Cultures and Contexts: Contesting British National Identity

Semester: SPRING 2016
Class code: V55.9549.002

Instructor Details
Dr Philip Woods
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mobile: 07922046578
Office hours immediately before and after class, and by arrangement via e-mail

Class Details
Cultures and Contexts: Contesting British National Identity
Wednesdays 1000 to 1200
Location to be confirmed.

Prerequisites
This is an Upper Division class

Class Description
The idea of British national identity has been built around a sense of united statehood within the confines of the four nations comprising the United Kingdom, ruling overseas territories. As such, it conveyed a sense of a multi-national empire ruled by monarchs, but developing over time into a benign, democratic, constitutional monarchy, generally through peaceful, not revolutionary change. The British have seen themselves historically as freedom-loving, independent, industrial, tolerant, Protestant and individualistic. These myths of national image have been forged partly through conflict with other nations over many centuries and reflect a nationalistic pride in military success and the maintenance of the largest empire the world has ever seen. Changes since 1945 have seen the collapse of that empire, membership in the European Union, large-scale immigration, changing gender politics, and the devolution of power to Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales. This has inevitably led to major challenges to traditional British views of their national identity. Includes fieldtrips to key sites.

Desired Outcomes
On completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate a knowledge and critical understanding of key issues in the changing views of British national identity, especially in the period since 1940

2. Comment critically and creatively on fieldtrips, using a blend of personal response and research to illuminate what the trip has contributed to an understanding of British national identity

3. Make a group presentation on a chosen primary source: film, video, novel, document, or portrait which sets the text in its context and explains its importance in an understanding of British national identity.
4. Bring together a broad range of arguments and evidence in relation to key issues of the course.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Assessment Components</th>
<th>1. Short Essay (800 words) on current images of national identity in the printed media and on the internet. By week 5</th>
<th>10%</th>
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<td>2. Presentation, Group or individual on a primary text * By week 10</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>3. Research Essay (1500-2000 words) By week 13</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>4. Short (1,000 words max.) write-up on ONE of the field-trips* One week after trip except Parliament trip</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>5. Final ‘seen’ examination Final week</td>
<td>30%</td>
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Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

1. Short Essay (800 words approximately) on current images of national identity in the printed media and on the internet. By week 5 (2 Mar.) 10%

Using current sources write a short essay on ‘How successfully are images of tradition and modernity balanced in the way that Britain presents itself?’

You may focus on any aspect of current British life, culture and representation (e.g. tourism, architecture, media, sport etc) and may illustrate your answer as you think appropriate e.g. from websites, magazines etc. It works best in a short essay of this kind to hold to one focus or theme for your essay so that you can allow for some depth in your research for it.

2. Presentation, Group or individual on a primary text * By week 10 by arrangement (13 Apr) 15%. Turnitin not required.

This is a short presentation, 10-15 minutes for individuals and 20 minutes for groups, plus time for questions. The aim is to make an interesting and informative presentation based around the document you choose from those given to you at the outset of the class. You should research the background to the document to show that you understand its authorship, and historical context, but you are free to make your commentary as creative as you can. If you present as a team, it is expected that you divide the task between members appropriately. The grade will be the same for each member of the team, unless there is a clear evidence of a lack of participation by any member.

N.B. Please hand in a short (one side) written summary of the presentation or provide Powerpoint by email to me.

The following criteria apply:

a. ability to show an understanding of the overall meaning/import of the document and its historical context, including authorship, audience, date, etc..

b. ability to present in a lively, clear and creative fashion, using relevant supporting material, e.g. handouts, video, pictures as appropriate

c. ability to communicate with and involve the audience

3. Research Essay (1500-2000 words) By week 13 (4 May) 30%

Essays should be approximately 1500-2000 words long and should contain a bibliography and references where appropriate. I am available for consultation on essays. Be careful to avoid plagiarism as penalties are heavy (see me if in doubt). See additional advice on essay writing in ‘Course Documents’ on Blackboard.
N.B. Unless you have my prior agreement in writing, you must answer the question exactly as set. You must not set a title of your own.

The reading list is predominantly for preparation for class discussion and has not been set with the essay questions particularly in mind so you should be aware of the need to read beyond the reading list for your essay preparation. I will be only too happy to advise on reading if you get into difficulty.

