

HIS BC 3360 London: From 'Great Wen' to World City



Pieter Angelis, *A View of Covent Garden London on Market Day* (1720s)

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 Tuesday) (10%)
- participation in discussion that reflects thoughtful reading of each assignment (10%)
- one 5-page essay, due on October 10 (30 %);
- one-page research paper proposal with bibliography due November 14 (10%)
- a final research paper of 15 pages, due on December 10 (40%).

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

Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (Harvard UP).

Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub* (Yale UP).

James Boswell, *London Journal* (Yale UP).

Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton UP).

Jonathan Schneer, *London 1900* (Yale UP).

Samuel Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners* (Longman), available in Kindle edition.

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

Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and their Possessions* (Yale UP).

Other required readings (marked with *) will be posted on Canvas 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.

Information regarding the Office of Disability Services:

If you are a student with a documented disability and require academic accommodations, you must visit the Office of Disability Services (ODS) for assistance. Students requesting eligible accommodations in their courses will need to first meet with an ODS staff member for an intake meeting. Once registered, students are required to visit ODS each semester to set up new accommodations and learn how to notify faculty. Accommodations are not

retroactive, so it is best to register with ODS early each semester to access your accommodations. If you are registered with ODS, please see me to schedule a meeting outside of class in which you can bring me your faculty notification letter and we can discuss your accommodations for this course. Students are not eligible to use their accommodations in this course until they have met with me. ODS is located in Milbank Hall, Room 008.

Barnard College Wellness Statement:

It is important for undergraduates to recognize and identify the different pressures, burdens, and stressors you may be facing, whether personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. We as a community urge you to make yourself--your own health, sanity, and wellness--your priority throughout this term and your career here. Sleep, exercise, and eating well can all be a part of a healthy regimen to cope with stress. Resources exist to support you in several sectors of your life, and we encourage you to make use of them. Should you have any questions about navigating these resources, please visit these sites:

- <http://barnard.edu/primarycare>
- <http://barnard.edu/counseling>
- <http://barnard.edu/wellwoman/about>
- [Stressbusters Support Network](#) <pdf>

All students are expected to adhere to the Barnard College Honor Code:

Approved by the student body in 1912 and updated in 2016, the Code states:

We, the students of Barnard College, resolve to uphold the honor of the College by engaging with integrity in all of our academic pursuits. We affirm that academic integrity is the honorable creation and presentation of our own work. We acknowledge that it is our responsibility to seek clarification of proper forms of collaboration and use of academic resources in all assignments or exams. We consider academic integrity to include the proper use and care for all print, electronic, or other academic resources. We will respect the rights of others to engage in pursuit of learning in order to uphold our commitment to honor. We pledge to do all that is in our power to create a spirit of honesty and honor for its own sake.

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.)

*Samuel Pepys, *Diary*, Robert Latham and William Matthews, eds., Vol. VII: 1666, pp. 267-87 [Sept. 1 – 15, 1666].

Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub*, Chaps. 1, 3, 6-8, 10.

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

Roy Porter, *London*, Chap. 6, pp. 131-59.

*Donald Bond, ed., *The Spectator*, Vol. I, No. 69; Vol. IV, No. 428, No. 429, 450, 454.

*Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785*, Chap. 1, "Print, People, and Culture in the Urban Renaissance," pp. 27-83.

*Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century*, Chap. 3, "Tyburnography: The Sociology of the Condemned," pp. 74-111 (on Canvas); Chap. 4, "The Picaresque Proletariat During the Robinocracy," pp. 119-152.

Search this database with keywords of your choice and come to class ready to discuss your favorite case: <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/>

IV. Culture in the Capital (September 26)

Roy Porter, *London*, Chap. 7, pp. 160-84.

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

James Boswell, *London Journal*, Frederick A. Pottle, ed., pp. 39-140; 257-333.

Frances Burney, *Evelina, or The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778), Letters XI-XIII only,

<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.

*Isaac Land, "Bread and Arsenic: Citizenship from the Bottom up in Georgian London," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 39 (2005), pp. 89-110.

Lisa F. Cody, "Every Lane teems . . . Graffiti in Eighteenth-Century London," and John Marriott, "The Spatiality of the Poor in 18th-Century London," in *The Streets of London*, pp. 82-100 and 119-34.

"The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave," digital link:

<http://digilib.nypl.org/dynaweb/digs/wwm97262/>

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.

*Donald Olsen, *The City as a Work of Art*, Chap. 3, "The Remaking of London," pp. 12-35.

*Andrea Fredericksen, "Parliament's Genius Loci."

