

## *Performance Study in London, 2024 syllabus* (\*subject to change)

### **Program**

The *Performance Study in London* class will introduce participants to multiculturalism and British Theatre, past and present including, Caribbean, Indian, Asian, Diasporic influences in British arts and culture; Britishness and Scottish, English, Irish, Welsh cross-culturalism and theatre. Take a look at this site for context:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British\\_national\\_identity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_national_identity).

The group will depart the United States on May 20th, and will stay in London until June 11<sup>th</sup>. While there, students will meet mornings for discussions about the plays, and in the afternoons and evenings, attend plays relevant to the course, selected by the accompanying UI professor, Loyce Arthur. Student will take turns leading discussions about the plays as well as a final paper when students return to the States. Approximately eleven productions will be chosen and will range from the classic repertory to contemporary plays and musicals, including one or two plays at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, one or two plays at the National Theater, and two plays at Stratford-Upon-Avon. Students will have free time to attend other plays, museums, and all that one of the largest cities in the world has to offer. The course is worth 3 s.h.

### **Syllabi-**

*View films and TV shows from provided list to get a feel for London before we leave (see below). Choose one to talk about in a 5 minute presentation for the 1<sup>st</sup> class. Reflect on “Britishness” and multiculturalism issues. Read: <https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/history-and-civilisation/2018/04/why-britishness-as-an-identity-is-in-crisis>. Watch: <https://timeforgeography.co.uk/videos-list/cities/multiculturalism-london/>*

5/21	arrival, transport, settle in, orientation meeting	
5/22	afternoon guided sightseeing tour, 6pm welcome dinner?	
5/23	10am class- share films or TV shows	*performance #1
5/24	10am class	*performance #2
5/25 or 5/26	*matinees?	*performance #3?
5/27	**Bank Holiday**	*performance #4
5/28	10am class	*performance #5
5/29	10am class      *matinee?	*performance #6
5/30	10am class	*performance #7

5/31 10am class

6/1, 2 BREAK as you will

6/3 \*performance #8

6/4 8:30am train to Stratford Upon Avon/RSC + day tours of Shakespeare's birthplace, etc + evening performance #9

6/5 day tours of Shakespeare's birthplace, etc + evening performance #10

6/6 morning tour \* train back to London

6/7 10am classes \*performances #11

6/8 \*performance #12?

6/9 NO CLASS

6/10 10am last class\*

6/11 return flights TBD

### **Questions for discussion in class:**

What is the playwright's agenda? Why did they write the play? What is the cultural context? What role, if any, does cultural identity play?

How are all of the theatre artists involved interpreting the work? Why are they doing the play? How are they reflecting their culture/society/identities?

Why do a play from the past, today? How does the play speak to contemporary audiences?

What are the pros of intracultural theatre projects? What are the cons?

List of films, series- feel free to add your own *Mostly from the 1980's – 2023- to give you a sense of some key ethnic groups that have shaped British life and what it means to be British. If you can't see all of them, (I don't expect you to), look for the trailers on YouTube or other sites so you can get a sense of themes and cultural interactions.*

### **The Road: A Story of Life & Death**

On the oldest Roman road in the capital, filmmaker Marc Isaacs weaves together numerous poignant stories of loss and the search for belonging into a tapestry of the human experience. Keelta a young Irish woman leaves home to build a new life for herself on the road where Billy, the old Irish laborer is struggling to find a meaning to his life. Peggy, a 95 year old Jewish refugee from Vienna and Brigitte, a German born former air hostess, have both suffered bad husbands, whilst Iqbal, an unassuming Indian hotel concierge, awaits the arrival of his wife from Kashmir. A film that forces you to recognize the struggles and preoccupations of its characters as our own.

<https://thestreamable.com/movies/the-road-a-story-of-life-death-2012>

### **London River**

After traveling to London to check on their missing children in the wake of the 2005 terror attacks on the city, two strangers come to discover their respective children had been living together at the time of the attacks.

