



Summer in England, Scotland and Ireland

EH 378H/ IS 305H: British Culture and Identities: King Arthur, Robin Hood, Dragons, Bagpipes, and Harps

Professor: Janet Morgan Haavisto, Ph.D.

Course Description:

This course is designed to encourage a clearer understanding of the influence the British have exerted on the world and on themselves through their attempts to define “Britishness.” Beginning with the Arthurian legends, Beowulf, and the Robin Hood tales, we will examine the characteristics that “Britons” have traditionally prized and validated. These characteristics have led the British through imperialism and even into post-colonialism. Contemporary Britons, however, live in a very different world—one in which they have moved from a position of perceived superiority in a time in which “the sun never set on the British Empire” to a world in which their economy is more tenuous and their cultural makeup includes many groups (Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Indians, Asians, Africans, and yet more) who see themselves as “British.” This is a far cry from the Anglo-Saxon/Celtic prototype of earlier centuries. Through literature and cultural studies, we will examine efforts to redefine “Britishness” for the twenty-first century, along with the issues that must be addressed by all of the constituents in the enterprise.

At the end of the course students will be able to:

1. discuss the issues involved in the effort to define “Britishness”;
2. define “devolution” and discuss the impetus for it as well as the ramifications of it for the parties involved and engage in the debate about the efficacy of it;
3. discuss the likely impacts on Britons’ definition of themselves of the UK entry into the European Union;
4. distinguish among terms, such as, “United Kingdom,” “Great Britain,” “England,” “Briton,” “British,” “Celtic,” “Anglo-Saxon” “Gaelic”;
5. explain how early legends (such as, the Arthurian tales and Robin Hood tales) helped define the characteristics commonly attributed to the “British”;
6. discuss the impact that cultural diversity (such as, Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, etc.) has had and will have on the inhabitants of the United Kingdom and how such cultural diversity has complicated an effort to define “Britishness”;

7. discuss the issues of racism plaguing Britons and the difficulties racism causes in the effort to define “Britishness”;
8. distinguish among such terms as “Britishness,” “Englishness,” “Welshness,” “Scottishness,” “Irishness” and discuss why distinctions are made among such terms;
9. discuss some writers and their literature and the perspectives they shed on the issues of “Britishness” and on attempts to accommodate Britons of many national and ethnic backgrounds;
10. discuss why the sun still never sets on the British Empire even though the age of imperialism is long gone and the twenty-first century is an age of post-post colonialism;
11. explore why in the effort to redefine themselves both strong identification with the United States and anti-Americanism figure into the British effort to reposition itself in the world of the twenty-first century.

Texts: Recommended but not required--Storry, Mike & Childs, Peter. *British Cultural Identities*. 2nd. edition. NY: Routledge, 2002. ISBN 0-415-27861-9
(Any edition is ok, actually. You can rush order it from the internet.)

Required:

Selections from The Camelot Project. University of Rochester.
<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/cphome.stm>

Sir Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe*

Following, I have appended information taken from The Robin Hood Project website. You will see the website address. Then you will see the introductory two paragraphs from the home page of the site so that you will understand a bit about the project.

<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/rh/rhhome.htm>

THE ROBIN HOOD PROJECT is designed to make available in electronic format a database of texts, images, bibliographies, and basic information about the Robin Hood stories and other outlaw tales. The project is sponsored by the University of Rochester and prepared in The Robbins Library, a branch of Rush Rhees Library. The Robin Hood Project has been designed by Alan Lupack, Curator of the Robbins Library, and Barbara Tapa Lupack. Victoria Szabo developed procedures for formatting texts and assisted in the design of home pages and menus and in preparing texts for inclusion. Corinne Arraez, Donna Bell, Keith Parkins, and Ian Peddie have assisted in the preparation of documents and images for inclusion. Thomas Hickman of the Robbins Library assists with the proofing of material for inclusion. Jonathan Dick formerly of the Computing Center at the University of Rochester, Richard Hayden of the Microcomputer Services Dept. of Rush Rhees Library and Jackie Forbes and David Neuland, formerly of the Microcomputer Services Dept. of Rush Rhees Library, have provided training and technical support. The Interlibrary Loan

Department of Rush Rhees Library has provided invaluable assistance in obtaining texts used in the project.

You may look at a menu arranged by author with most ballads listed under the heading "Anonymous." Another menu lists artists and their works. Not all of the submenus are complete; and in some senses the project will always be "under construction" since we will constantly be adding information, bibliographic citations, texts and images.

Course Requirements:

- Attendance at all classes both in the classroom and at on-site events is required.
- Participation in all classes both in the classroom and at on-site events is required.
- Assignments for classes must be done in time for you to be able to participate meaningfully in our discussions.
- You will maintain a daily journal throughout the course. In it you will record evidence you find of "Britishness," including evidence of uneasy accommodations of the notion. As you progress, you will find that your understanding of the issues involved in defining the term will both broaden and deepen. You will want to reflect on how your readings and experiences have affected your perceptions. You will also want to note the attitudes and comments you encounter about citizens of the United States, including who demonstrates the attitudes and makes the comments and whether they presume a definition of Americans as "Anglos".
- You will write a paper in which you examine one aspect of the UK and its people. We will discuss the parameters of that project in class.
- You will have assignments at each of our field trip sites.
- You will interview as many Britons as you can (but in any case, at least five) and write about your insights. We will discuss the interviews in class.

Grading:

Research Paper—including insight; organization; proper documentation of primary and secondary sources; accurate spelling, grammar, and syntax; depth of research; on-time submission; etc. 20 points

Journal entries—including insight and thoughtfulness, quality of entries, on-time submissions of entries when requested 20 points

Participation—including insight, interest in discussions, civility (not participating in side conversations during group discussions, politeness to fellow discussants, etc.) 20 points

Excursion Assignments—including insight, on-time submissions, response to the prompts (as opposed to writing entries that fail to address the issues in the prompts), quality of writing (itemized above under paper)

20 points

Interviews of Britons—including insights, discussion of information you discovered and how it adds to your understanding, quality of writing (see above), quality of presentation in class discussions of your findings and insights

20 points