

Course Syllabus

London Study Abroad Spring 2022
Roehampton University

Asian Studies 491- Z Topics in Asian Studies /English 374 Race, Ethnicity, and Literature or
English 494 Study Abroad in England (W/I):

Black and Asian Literature of the Diaspora in Britain

Literature is an extremely important way to imagine lives and worlds and to represent social realities. This course explores the *social context* of the act of writing—rather than the stylistic, textual analysis—by exploring imagery and constructions of identity that are produced through the Black and Asian, diasporic communities in Britain. It studies the projection of stereotypes and sense of place that have shaped cultural perceptions through a consideration of different texts (and films) and considers how such productions have themselves been influenced by shifts in political, economic, and individual orientations.

Much attention has been given to representations of the exotic “Other” produced through British contestations with African, Asian, and Caribbean peoples in the context of colonial conquest. This course, on the other hand, focuses on how the “Others” have “talked” back within and against British constructions of their identities by studying examples of diasporic literature with a specific emphasis on new writing in the Black and Asian communities. A key question here is how these contemporary writers deal with the longing to belong and with the loss of “home”—when “home is where they already are? How do these creative artists present their own interpretations of the effects of displacement and its impact on articulations of faith, history, memory, subjugation, and nation(alism)? A major theme is how new identities are created, recreated, and refashioned as different experiences impact on one’s lives as well as—for a younger generation—through a more global trajectory.

The main course objective of the course is to study the ways in which postcolonial subjects in contemporary Britain seek to (re)present themselves through literature. The topic has numerous interpretative possibilities for the understanding of the power relations of creativity that are invariably played out in today’s Britain. It also lends itself to consideration of a number of issues raised through the texts that foreground race, racism, and ethnicity. We may also read these texts through the lens of authors who are of mixed-race and/or this is portrayed in the works.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Specifically for Study Abroad:

Demonstrate **awareness of your own cultural values and biases** and how these impact your ability to interact with others

Demonstrate **knowledge of diversity** with a focus on the population and/or topic of interest in your Study Abroad Program

Demonstrate an increased **capacity to analyze issues with appreciation for disparate viewpoints**.

Be able to **communicate appropriately and effectively** with diverse individuals and groups

Specifically for this Course:

- An understanding of the ways that literature reflects social realities and enhances our knowledge.
- Demonstrate an understanding of key creative texts that reflect specific issues relating to the formation of class, race, gender, and religious identities in Britain.
- Demonstrate an integration of this knowledge with the study location
- An encouragement of questions that challenge our previous assumptions and cultural values that lead to new insights and an appreciation of multiple viewpoints

Texts:

Divided in two groups, each half of the class will read **3 books each from Section A** (Black authors) and **3 books each from Section B** (Asian authors) **for a total of 6 books**. This will provide exposure to a wider range of literature.

Section A: Black authors

Season of Migration to the North, Talib Salih (165)
A Small Island, Andrea Levy (448)
The Lonely Londoners, Samuel Selvon (142)
Second-Class Citizen, Buchi Emecheta (174)
That Reminds Me, Derek Owusu (208)
Irki, Kadija Sesay (84)

Section B: Asian authors

Life of a Banana, P.P. Wong (256)
A Pale View of Hills, Kazuo Ishiguro (192)
To Lahore with Love, Hina Belitz (288)
Brown Baby: a Memoir of Race, Family and Home, Nikesh Shukla (277)
A Year of the Runaways, Surjeev Sahota (468)
I am China, Xiaolu Guo (367)

Criteria for Student Evaluation*

▪ attendance and participation in the class discussions (**10%**). After **three** absences, each one will result in a **5%** lowering of your grade. Both the instructor and the students are also expected to **be on time**. Three late entries are *considered an absence*, as is anything over 15 minutes after the start of class.

▪ two in-class presentations on topics engaging issues that arise from the class and reading materials **(15%)**. These will show an appreciation of how different issues (e.g., class, race, gender, generation) intersect and overlap with one another.

▪ reading journal: weekly entries on the class materials and discussions **(30%)**. These will assess your thoughtful and analytical reactions and how they may relate to your actual experiences in London as well as reflect your ability to interact and communicate effectively with others in a foreign setting; they will be collected and graded periodically.

▪ two 2-3 page “letters” to characters in the books read or to others **(10%)**. To assess how well you comprehend and empathize with the key issues and dilemmas that the characters may face.

▪ final essay of 1500 words (c. 6 pages) that takes up several of the major themes addressed in the readings **(25%)**.

▪ one self-designed field trip (may be with a partner) that will relate to some aspect of the Black/Asian experience in London **(10%)**.

**All percentages given are to be understood as general guides.*

Grading Guidelines:

A work: outstanding work that demonstrates significant mastery of subject materials; i.e., shows analytical reading and critical engagement with conceptual issues.

Responds to questions (all parts)

Shows original thinking in presentation of own ideas

Excellent presentation; i.e., develops a focused and clear argument and articulates a sustained train of logical thought.

Pays attention to spelling and grammar.

B work: shows clear evidence of engagement with the materials as well as critical insight

Responds to questions (all parts)

Develops a focused and clear argument that proceeds logically (i.e., has a beginning, middle, and conclusion)

Very good standard of presentation

C work: shows some understanding of the key factual and/or theoretical issues and addresses them

Responds to question (all parts)

Reveals, in places, examples of a clear train of thought or argument

Concludes properly

Good standard of presentation

D work:* shows some awareness and understanding of the materials or theoretical issues, but with little development

Questions or parts are omitted

Misunderstandings are evident

Shows some evidence of planning, although irrelevant/unrelated material included

Fails to develop a clear or coherent response, but shows occasional knowledge or insight

F work: *fails to address materials or develop an argument; irrelevant response

Fails to address question

Fails to demonstrate knowledge of the key issues or arguments

Contains clear conceptual or factual errors or misunderstandings

Poorly organized/or poorly written

* I will make a special effort with any student who has borderline work and desires to improve upon it.

All percentages given are to be understood as general guides.

PLAGIARISM: This is a **most serious** academic offense and will be treated accordingly. It is defined as “to steal and use” the ideas or writings of another and pass it off as one’s own. Whether done *consciously or unconsciously*, appropriating others’ writings or language—without acknowledging the sources—is a legal offense (some universities may expel students who plagiarize). The act is not excused because of oversight, ignorance, or sloppiness. Plagiarism is considered a form of theft (of the work of others) as well as fraud (i.e., misrepresentation of others’ work as yours).

With the easy accessibility of the web, there is the real danger of being seduced by a “cut and paste” mentality. Learn from others—that’s fine; but be sure the final presentation and interpretation of ideas are your own. Anything you locate I can locate as well!!

Further information is available at the back of the University Catalogue. Don’t hesitate to talk to me if you are unsure about citing others’ work. Direct quotations must be indicated, paraphrasing must be acknowledged, and ideas taken from others must be attributed to their sources.

