fieldtrip, 10 am (group 1); 2pm (group 2)**

Session 14

**Lord’s Cricket Ground Fieldtrip essay due**
**Revision- Prepare Plans for seen exam questions**

**Britain in the World:** end of empire; membership of Europe; post-war immigration

*For discussion:* Why has Britain not joined the EURO? Should it? Is Britain too supportive of US foreign policy for its own good? Does Britain have a distinctive role in the world since it lost its empire? What has been the legacy of empire?

**Required Reading**

**Further Reading**
S. George *Awkward Partner, Britain in the European Union* (OUP:1998) 0198782233, esp. conclusion

Session 15

**Final Examination. Two hours: 1000 to 1200**

**Classroom Etiquette**
Eating is not permitted in any classrooms in Bedford Square Please kindly dispose of rubbish in the bins provided

**Required Co-curricular Activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday 24 February</td>
<td>Fieldtrip to Houses of Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 20 March</td>
<td>Fieldtrip to Southall Sikh Gurdwara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 1 May</td>
<td>Fieldtrip to Lord’s Cricket Ground</td>
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</tbody>
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**Estimated Travel Costs**

The estimated travel costs for this class is
- Parliament : £4.80 zones 1 off-peak 2 singles
- Southall: £5.60 zones 1-4 travelcard off-peak
- Lord’s : £4.80 zones 1 off-peak 2 singles

**Total** = **£15.20**

This is a maximum amount- students using oyster cards on buses, or walking (!) should be paying less
Suggested Co-curricular Activities

Students are encouraged to attend free lectures relevant to the class, e.g. those held at Gresham College: http://www.gresham.ac.uk/

Your Instructor

Dr Philip Woods has lectured at the University of West London and Kingston University, London. He studied History at the London School of Economics and at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. His doctorate, which was published, was on British-Indian politics after the First World War. His current research is on the British use of film propaganda in India and the role of war correspondents in Burma in the Second World War. His book on War Correspondents in Burma in the Second World War was published in March 2017. He has published in a number of academic journals including Historical Journal of Film Radio and Television, South Asia and Indian Horizons.

NYU GLOBAL ACADEMIC POLICIES

Policies and procedures for Global Academic Centres, including policies on academic integrity and the Study Away Standard, can be found here: https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/student-services.html

Absences: Key information on NYU London’s absence policy, how to report absences, and what kinds of absences can be excused can be found here: http://www.nyu.edu/london/academics/attendance-policy.html

NYU London work submission policies can be found here: http://www.nyu.edu/london/academics/academic-policies.html

Classroom conduct: Academic communities exist to facilitate the process of acquiring and exchanging knowledge and understanding, to enhance the personal and intellectual development of its members, and to advance the interests of society. Essential to this mission is that all members of the University Community are safe and free to engage in a civil process of teaching and learning through their experiences both inside and outside the classroom. Accordingly, no student should engage in any form of behaviour that interferes with the academic or educational process, compromises the personal safety or well-being of another, or disrupts the administration of University programs or services.

Please refer to the NYU London Disruptive Student Behaviour Policy at https://goo.gl/Nvt5Vu for examples of disruptive behaviour and guidelines for response and enforcement.