<https://thestreamable.com/movies/london-river-2009>

### **Burning an Illusion (1981)**

Set in Ladbroke Grove, Menelik Shabazz's [\*Burning an Illusion\*](#) is outstanding thanks to the character of Pat Williams, a British-born black woman. She is played by the brilliant Cassie McFarlane, who reveals complex emotions as Pat develops from a carefree office worker in charge of her own life into a more militant person.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYsm8tGnyG8>

<https://www.amazon.com/Burning-Illusion-Cassie-Mcfarlane/dp/B096DBYKWR>

### **My Beautiful Laundrette (1985)**

Set in racially mixed Lewisham, Stephen Frears's landmark film from Hanif Kureishi's script follows the relationship between Omar (Gordon Warnecke), a middle-class man of Pakistani origin, and Johnny (Daniel Day Lewis), a working-class white man. [\*My Beautiful Laundrette\*](#) shows the impact of a rising immigrant population on working class communities in Thatcher's Britain, with the parallel rise of right-wing gangs.

<https://www.justwatch.com/us/movie/my-beautiful-laundrette>

### **Dirty Pretty Things (2002)**

Another Frears film, this one set in Tony Blair's Britain rather than Margaret Thatcher's, and thus depicting an altered landscape. Okwe has illegally arrived from Nigeria, where he worked as a doctor before having to flee due to a setup by corrupt forces. He drives a cab during the day and works in a hotel at night. Turkish immigrant Senay, with whom he shares a flat, has her own set of problems. The London of illegal immigrants is a dangerous underworld in which people exchange body parts and sexual favors for money. [\*The film\*](#) ventures behind the luxurious façade of the capital into a scary and dark world. The thriller format means the film avoids lecturing or sentimentality.

<https://www.justwatch.com/us/movie/dirty-pretty-things>

### **Kidulthood (2006)**

Menhaj Huda's [\*Kidulthood\*](#) follows the lives of three teenagers over two days in the Ladbroke Grove area.

<https://www.justwatch.com/us/movie/kidulthood>

### ***Babylon* (1980)**

One of the earliest (and best) examples of Black British cinema, *Babylon* follows an aspiring reggae artist as he combats the racism and police brutality in South London. The film handles serious issues and sound system culture with gritty realism, complete with live music and scenes shot entirely on location in Deptford and Brixton. Watch now: [From \\$4 on YouTube, youtube.com](#)

### ***Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994)**

The first of many collaborations between Hugh Grant and screenwriter Richard Curtis (others include *Notting Hill* and *Bridget Jones's Diary*), this 1994 film follows a group of Brits and their romantic run-ins over the course of—you guessed it—several weddings and a funeral. Aside from being one of the most famous British movies of all time, *Four Weddings and a Funeral* showcases the charming, lovely side of London life, from strolls along the South Bank to rainy kisses on Highbury Terrace. **Watch now:** [Free with Starz subscription, starz.com](#) or [from \\$4 on Amazon, amazon.com](#)

### ***Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995)**

Simran (Kajol), a sheltered girl growing up in London, convinces her strict dad to let her take one last holiday with her friends before agreeing to an arranged marriage in India—and somewhere along her journey, she falls in love with Raj (Shah Rukh Khan) instead. (Oops.) If the 1990s saw a sudden surge in young Indian men and women buying Eurail passes in search of romance, this [Bollywood cult classic](#) was to blame. Watch now: [Free with Amazon Prime, amazon.com](#) or [from \\$4 on iTunes, itunes.com](#)

### ***Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001)**

Bridget's single-gal flat is located in the neighborhood of Borough, and places like Borough Market and the Globe pub (underneath her apartment) are featured. The scenery is enough to make you want to [pub-crawl through London](#) immediately—bonus points if you can convince Colin Firth to join you. **Watch now:** [Free with Starz subscription, starz.com](#) or from [\\$4 on Amazon, amazon.com](#)

### ***V for Vendetta* (2005)**

Remember, remember, the... well, you know the rest. Guy Fawkes is an undeniably iconic figure in British history, and *V for Vendetta* practically transforms the anarchist into a comic-book superhero. London's underground Tube stations and the British Parliament building make notable appearances in the movie—and by that, we mean they explode. But don't worry: No real landmarks were harmed in the making of this film. **Watch now:** [Free with a Netflix subscription, netflix.com](#) or [from \\$4 on Amazon, amazon.com](#)

