



SYLLABUS

ARTS JOURNALISM IN LONDON

Instructor: Christopher Cook
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Contact Hrs: 40

LONDON, UK

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Amongst the so-called ‘world cities’, London is unique in the richness and diversity of its cultural provision. It boasts both healthy privately funded and an adventurous publicly subsidised theatre, with two international companies, the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company, both playing in the city. There are two opera houses, dance companies that extend from the Royal Ballet to innovative work made by such distinguished British choreographers as Siobhan Davies, Matthew Bourne, Wayne McGregor, Shobana Jeyasingh, Akram Khan and Christopher Wheeldon There are seven symphony orchestras, five concert halls, two recital rooms, a lively popular independent music scene that embraces everything from jazz to pop, a film industry and a unique broadcasting system that is dominated by the BBC, the world’s most extensive newsgathering organisation and the richest broadcaster in Europe, that is committed to a not-for-profit version of public service broadcasting that privileges the production of music and drama.

Then there is the world’s largest modern art museum, the Tate on Bankside, a clutch of other leading museums that include the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert and a series of new galleries in the East End of the city that are showcasing new multi-media work by the generation that came after the BritArtists

There are, it seems more arts journalists working in London than in any other comparable city in the world and satisfying an ever-growing appetite for cultural news, arts reviews and feature material about art and artists. They are skilled at writing for different media, broadcasting, print and online and know exactly how to tailor their work to a specific demographic.

This course will take full advantage of both London’s rich cultural provision and the varied work of its many arts journalists and critics. To augment classroom lectures and tutorials by the course instructor there will be field trips to significant cultural sites, theatres, galleries, concert halls, etc, and regular guest visits from practitioners in the field.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the course is twofold:

- To acquaint students with a different system of cultural provision than that with which they are familiar in the United States.
- To teach the key elements in the practice of arts journalism in the United Kingdom. These are skills which are valid on both sides of the Atlantic, viz writing arts news stories and arts features, researching and undertaking interviews for publication, writing criticism of theatre, concerts, art exhibitions, dance etc for particular demographics and within a prescribed number of words and against the clock for both print and online!

LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completion of this course students will be able to demonstrate:

- A general knowledge of the structures, organisation and practices of the principal arts and media organizations in London and how they broadly differ from those in the United States
- An awareness of how cultural provision in London interfaces with broadcasting and the print media and online
- An understanding of the purposes and styles of the principal kinds of arts journalism currently practiced in London
- An informed understanding of how media ethics and traditional best practice in journalism are intrinsic to media coverage of cultural provision
- The ability to properly research and source different kinds of arts journalism
- An ability to write professionally and well about the arts
- A capacity to criticize their own work as scrupulously as they would judge the cultural endeavours that they choose to write about

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY

The course will be taught by classroom lectures, tutorials, seminars, class meetings with arts journalists and at least one visit each week to a major arts event. At the heart of the course are a sequence of class critiques in which students review their own and each other's work.

COURSE MATERIALS

Writing for Journalists – Matt Swaine with Harriett Gilbert and Gavin Allen – Routledge, London - 2021 (ISBN – 978-0367368579), Fourth Edition (provided)

METHOD OF EVALUATION (GRADING)

Four pieces of assessable written work are required from students taking this course: a **short arts news story** set in the second week of the course, a **critical review** of 500 words on an event within the performing arts that we have seen for the class, an **Arts Blog** of 700 words written about the cultural event(s) of one week and to be completed in the third and fourth weeks, and a **final project** which of some 1500 words to be submitted at the end of the course which will take the form of an arts feature, an interview with or an extended profile of an arts practitioner for either print or digital media. All work will require a high degree of independent research in the student's own time. There will be appropriate tutorial support from the course instructor for all written work.

Grading

- 15% News Story
- 15% Critical Review
- 20% Arts Week Blog
- 30% Feature, profile or interview
- 20% Participation in class and attendance

Academic Integrity

It is expected that any written work submitted for grading for this course will be entirely a student's own work. If within the body of the paper you have advanced arguments or cited examples which you have found in your wider reading, while researching the internet, in attending other classes within the programme or from any other place then you are required to identify these sources both within footnotes and in a formal bibliography. Failure to acknowledge any source may leave you open to the charge of plagiarism and at the very least failure to secure a grade for this class.

Attendance

Every class (whether on or off site) must be attended. See attendance policy for details.

Excursions and cultural visits

- The British Museum – (own time)
- A guided tour of the Royal Albert Hall, 24 July (during class)
- Theatre – *The Motive and the Cue* at the National Theatre, 6 July 7.30pm
- Dance – *Mercedes de Córdoba 'Si Quiera'* at Sadlers Wells, 13 July 7.00pm
- Art show – *Isaac Julien 'What Freedom is to Me'* at Tate Britain, 20 July 10.30am
- Classical concert – *BBC Prom*, Royal Albert Hall, 24 July (evening)

Guest Speakers

The following guests will talk to the class:

- Debra Crane – Dance Critic and former Arts Editor, The Times
- Sarah Hemming – Theatre Critic, The Financial Times
- Richard Cork – Former Visual Arts Critic, The Times

THE COURSE

What follows is a weekly plan for what will happen in class. However, it will almost certainly vary according to both the needs and the interests of the students in each group.

WEEK ONE – GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The first week of the course will consist of a general introduction to Journalism in the UK, to include broadcast, print and online journalism.