Stephen Halliday, "Death and miasma in Victorian London: an obstinate belief," *British Medical Journal*, Dec. 22, 2001, on-line access:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1121911/>

*Edwin Chadwick, *Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain*, ed. M. W. Flinn, pp. 117-145.

*Christine Corton, *London Fog: A Biography*, Chap. 1, "The Birth of London Fog," pp. 1-36.

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

Porter, *London*, Chaps. 8 and 9.

Heather Shore, "Mean Streets," Anna Davin, "Socialist Infidels and Messengers of Light," Brenda Assael, "Music in the Air," in *The Streets of London*, pp. 151-97.

Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and their Possessions*, Chaps. 2, 3, 4, pp. 32-121.

*Donald Olsen, *The City as a Work of Art*, Chap. 12, "Hidden Pleasures," pp. 189-209.

VIII. Outcast London (October 24)

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

Rev. Andrew Mearns, "The Bitter Cry of Outcast London: An Inquiry into the Condition of the Abject Poor," 1883, on the W. T. Stead website:

<http://www.attackingthediabol.co.uk/related/outcast.php>

Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London*, Introduction and Chap. 1, "Workhouse Nights" and Chap. 5, "The 'New Man' in the Slums," pp. 1-22; 25-54; 228-81.

**Pall Mall Gazette* (Xeroxes on CourseWorks).

*Pamela Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down*, Chap. 6, "Robbing the Devil of His Choice Tunes: Converting the Culture of Working-Class Neighborhoods," pp. 175-205.

IX. Suburban Expansion (October 31)

Porter, *London*, Chap. 13, pp. 306-25.

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

G. L. Anderson, "The Social Economy of Late Victorian Clerks," from Geoff Crossick, *The Lower Middle Class in Britain, 1870-1914*, pp. 113-29.

*Standish Meacham, *Regaining Paradise: Englishness and the Early Garden City Movement*, Chap. 3, "Ebenezer Howard and the Garden City Association," and Chap. 7, "Suburban High-Mindedness at Hampstead," pp. 44-69; 146-77.

X. London Women, Old and New (November 7)

*Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, Chaps. 1, "Urban Spectatorship," and Chap. 2, "Contested Terrain: New Social Actors," pp. 15-80; Chap. 7, "Jack the Ripper," pp. 191-228.

*Dina Copelman, *London's Women Teachers: Gender, Class and Feminism, 1870-1930*, Chaps. 1 and 2, pp. 3-56.

*Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918*, Chap. 1, "Miss, I Wish I Had Your Life," pp. 11-26.

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

XI. Whose Metropolis? Imperial Types and Stereotypes (November 14)

Jonathan Schneer, *London 1900*, Chaps. 1, 3, 5. 9; skim Chap. 10.

*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]

Tim Barringer, "The South Kensington Museum and the Colonial Project," in Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn, eds., *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture, and the Museum*:

<https://wikis.nyu.edu/download/attachments/62920128/Barringer%20The%20South%20Kensington%20Museum.pdf?api=v2>

XII. London: World City (November 28)

Porter, *London*, Chap. 15, pp. 344-361.

Samuel Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*.

*Kate Gavron, Geoff Dench et al, *The New East End: Kinship, Race, and Conflict*, pp. 10-31, 43-51, 60-83, 120-31, 170-80.

*Peter Fryer, *Staying Power*, Chap. 11, "The Settlers," 372-86.

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

Film and discussion.

Final research paper due on December 10th

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Guidelines for Weekly Posted Responses



Please post a response of **two concise paragraphs** (no more than c. **200 words**, please) by Tuesday midnight and remember to read all the responses by the time you come to class at noon the next day. We'll evaluate this time frame in a few weeks in order to make sure it works for everybody, so stay tuned for future updates.

Responses should accomplish the following:

Paragraph one: sketch out a succinct summary (four or five sentences) of **topics or problems** set out in the readings. This is **not** the same as summarizing the contents of the readings. Each unit is designed to raise historical questions, so try to delineate the underlying big issues. As you read your assignments, keep a list of basic points you might want to make in your first paragraph. Is there a debate going on in this material? Is there a historiographical challenge being taken on by the unit? Are the supplementary readings supplying something missing from the conventional treatment that the textbook provides?

Paragraph two: say how you think we should interpret the readings, giving your opinion. Consider your existing knowledge of history and/or cities. Try to place the topics into a larger context (stages of urban development; the history of capitalism or colonialism; the consolidation of class/racial/gender identities) and tell us what impressed you as historically significant. What would you tell a student of the subject, if you had to teach a seminar using these readings?

Your response can serve as your personal record of the week's readings. Think of it that way and you won't feel it's a performance; it's more of an exercise in digesting the reading in an intelligent and articulate way.