

British Culture and Society: British Society on Films
Brit társadalom és kultúra mai filmek tükrében BBNAN13000 D1

Lecturer: Balogh Beatrix
Time and place: Tuesday 14.30-16.00 D 209
 All mandatory-item movies are viewed at home. The movies must be watched by the time indicated in the syllabus.
Availability: Tuesday 16.00-17:00 (Office Hours) in Rm 102, or by appointment
 email: trixiebalogh@yahoo.com

Purpose of the course is to gain further insight into patterns of British society through films and discussion. Far from presenting a comprehensive survey of the contemporary social, political, and cultural reality we will choose a few important recurring themes and 1, discuss how these issues/realities are present and presented in British cinema 2, and what particular insight we can gain about British identity and British society through these representations. In this respect, the course intends to revisit key features of British society you learned about in an introductory survey/lecture course, albeit through a specific medium.

We will watch a selection of iconic British movies and will gain insight into the North-South divide, Social Class, Religion and Ethnicity, National Drama and Trauma, British and Regional (negotiated) identities, Social and Gender norms, and Quintessential English humour.

Literal and theatrical traditions, genres, narratives, literary theories will be discussed only as attendant to telling a “story” or exploring deep-seated notions of society with cinematic techniques. Instead, the course will focus on the real lives and social realities. You will meet -- hear the problems and accents of -- real and fictional characters ranging from the Sheffield welder, or council estate dweller to London professionals, or the Queen.

Format and Requirements: class participation, response notes, presentation, end-term test.

The main format of exploring social issues is discussion. After an introduction to a “main theme” you will watch the assigned movies at home and come to class with your remarks and questions. Short texts to familiarize students with the social or political background of the movies will be provided.

Response notes: partly to demonstrate your familiarity with the movie (to show that you have indeed watched it) you are to write a short (1-2 paragraphs) informal ‘reaction’ via Unipoll before class. These reflections are due on Sundays, at 23.00. (What you liked/disliked, found interesting/difficult, in what way you found the movie instructive/informative/distressing/funny; in other words, your personal reaction as audience). Add to it one or two questions you would like to raise in class. You are to watch the movie even if you cannot come to class (see below at “attendance and grading policy”)

In one of these “response notes” (longer in format but written in a semi-formal, no-nonsense style) you will compare how two movies of your choice reflect on the same theme.

Presentation/Discussion Leading: Choose a movie/theme and prepare a short talk (ppt and/or handout aided) in which you explore a question or explain the social background, and propose discussion questions to the group.

End-term test: short essay questions (list of possible questions will be distributed) to be answered in 3-5 sentences in which you will give account of your familiarity with class discussions.

Compulsory films: *The Full Monty, Billy Elliott, Trainspotting, Bloody Sunday, Remains of the Day, Four Weddings and a Funeral, Bridget Jones’s Diary, The Queen, Bend it like Beckham, Love Actually.*

| CLASS | DATE | DISCUSSION TOPIC | READING ASSIGNMENT FOR CLASS |
|---------|------|---|--|
| Sept 10 | | Introduction , goal orientation, syllabus. Past experiences with British Movies. Cinema and society: cinema as entertainment, social record, artistic project. Emblematic/cult movies and their “authors”. | “Capturing Britain: 10 Films to Represent a Nation” <i>culturetrip.com</i> ; Top21 British Directors of all times” <i>The Telegraph</i> . in-class reading |
| Sept 17 | | The working class of the ‘North’; comedies to celebrate and criticize the social world <i>The Full Monty</i> | “The north of England: The great divide” <i>The Economist</i> |
| Sept 24 | | <i>Billy Elliot</i> | -- |
| Oct 1 | | Regional identities negotiated through class and ethnic consciousness I. “Sulphurous humour, brutal recklessness”, incomprehensible dialect and a worm’s eyes view from Edinburgh in Danny Boyle’s <i>Trainspotting</i> | “‘Trainspotting’ made easy for Americans” <i>The Independent</i> (why the movie had to be dubbed); “So to speak” <i>The Guardian</i> , |

| | | |
|--------|---|--|
| Oct 8 | Regional identities; Northern Ireland: “The Troubles” Bloody Sunday | BBC.com “Bloody Sunday” |
| Oct 15 | Memory, loyalty, dignity, politics, and social constraints - Contextualizing and deconstructing Britishness Remains of the Day | “Books of The Times; An Era Revealed in a Perfect Butler’s Imperfections” <i>The New York Times</i> |
| Oct 22 | Romantic comedies and the imagined, cinematic place I: Affluent high society in their clumsiness: Four Weddings and a Funeral | “The subversive awkwardness of <i>Four Weddings and a Funeral</i> ” <i>The Atlantic</i> |
| Nov 15 | Bridget Jones’s Diary How can humour be culture specific? | -- |
| Nov 12 | Ethnicity and Religion – culture clash in multi-ethnic Britain Bend it like Beckham (<i>East is East, Snatch, Slumdog millionaire</i>) | “Why are there hardly any films ..” <i>British Council</i> , “British Indians: a remarkable story of success” <i>The Telegraph</i> |
| Nov 19 | The Monarchy through the lens of political necessities, personal drama and national crisis. A poignant study of The Queen , set in the aftermath of the 1997 death of Diana. | -- |
| Nov 26 | Love Actually , “Ensemble-cast-multi-thread-holiday-spirit movie,” and a new take on 10 Downing Street | -- |
| Dec 3 | End-term test | -- |
| Dec 10 | Summary and Review | -- |

Attendance, class work, and evaluation:

1. You should prepare for each class. Watch the movie and read the assigned text before the class discussions. **Missing a class does not exempt you from watching the movie assigned for that week** or preparing for the
2. Please make your priority to attend in person discussions while we can. If you are bound to miss classes due to illness (or symptoms make you cautious), let the instructor know immediately. Response notes should be turned in notwithstanding. Do not miss a class for an alluring alternative activity. If you miss more than 3 classes without permission, your course may be marked “incomplete”.
3. Responses are to be written in the Unipoll task panel. Each response note is scored. Less than 60% of homework scores (either regularly failing to complete the task or submitting loaned reviews) might result in failure of the class.
4. Evaluation: Your final grade will be based on the following components. Class work: meaningful participation in class discussions/online forum, authentic response notes, presentation, End-term test.

Set texts (compulsory readings in bold):

- “Capturing Britain: 10 Films to Represent a Nation” *culturetrip.com*; “Top 21 British Directors of all times” *The Telegraph*; print copies will be distributed in class
- **“The north of England: The great divide”** *The Economist*, 15 Sept, 2012 <http://www.economist.com/node/21562938>
- “‘Trainspotting’ made easy for Americans” *The Independent* May 1996, (why the movie had to be dubbed); <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/trainspotting-made-easy-for-americans-1349197.html>;
- **“So to speak”** *The Guardian*, May 2008. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/may/31/irvinewelsh>;
- **BBC History: Bloody Sunday** <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-foyle-west-47433319>;
- **“Books of The Times; An Era Revealed in a Perfect Butler’s Imperfections”** *The New York Times*; will be posted to Neptun/Teams or the coursemail list.
- Charmings, Andrew W. **“The subversive awkwardness of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*”** *The Atlantic*, April 2016 <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/04/the-subversive-awkwardness-of-em-four-weddings-and-a-funeral-em/360703/>;
- Sathe, Deborah. **“Why are there hardly any films for British Indians?”** *British Council*, October 28, 2015. [Why are there hardly any films for British Indians? | British Council](http://www.britishcouncil.org/why-are-there-hardly-any-films-for-british-indians), “British Indians: a remarkable story of success” *The Telegraph*