### ***London Irish* (2013)**

Old enough to know better... Young enough to do it anyway. Conor, his older sister Bronagh, best friend Packy and Niamh have just moved from Ireland to London, ready to shake this drunken haze and start life afresh with a clear head. The days of forgotten nights out, regrettable bedfellows and

alcohol fueled bad decisions are over. Cheers to the adult life! Which starts now... soon... just as soon as they shake this hangover. <https://www.justwatch.com/us/tv-show/london-irish>

### ***Been So Long (2018)***

Released in 2018 by Netflix, *Been So Long* (based on the musical of the same name) chronicles a single mother who falls in love with a handsome stranger during a night out in Camden Town. If you can look away from the singing cast for a second, try to spot Camden Market, Regent's Canal, and Primrose Hill in the background of many scenes. But we understand if Michaela Coel distracts you for the entirety of the movie. **Watch now:** [Free with Netflix subscription, netflix.com](#)

### ***Bend It Like Beckham (2002)***

Watch It: Amazon Prime, Google Play, iTunes

Not *just* a romantic comedy, this film from writer and director Gurinder Chadha has an undercurrent of strong social commentary that rings true no matter what age you watch it (and watch it again). In the movie—one of the highest-grossing sports films focusing on soccer—two young women in West London are following their dreams of becoming professional athletes, only to be beset by cultural expectations and stereotypes of what a woman should and shouldn't do. Killer soundtrack, too. —  
*Katherine LaGrave, Digital features editor*

### ***Attack the Block (2011)***

Joe Cornish's horror-comedy flick set in a South London tower block highlights parts of London that are not normally in the spotlight. Taking place somewhere between Peckham and Brixton (but in reality shot in council estates throughout the city), the film follows a teenage gang coming up against a marauding army of aliens attacking their estate. With a cast recruited from nearby council blocks (including an early role for John Boyega), *Attack the Block* showcases the wit and warmth of everyday communities of Londoners outside of Zone 1.

<https://www.justwatch.com/us/movie/attack-the-block>

[Netflix's new \*Black British series, Champion\*](#), The series revolves around a Jamaican British family, namely two siblings, and their journey within the music industry— one journey that has just begun and another which is restarting. The show follows their family, relationships and dealings within the business, as well as the fierce rivalry and love they share with one another.

***Luther***, starring Idris Elba and Ruth Wilson, is a popular detective show with a crime noir atmosphere. Set in gritty urban London, *Luther* follows the cases of DCI John Luther. *Luther* is is filmed in Westfield and Shepherds Bush, London, among other areas. After five seasons, the last episode aired in 2019 but there will be a feature-film in the near future; filming began in November of 2021.

***Ted Lasso***, stars American comedic actor Jason Sudeikis as an out-of-his-element American football coach sent to manage a struggling English Premier league team, AFC Richmond. Richmond is in the SW of Greater London. Just over eight miles west-southwest of Charing Cross, Richmond is on a meander of the River Thames. The stadium used in the show is Selhurst Park Stadium in the Croydon district of South London (where the Crystal Palace Football Club plays in real life). You'll also see Wembley Stadium, Rivoli Ballroom in Brockley, Tower Bridge, and more. **Apple TV**

**New Blood** – New Blood features two junior investigators working together to take down rich and powerful corporate criminals. Mark Strepan plays Stefan, a Polish immigrant, while Ben Tavassoli plays Rash, an Iranian immigrant. While “Polish” might not seem terribly diverse to the average American, it's important to understand that in the UK, there's still a fair bit of prejudice about Eastern European immigrants.

You can watch New Blood [HERE on BritBox](#).

**Doctor Who** – While this British classic hasn't always been the most diverse show around, recent seasons have featured a number of black and Asian companions. Some might argue that's still not THE BIG ROLE, but most companions have pretty substantial parts. It's hardly “waiter #2” material. Some of the prominent diverse characters from the series include Freema Agyeman as Martha Jones, Tosin Cole as Ryan Sinclair, Noel Clarke as Mickey Smith, Pearl Mackie as Bill, Mandip Gill as Yasmin Khan, and Adjoa Andoh as Francine Jones. You can watch recent seasons of Doctor Who [HERE on Amazon](#) and MAX.

