

Faculty of Humanities, Tunis
English Department
2018-2019
First year

Module

Key concepts in civilisation and culture

Subject

Key concepts in British civilisation and culture

Teacher

Awatef BEN SMIDA

2018-2019

Key concepts in civilisation and culture

Course objectives

This course is an introduction to the British civilisation. It aims to give first year students an insight into life in the United Kingdom.

The course will be structured around political, social and cultural key concepts. The British context would serve as an example to explain these notions since the country stands for an outstanding example from the English-speaking world.

There will be a combination of lectures and in-class discussions of assigned readings. Short writing assignments and quizzes will be given out in class from time to time. Students are expected to participate in discussion and encouraged to ask questions and give comments on the readings when appropriate.

There are at least 3 objectives for this course:

- The first is to provide students with a body of knowledge about some general key concepts. This knowledge is meant to be a background for your education and professional life.
- The second objective is to help you become better writers, by asking you to identify problems, analyse materials, evaluate options, and make your own arguments and conclusions. This objective will be achieved via in-class short writing assignments and written exam dissertations.
- The third objective is to encourage you to think critically. Civilisation and history are more than a compilation of facts. A historian does not only describe and tell stories of the past as they were recorded. The interpretation often influences the finished product. To understand the world, you need to know history, have your own interpretation of it and develop critical thinking skills decisive in shaping your future.

Course structure

The course is made up of **2-hour** class sessions over 12 weeks.

Attendance of all class sessions is **more than** highly recommended.

Dates in 2016:

(1) week 37; **(2)** week 38; **(3)** week 39; **(4)** week 40; **(5)** week 41; **(6)** week 42; **(7)** week 43; **(8)** week 44; **(9)** week 45; **(10)** week 46; **(11)** week 47; **(12)** week 48.

The course is structured around 4 main chapters divided up into 12 lectures and going from national to international concerns.

Week(s)	Week	Topic
1	1	Introduction: The United Kingdom's ID
2-5	4	Pillars of the British democracy
6-8	3	The UK's social morphology
9-11	3	The creative industry in the UK
11-12	1	British insularity

Assessment

Assessment will take place twice a year with a re-sit session.

- Midterm exam in January: a 2-hour written exam with a text commentary and related questions regarding course syllabus.
- Final exam in May: a 2-hour written exam with a topic regarding course syllabus.
- For those who fail in one of them or in both, there are catch-up exams in June: a 2-hour written exam for each term with a text commentary or a topic regarding the course syllabus.

Course materials

To explain the different concepts and reach the above stated objectives; we will rely on oral lectures, reading and analysis of both primary and secondary sources, discussion of video documentaries, quizzes and writing assignments.

Teacher

- Awatef BEN SMIDA: awatefb@gmail.com

Course outline

Key concepts in British civilisation and culture

Introducing the course

Introduction: The United Kingdom's ID

- I. History
- II. Geography
- III. Climate

Theme 1: Pillars of the British democracy

- I. Democracy and the evolution from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy
- II. A bicameral parliamentary system of government
- III. An electoral system which favours bipartisanship
- IV. The Welfare State System, beginning and end of a consensus

Theme 2: The UK's social morphology

- I. A rigid social structure
- II. The State religion in a multi faith society
- III. Problematic multiculturalism

Theme 3: The creative industry

- I. Media and art: fourth estate and/or leisure & showbiz
- II. Sport and national identity in the UK.

Theme 4: British insularity

- I. Imperialism versus Isolationism
Commonwealth and the "Imperialist Spirit"
Euro scepticism and the "Special Relationship"

Bibliography

Books

- Kenneth O. Morgan, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Britain*, OUP, 1984.
- John Oakland, *Contemporary Britain: a survey with texts*, Routledge, 2001.
- John Oakland, *British Civilisation: An Introduction*, Routledge, 2006.
- Marie-José Arque, *A Glossary of British and American institutions*, Armand Colin, 1997.
- James O'Driscoll, *Britain: An up-to-date guide to Britain for learners of English*, OUP, 2009.
- Anthony King, *The British Constitution*, OUP, 2007.
- Charles Arnold-Baker, *The Companion to British History*, Routledge, 1996.

Websites

- <http://www.royal.gov.uk>
- <https://www.gov.uk>
- <http://www.parliament.uk>
- <http://www.europarl.europa.eu>
- <http://www.unlockdemocracy.org>
- <http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/blog/its-official-house-lords-completely-bust>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-culture-media-sport>
- <http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk>
- <http://spartacus-educational.com/industry.html>

Media

- <http://www.bbc.com> as an example of British broadcasters
- <http://www.economist.com> as an example of British magazines
- <http://www.telegraph.co.uk> as an example of British newspapers