

**English 395**  
**London High and Low:**  
**Literature, Theatre, and Popular Culture**  
**(June 4-24, 2023)**

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### **Course Learning Objectives**

This course allows students to study literary texts related to the city of London and to visit various venues and neighborhoods of importance for course readings. Students will read novels, short fiction, and poetry, as well as watch several plays. They will think, discuss, and write about literary representations and impressions of the city of London—the sights, sounds, images, and ideas that shape its “character.” They will also be exposed to the culture of this great metropolis and reflect on how that experience enhances their understanding of literary texts.

Upon the completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Read closely, think critically, and write effectively about literary texts and theatrical productions that reflect on perennial questions concerning the human condition as well as topical issues related to the present moment and the specific locations they will explore.
- Identify the relevant historical, social, and critical/theoretical contexts of the readings, paying special attention to representations of and statements about the city of London—how the literature helps us understand the city’s “character” in its many manifestations.
- Investigate and thoughtfully respond to a variety of ideas, beliefs or values held by persons in situations other than one’s own.
- Demonstrate an awareness of the role of travel in shaping our thoughts and ideas about present-day cultural and political life and allowing a perceptive and open-minded immersion in a cosmopolitan urban area.

### **Texts**

**Novels** (Purchase on your own):

- J.K. Rowling: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*  
(Scholastic, Inc. ISBN 978-0-590-35342-7)
- R. L. Stevenson: *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (any edition;  
the cheapest is probably Dover Thrift Edition, ISBN: 978-0486266886)
- Virginia Woolf: *Mrs. Dalloway* (Harcourt Inc. ISBN 978-0-15-603035-9)

**Course Pack** (Handouts given to you in advance)

The course pack includes short texts by Arthur Conan Doyle, Charles Dickens, William Blake, John Keats, and Bernardine Evaristo. Additional short texts will be distributed in London.

## Live Performances:

*Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* (The Palace Theatre)

<https://uk.harrypottertheplay.com/about-the-show/>

*The Comedy of Errors* (The Globe Theatre)

<https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/whats-on/the-comedy-of-errors-2023/>

*Tomorrow is Already Dead* (Soho Theatre)

<https://sohotheatre.com/shows/tomorrow-is-already-dead/>

*Dear England* (National Theatre)

<https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/productions/dear-england/>

## Requirements

- Attend and be on time for all performances, lectures, and walking tours.
- Complete readings and prepare comments for participation in discussions
- Lead one class discussion (prepare questions and moderate the discussion).
- Keep a journal with observations about the readings, the plays, and the city of London.
- Take four quizzes based on the readings and class discussion.

## Grading

Assignments/Points	Percentages
Attendance and Participation (30pts)	30%
Journal (30pts)	30%
Four Quizzes (20pts)	20%
Discussion Lead for a text or a play (20pts)	20%

## Attendance and Participation

Nothing is more important in this course than to attend all plays, lectures, tours, and discussions! Missing any of these activities will have a detrimental effect on your grade. Out of respect for everyone involved, it is your responsibility to be on time for all activities.

You are expected to **participate actively in all activities** by asking and answering questions, sharing your thoughts about the literature, and discussing all relevant ideas and materials. Take notes during lectures and discussion sessions. After each play and tour, you should record thoughts when time allows—while traveling, in the evening and/or the next day. Do not delay it! Do it while your impressions are still immediate and vivid. Do it whenever you have a good idea. Our memories fade quickly, so it is vital that you record your reactions and thoughts right away.

## Journal

The purpose of the journal is to collect information, observations, and ideas about travel, the readings, the plays, and the city of London itself. It would be best to have a notebook for this purpose, but you may also use your phone. Feel free to include observations about any aspect of your experience. You may start even before arrival by recording your thoughts about travel.

You should enter dates for your journal entries and write them daily or every other day. The length of your entries may vary but be thorough and specific. The final form of your journal will be on Canvas, where you will select key entries, those you feel best reflect your observations. Select at least one entry about each category: readings, plays, neighborhoods, and travel. While you should preserve the content, flow, and tone of your original entries, please pay attention to grammar and spelling when you finalize it on Canvas. The journal grade will be based on the thoroughness, thoughtfulness, and details of your entries, the way you incorporate the literature (readings and plays), travel, and city of London – not on whether we agree with your statements.

We will share and discuss examples from journals weekly throughout the course to clarify the process and answer questions. Each entry posted on Canvas should be at least 600-700 words. Journals are due one week after our return, on July 1, although they can be completed earlier.

## Quizzes

Quizzes will be taken on Tuesdays and/or Thursdays in our formal classroom. They will focus on the readings assigned for that week. They will be primarily short answer questions (a reasonable paragraph) but may also include multiple choice, fill in the blank, or true and false questions.

## Discussion Lead

You will prepare discussion questions for one reading or play and lead part of the discussion. This discussion may take place in our formal classroom or in an informal setting, like a pub. You may focus on whichever aspects of the literature interest you, but your questions should invite responses and opinions from other students. Consider key ideas and aspects of the readings—e.g., themes, setting, or characterization—what they reveal about London, or about England more broadly. Address both the content/form of the readings and your experience as a reader. You will be assigned a specific work on which to focus and receive tips and examples in class.

## Recommendations

Although Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* is not a required reading, you are welcome to read the play using your own copy or on one of these websites:

<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/comedyscenes.html>

[https://absoluteshakespeare.com/plays/comedy\\_of\\_errors/comedy\\_of\\_errors.htm](https://absoluteshakespeare.com/plays/comedy_of_errors/comedy_of_errors.htm)

You could also read *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child: Parts One and Two* before we watch the performance. You can purchase a copy, for example, on Amazon.

I will share other recommendations and suggestions before and throughout our trip.

## Conduct

We all want to enjoy this experience and have every right to expect others not to spoil it for us. Keep in mind that one person's behavior will have an impact on the rest. If we are team players (punctual, considerate, helpful, etc.), we will all have a better and more productive experience. But if we make immature or selfish choices, they will distract us from both work and pleasure. Be curious and adventurous, but also safe and smart. Take care of yourselves and of each other.

Also, remember that you represent UWSP. We have an excellent reputation with our British partners and hope to keep it that way. Even when you explore London on your own, you will still do so as a UWSP student. Let's be proud of the impression we create during our stay in London.

Plagiarism and other forms of cheating constitute serious misconduct and will not be tolerated. If you are unsure whether certain actions are appropriate or not, feel free to talk to us about it.

## Communication

I am your instructor, but also your more experienced travel companion. Please do not hesitate to talk to me if you have any needs or concerns. I will do my best to help you in any situation.

Our primary mode of communication in London will be WhatsApp, though I may email you as well. We will create a group chat for any messages that should go to the whole group (Dr. Brad Van Den Elzen will be included as well). I will use it for announcements and similar purposes. You may also use it to message the whole group, but only if you have something important to convey to us all. Otherwise, please message me or your classmates individually, as appropriate.

As you know, weekends are yours to do whatever you'd like. However, please keep me informed of your travel plans. If you are not in London, I need to know where you are. If you stay in London for the weekend, I will be happy to suggest collective or individual activities.

**Schedule:** For a complete, weekly schedule of activities, see the separate handout.