**The Kumars at No. 42** – This comedy focuses on a normal British family that broadcasts a celebrity chat show from the back garden of their home. Son Sanjeev hosts, but his business-oriented father, matchmaking mother, and mischievous granny all get in on the action. <https://www.justwatch.com/us/tv-show/the-kumars-at-no-42>

On the air since 1985, ***Eastenders*** is one of the most iconic British TV series ever. A gloriously drama-filled soap opera, the storylines are rarely realistic, with plenty of betrayal, pregnancy reveals, returns from the dead, and more for soap fans to love. But it's more than that - set in the East End, this is a series that (ridiculous story arcs aside) deals with pretty normal people.

<https://www.justwatch.com/us/tv-show/eastenders>

## **I May Destroy You**

Set in London, *I May Destroy You* is created by Michaela Coel, who also stars as novelist Arabella. After she is sexually assaulted, she struggles to work on her second novel.

**How to Watch:** *I May Destroy You* is [streaming on Max](#).

## **The Great British Bake Off**

There is no feel-good reality show quite like *The Great British Bake Off*. Watch as amateur contestants crack jokes and will their pastries to bake to perfection. From Mel and Sue's cheeky humor to Mary Berry's delight at the mention of rum, this competition feels less cutthroat and more comforting than anything else. **How to Watch:** *The Great British Baking Show*, as it is known in the States, is available on [Netflix](#). (Though it should be noted that later seasons have new hosts and judges.)

Often referred to simply as ***Ab Fab***, Jennifer Saunders and Joanna Lumley star in *Absolutely Fabulous* as Eddie and Patsy, two women living and working in London. They drink too much, take too many drugs, and attempt to stay young while navigating the ever-changing fashion scene.

<https://www.justwatch.com/us/tv-show/absolutely-fabulous>

Hilarious in its ridiculousness, a [2016 movie followed the series](#).

<https://www.justwatch.com/us/movie/absolutely-fabulous-the-movie>

## ***Rocks* - Netflix**

Few coming of age dramas are as touching as *Rocks* on *Netflix*. The film tells the story of a teenage girl, nicknamed Rocks, who struggles to take care of herself and her younger brother after their single mother abandons them. As moving as the film is though, *Rocks* is also a funny, genuine and heartfelt depiction of female adolescence in the UK.

One of the most influential Brit-coms of the last 20 years was **The IT Crowd**, which ran for four seasons (and one farewell special). A workplace comedy airing in the same era as the original U.K. Office, *The IT Crowd* starred Chris O'Dowd, Richard Ayoade, and Katherine Parkinson as the IT Department for the fictional Reynholm Industries in London. Immensely popular, *The IT Crowd* almost spawned an American remake starring Joel McCale (and original cast member Ayoade), though that never made it to production. <https://www.justwatch.com/us/tv-show/the-it-crowd>

## **Period pieces- for historical context** Just a few of an endless list

### **Peaky Blinders**

Set in 1919 Britain, this show centers around soldiers are returning home after World War I and gangs are fighting for dominance. One of the most prominent groups, the Peaky Blinders, is lead by war hero Thomas Shelby, who finds himself struggling to run a business while also leading a life of crime. **How to Watch:** *Peaky Blinders* is available on [Netflix](#).

***Call the Midwife*** is a popular period drama series set in London in the late 1950s and 1960s, which follows a group of nurse midwives. The show explores the difficulties faced in women's healthcare, and covers everything from teen pregnancy and adoption, to racism, sexuality, poverty, and disability.

### ***Belle* - Disney+**

Directed by British filmmaker Amma Assante, *Belle* is a period drama based on the real story of Dido Elizabeth Belle, the illegitimate mixed-race daughter of Sir John Lindsay. Little is known about Dido in real life, other than that she appears in a 1779 painting, next to her white cousin, Lady Elizabeth Murray. *Belle* imagines what her life might have been like.

