

IS 122: European Society Past and Present Europe 2024

GE Submission: Statement of Rationale

Studying abroad offers the opportunity to engage in deep analysis of host cultures through readings, podcasts, lectures, and experiential learning. On Europe Semester, we will ask students to observe the use of spaces, human interaction with the built environment, public transportation, the behavior of individuals and communities, the economics of daily life, the intersections of public policy with public life. They will explore historical and contemporary issues, including colonialism and its lingering consequences; immigration; the Holocaust; the war in Ukraine; the situation of the Romani; and more. Assignments challenge students to use foundational theories to analyze their own observations and experiences. Across all issues, students will be encouraged to integrate what they are learning with Christian faith, ethics, and theology.

The summaries below explain how we plan to meet the three certification criteria for Understanding Society. As an example, we've included our plan for class sessions in London as well.

Certification Criterion 1: Students will be able to identify foundational theories that offer explanations of social, political, economic, and/or cultural phenomena.

This certification criterion will be supported by carefully selected course readings as listed in the syllabus. These readings draw on theories and methods from a cross-section of social-scientific disciplines and interdisciplinary fields, including political science, sociology, environmental history, and peace studies. We will learn from experts along the journey, including, for instance, Juraj Majo and Alena Ručovska, professors in the Department of Human Geography at Comenius University, Bratislava. We will also include well-researched podcasts exploring current issues in European society (e.g., After the Fact podcast episode on migration in London). Finally, students' own observations of our host cultures, including the mundane activities of riding public transportation or shopping for food along with visits to historic sites, memorials, or political offices, will help them connect social-scientific theories with daily life. This criterion will be assessed by means of quizzes, short writing assignments, and participation in class discussions.

Certification Criterion 2: Students will be able to apply foundational theories to analyze contemporary problems or controversies.

Course readings and guest lectures will help students develop the skills necessary to understand and apply foundational theories to specific issues in contemporary Europe, particularly including the long-lasting consequences of colonialism, the immigration crisis beginning in 2014, Brexit, the invasion of Ukraine, and the effects of and responses to environmental degradation (the central theme of the program). The site guide exercise gives students the opportunity to apply theories in a presentation that engages with the history and contemporary

controversies associated with particular sites. Reflective essays allow for deep thought on the use of foundational theories to analyze the intersections of course themes with site visits and the experiences of daily life.

Certification Criterion 3: Students will be able to make personal and social application of various theories—informed by a biblical perspective.

Course readings, guest lectures, site visits, and class discussions give space for students' development of the skills to put theory into practice while drawing on biblical principles. This criterion will be assessed through the site guide exercise and reflective essays, both of which ask students to engage with contemporary issues in European societies on a personal level as they choose topics, key concerns, and relevant theories. The essays in particular offer the opportunity for students to make their own biblically-informed applications of theories through their reflection on their personal experiences in the locations of the program.

Student Learning Outcome: Students will apply appropriate foundational theories to analyze social, political, economic, and/or cultural phenomena.

The Understanding Society SLO is incorporated into the second course learning outcome: Students will use foundational social scientific theories to analyze and explain their own social and cultural observations of daily life, public spaces, memorials, political policies, economics, and the interactions between individuals, social groups, and institutions.

Sample course plan: London

Topic 1) Brexit

Readings:

- David Jeffery, "United Kingdom: The United Kingdom and Its Disunited People" (pp. 14-21 in Erik Jones and Masha Hedberg, eds., *Europe Today*, 6th ed., Rowman and Littlefield, 2023), introduces Brexit as part of the social and political dynamics of contemporary Britain
 - Will Jennings and Gerry Stoker, "The Divergent Dynamics of Cities and Towns: Geographical Polarisation and Brexit" (*The Political Quarterly* 90.S2 [2019], pp. 155-166), digs more deeply into the different perspectives on Brexit across Britain
- *These readings relate to criterion 1: Students will be exposed to foundational theories of economics, politics, and social differences (urban vs. rural, educational background, and wealth).*

Activities:

- Explore the [London School of Economics Brexit, BPP, and Euopp blogs](#) to develop your understanding of the process and consequences of Britain's exit from the European Union for society, politics, and the economy
- *Exploring contemporary issues through the LSE blogs relate to criterion 1: Students will be exposed to foundational theories of economics and politics.*
- Take a tour of the Houses of Parliament and walk through the City of London, considering the involvement of these spaces in the Brexit process and the effects of Brexit for Britain's political and financial future

→ The tours relate to criterion 2: Students will apply the foundational theories central to their developing understanding of Brexit to analyze their observations of Britain's political and financial centers.

Assessment:

- A quiz will test students' comprehension of the processes and effects of Brexit
→ The quiz tests students' comprehension of foundational theories (criterion 1).
- A short writing assignment will ask students to explore the consequences of Brexit for one of several different residents of London (representing various nationalities, social statuses, and professions); small group conversations will give students the opportunity to engage in debate with each other over the current state of Brexit
→ The writing assignment supports criterion 2 by asking students to apply foundational theories to their understanding of the complex factors involved with Brexit.