READING

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 – 'The News Intro', 'The First Three Paragraphs' and 'News Structure and Style' – *Writing for Journalists* – Matt Swaine with Harriett Gilbert and Gavin Allen – Routledge, London – 2021

ASSIGNMENTS

Students will be required to select one object in one room while visiting the British Museum and to write and research a 500 - word account of their research and how it relates to the object that they have chosen from the museum's collections – **due in class Thursday 6 July**

SCHEDULE

Thursday 29 June, 1.00pm

Introduction: Broadcast, print and online journalism in the UK

Lecture: The British Museum

Set: First Assignment

Class visit: British Museum in Students' own time

WEEK TWO – THEATRE

Students will be introduced to the theatre scene in London and to the range of reviewing styles and critical practitioners writing in the city.

READING

Chapter 11 – 'Writing Reviews' – *Writing for Journalists* – Matt Swaine with Harriett Gilbert and Gavin Allen – Routledge, London – 2021

Students will also be required to read and discuss at least one arts story published within the week of the course. These stories and arts reviews will be given as class handout

ASSIGNMENTS

Students will be required to write a short arts news story (500 words) written for a particular UK national newspaper and taking full cognizance of the demographic of that publication – **due in class Thursday 13 July**

SCHEDULE

Thursday 6 July, 1.00pm

Review: British Museum assignment

Lecture: Cultural provision in London covering such topics as arts policy, funding, venues, demographics etc

Review: Arts news stories handouts

Review of assigned reading from Week One

Set: Second writing assignment

Guest speaker: Sarah Hemming, Theatre Critic, *The Financial Times*

Thursday 6 July, 7.30pm

Class visit: *The Motive and the Cue* at the National Theatre

WEEK THREE – DANCE

Students will be introduced to the multifaceted opportunities for dance and dancers in London, and to the range of reviewing styles and critical practitioners writing in the city.

READING

Chapter 5 – ‘Writing for the Web’ – *Writing for Journalists* – Matt Swaine with Harriett Gilbert and Gavin Allen – Routledge, London – 2021

Students will also be required to read and discuss at least two dance reviews published within the week of the course. These reviews will be given as class hand-outs.

ASSIGNMENTS

Students will be required to write a short dance review (500 words) written for a particular UK national newspaper and taking full cognizance of the demographic of that publication – **due in class Thursday 20 July**

SCHEDULE

Thursday 13 July, 1.00pm

Class review: *The Motive and the Cue*

Review: Students Arts news stories

Review: Class reading

Set: Third writing assignment

Guest speaker: Debra Crane. Writer on Dance, The Times

Briefing: Final project

Thursday 13 July, 7.00pm

Class visit: Mercedes de Cordoba Si, quiera at Sadlers Wells

WEEK FOUR – THE VISUAL ARTS

Students will be introduced to the visual arts scene in London together with the range of reviewing styles and critical practitioners writing in the city.

READING

Chapters 6 and 7– ‘Developing Feature Ideas’ and ‘Starting your Feature’ - *Writing for Journalists* – Matt Swaine with Harriett Gilbert and Gavin Allen – Routledge, London – 2021

Students will also be required to read and discuss at least two Visual Arts reviews published within the week of the course. These arts reviews will be given as class handout

ASSIGNMENTS

Students are required to write an ‘Arts Week Blog’ – **due in class Tuesday 25 July**

SCHEDULE

Thursday 20 July, 10.30am

Class Visit: Isaac Julien at the Tate Britain

Thursday 20 July, 1.00pm

Class Review: *Mercedes de Córdoba ‘Si Quiera’*

Review: Student critiques of ‘*Si Quiera*’

Review Class reading

Set: Fourth writing assignment

Guest speaker: Richard Cork, Visual Arts Critic

WEEK FIVE - MUSIC

Students will be introduced to the music scene in London, both art and popular music and to the range of reviewing styles and critical practitioners writing in the city.

READING

Students will be required to read two arts interviews/features connected with music. These readings will be representative of the full range of feature writing within UK national newspapers and periodicals.

ASSIGNMENTS

In this week Students will be required to complete research, to write and submit a full-length arts feature (assignment number 5, 1500 words) based upon original research and interviewing in person or via Zoom/phone. The form of the feature can range from an extended feature interview with an arts practitioner, a profile of a practitioner or a more general feature about an event or an institution. Students will be required to demonstrate research as well as writing skills in this final exercise – **due by midnight on Friday 28th July (Word attachment via email to cookacademicpapers@gmail.com)**

SCHEDULE

Monday 24 July, 3.00pm

Class Visit: guided tour of the Royal Albert Hall

Monday 24 July, 7.30pm

Class Visit: BBC Prom at the Royal Albert Hall

Tuesday 25 July, 1.00pm

Class Review: *Isaac Julien at Tate Britain*

Review: Student blogs

Review Class reading

Tutorials: Final Assignment

Thursday 27 July, 1.00pm

Lecture: Finding a language for music

Class Review: *BBC Prom*

Course Review

ADDITIONAL COURSE READINGS

Adams, Sally (2000). *Interviewing Journalists*. Routledge.

Crisell, Andrew (2002). *An Introduction to the History of British Broadcasting*. Routledge.

Garrison, Bruce (2009). *Professional Feature Writing*. Routledge.

Hodgson, F.W. (2000). *Modern Newspaper Practice*. Focal Press.

Keeble, Richard (2004). *The Newspaper Handbook*. Routledge.

McKay, Jenny (2004). *The Magazines Handbook*. Routledge

McNair, Brian (1999). *News and Journalism in the UK*. Routledge