**Horace Ové's "Pressure"** is widely regarded as the first Black British feature film. This dynamic feature explores the every day struggles of a Black British teenager growing up in 70s London.

<https://blackfilmarchive.com/Pressure>

### **Gandhi**

In the early years of the 20th century, Mohandas K. Gandhi, a British-trained lawyer, forsakes all worldly possessions to take up the cause of Indian independence. Faced with armed resistance from the British government, Gandhi adopts a policy of 'passive resistance', endeavoring to win freedom for his people without resorting to bloodshed. For "Britishness" and colonialism

<https://www.justwatch.com/us/movie/gandhi>



## **To Sir, With Love (1967)**

Watch It: Amazon Prime, Google Play, iTunes

An inexperienced teacher faces a wild bunch of high school students in a poor neighborhood. That familiar story takes place in London's East End, where Sidney Poitier tries a no-textbooks approach to engage his unruly class. The theme song, sung by one student, Lulu, spent more than a month at number one on Billboard's Hot 100 chart. Sentimental? Sure. Sing along? Oh, yeah. —*P.T.*

**Three Little Birds** (2024) Set in the 1950's the series narrates the adventures of gregarious sisters Leah and Chantrelle, who hail from the St Anne's district of Jamaica, and their virtuous, bible-loving acquaintance Hosanna, as they board a ship heading for a new life in Great Britain.  
**BritBox**

## ***Quadrophenia* (1979)**

Loosely based on The Who's rock opera of the same name, *Quadrophenia* is another stunning showcase of Mod culture in the '60s. The film stars Phil Daniels as Jimmy, a Londoner who quits his boring job to enter the world of drugs, dancing, and motorcycle gangs. The movie was shot almost entirely on location in and around London, adding a huge dose of authenticity to what could have been a fantastical plot. Plus, the soundtrack is amazing.

**Watch now:** [Free with HBO Max subscription, hbomax.com](#) or [from \\$4 on iTunes, itunes.com](#)

## ***Blow-up* (1966)**

The plot of *Blow-Up* is compellingly simple: As a London fashion photographer snaps a picture of a couple in a park, he accidentally captures a murder on his camera film. But the film is so much more than its storyline. Directed by Michelangelo Antonioni, *Blow-Up* is a visual masterpiece, filled with glowing, colorful images that perfectly encapsulate the Mod subculture of 1960s Carnaby Street.

**Watch now:** [From \\$2 on Amazon, amazon.com](#)

## ***A Hard Day's Night* (1964)**

Released at the height of their fame, *A Hard Day's Night* portrays a fun, music-filled day in the life of The Beatles. Beatlemania may have peaked in the '60s, but it's hard not to get swept up in the fanaticism when you watch the famous opening shot, featuring John, Paul, George, and Ringo running away from screaming fans through Marylebone Station and the streets of London. **Watch**

**now:** [Free with HBO Max subscription, play.hbomax.com](#) or [from \\$4 on Amazon, amazon.com](#)

## **Mary Queen of Scots**

In 1561, Mary Stuart, widow of the King of France, returns to Scotland, reclaims her rightful throne and menaces the future of Queen Elizabeth I as ruler of England, because she has a legitimate claim to the English throne. Betrayals, rebellions, conspiracies and their own life choices imperil both Queens. They experience the bitter cost of power, until their tragic fate is finally fulfilled.

<https://www.justwatch.com/us/movie/mary-queen-of-scots-2019>

## **Downton Abbey**

Downton Abbey is the juggernaut upstairs/downstairs soap that's still churning out theatrical movies today. <https://www.justwatch.com/us/tv-show/downton-abbey>

Downton Abbey: New Era is rentable on Apple TV



All 45 episodes of **Monty Python's Flying Circus**, the game-changing sketch comedy series that ran from 1969 to 1974, influencing every single comedian to come out of that generation and popularizing the "sketch show" in general, are just sitting there on Netflix, waiting for you to behold their glory. The Pythons' inspired lunacy not only swept America in the '60s and '70s but thanks to PBS and MTV airing Flying Circus reruns in the '80s their legacy extended on.

<https://www.justwatch.com/us/tv-show/monty-pythons-flying-circus>