Topic 2) Colonialism: The British Empire

Readings:

- Gurinder K. Bhambra, "Postcolonial Europe" (ch. 3 in Chris Rumford, ed., *Sage Handbook of European Studies*, Sage, 2009), introduces the concept of colonialism and contemporary postcolonial critique
- Stuart Frost, "A Bastion of Colonialism': Public Perceptions of the British Museum and Its Relation to Empire" (*Third Text* 33 [2019]: 487-499), brings the theories of colonialism and postcolonialism into an analysis of the British Museum as a repository and artifact of Britain's colonial past
- Gabriel Moshenska, "Creating a Museum of British Colonialism" (*New African*, Sept./Aug. 2020: 50), introduces a contemporary reaction to the British Museum from formerly colonized peoples
→ These readings relate to criterion 1: Students will be exposed to foundational theories of colonialism and postcolonialism. The application of theories to the specific situation of museums also provides students with examples of the work needed in criterion 2.

Activities:

- Listen to the episodes "Losing your marbles" and "A tiger and a scream" from the Stuff the British Stole podcast to consider how particular exhibits at the British Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum relate to Britain's colonial past and present
→ The podcasts provide an example of the application of foundational theories to specific museum exhibits (and their historical connection to colonialism)--criterion 2.
- Analyze the British Museum or the Victoria and Albert Museum, observing how the museum displays and describes exhibits; who is visiting the museum and how they are interacting with exhibits; what evidence you find of "colonialism" in the museum (spending at least two hours in the museum of your choice) to put the theories of colonialism and postcolonialism into conversation with your own experience of the museum space
→ The work of analyzing the museum space asks students to apply foundational theories to explain their own observations (criterion 2).

Assessment:

- A short analytical writing assignment will ask students to connect their understanding of British colonialism with their observations at the museum

- *The writing assignment fits within criterion 2 by asking students to apply foundational theories of colonialism to their analysis of the spaces of the museum.*
- A site guide exercise in the Parthenon Gallery at the British Museum will give students the opportunity to engage in the current debate around the legal and moral consequences of colonialism
 - *The site guide exercise tests students' ability to apply foundational theories by imagining the responses of different people to the question of the Parthenon sculptures. This assessment asks for more than the application of theories to analyze the issue (criterion 2); through creating a dialogue, students will engage with the material on a personal level (criterion 3).*

Topic 3) Immigration: Caribbean and African communities

Course materials:

- “How Migration is Changing London” (*After the Fact* podcast episode) introduces the modern story of immigration and immigrant populations in London
- The *Windrush Betrayal* documentary explores the contentious, complicated history of Caribbean immigration in London, and the consequences of this history for the surviving “Windrush generation” and their descendants
- Guest lecture from a colleague of Carmen McCain at SOAS
 - *These readings and guest lecture relate to criterion 1: Students will be exposed to foundational theories of immigration, racism as a social and political reality, and social change.*

Activities:

- Take a tour with Black History Walks to explore the historical and contemporary presence and experience of Black communities in London
 - *The walking tour exposes students to foundational theories (criterion 1) and their intersection with the history and contemporary experience of Black communities in London (criterion 2).*
- Spend at least two hours in the Spitalfields / Brick Lane neighborhood, observing who is present; how peoples representing different ethnic, cultural, or religious backgrounds interact; what kinds of shops and restaurants can be found; how immigrant communities integrate into or distinguish themselves from the rest of the city
 - *Touring and observing immigrant neighborhoods asks students to apply foundational theories to explain their own observations (criterion 2).*

Assessment:

- A quiz over the readings and the presentation on the Black History Walk will test students' understanding of the history and current situation of African and Caribbean immigrant communities in London
 - *The quiz tests students' comprehension of foundational theories (criterion 1).*
- A site guide exercise at the Windrush Memorial in Tottenham gives students the opportunity to engage deeply with the historic and contemporary experiences of the “Windrush Generation”
 - *The site guide exercise tests students' ability to apply foundational theories through creating a dialogue around the complex questions of immigration (and their intersection with colonialism and racism). This assessment asks for more than the application of theories to analyze the issue (criterion 2); through creating a dialogue, students will engage with the material on a personal level (criterion 3).*

Reflective Essay: London

Students will be asked to reflect on their experience in London in a reflective essay. This essay asks students to choose one core theme: religion; nationalism; migration; wealth and poverty; ethnicity; conflict; colonialism; environment; or politics. They must use the framework of the foundational theories related to their chosen issue, and they must integrate their own observations and analyses of at least three key sites, neighborhoods, or daily life in London to illustrate their issue.

→ *The reflective essay gives students the opportunity to consolidate their understanding of foundational theories with their own experiences of study, observation, and daily life in London (criterion 3).*