1. Is Linda Colley correct to believe that a British national identity was constructed in the period 1707 to 1837?

2. Assess the importance of the reign of any one British monarch to the development of a common British (English prior to 1607) national identity? You should pay attention to the role of image-making and cultural integration as well as political issues in this process.

3. Did most British people buy into the imperial ethos of the period c. 1880-1940? You may choose one particular historical episode (e.g. the South African War 1899-1901) or a popular medium (e.g. newspapers or cinema or literature) to focus your essay on.

4. Did the British achieve an unprecedented degree of cross-class unity in the Second World War or is this part of what Calder calls the “Myth of the Blitz”?

5. Can the state use film to influence national identity? What is the evidence from the British use of film propaganda in the Second World War?

6. Does the design of the Palace of Westminster (Houses of Parliament) symbolise a romanticised and outdated view of British democracy? [you may not answer this question if you write a fieldtrip essay on Parliament]

7. Examine the way in which the codification and changes in the ONE particular British sport can throw light on the role of class and class attitudes in Britain.

8. In what ways has the British emphasis on public service broadcasting, especially through the BBC, contributed to the building of a common national identity?

9. How and why did British attitudes to defining nationality and to non-white immigration to Britain change in the period 1948 to 1972?

10. Examine the challenges of either the Sikh or Muslim community in Britain in fitting in to a British national identity since the 1950s.

11. Why has the support for Scottish nationalism increased so rapidly in the last 3 decades?

12. Does Britain’s refusal to join the Eurozone reflect its continuing problem of insularity from the European project?

13. FREE CHOICE. You may write on a topic of your choice but you must have my prior written agreement (on a hand-in form) to the question.

4. Short write-up (max 1000 words) on ONE of the field-trips*

One week after the fieldtrip

This is a short response paper (1000 words max.) to any ONE of the fieldtrips: Parliament, Southall, and Lord’s Cricket Ground.

You should hand this in on the Wednesday week after the field-trip has taken place, except Parliament trip which allows you longer. Turnitin not required)
Parliament essay due 9 March (essay Q6 excluded if you write on this trip)

Southall essay due 13 April

Lord’s essay due 11 May

You are encouraged to be creative in your approach to this essay and its presentation. You should write about an aspect of the visit that impressed you and developed your understanding of British culture and identity. It works best if you hold to some part of the visit or a theme for your essay rather than trying to provide a description of the whole visit.

The best essays will blend some personal response with informed insight. You need to do some research for the essay, perhaps from guide books, the Library, or the internet.

Sources, including internet sources, should be listed in a bibliography at the end, and any direct quotations should also be referenced.

You may write up as many of these visits as you like, but only the best ONE will count.

5. Final 'seen' examination Final week (18 May) 30%

At the end of the semester there will be a two hour examination in which you are required to answer two of the following questions which will be designated at random on the day of the exam. These questions have been set to encourage you to think about wider and more comparative issues throughout the course. You are not allowed to bring any notes or other materials into the examination. There will be an opportunity to revise and practice for this examination.

1. Can governments successfully mould a sense of national identity? Use examples from the course.

2. What legacies of empire do you think feed into Britain’s sense of its national identity today?

3. Do British sports reflect a distinctive national culture?

4. Is Britain a truly multicultural society today?

5. 'Britain has lost an empire but not yet found a role' (Dean Acheson) Discuss this view of Britain's changing understanding of its world role since 1945.

6. Do you agree with the view of those who believe that Britain as a unified state cannot survive in its current form?

Assessment Expectations

Grade A: Excellent work. Shows a full mastery of the topic. Is well researched, well organised and well referenced. It shows the stamp of an individual or original approach to the problem set.

Grade B: Good work. Has done the necessary research and made a clear answer to the problem set, using reasonable referencing. Shows some insights.

Grade C: Satisfactory work. Has done necessary research but no more. Makes attempt to answer the problem but perhaps not always very clearly. Rather mechanical and lacking individual insights.

Grade D: Passable work. Meets minimum requirements but may not be very coherent or well argued. Perhaps not very well focused on the problem

Required Text(s)

David Morley & Kevin Robins (eds.) British Cultural Studies: Geography, Nationality, and Identity, Oxford University Press:2001 (0-19-874206-1)

Paul Ward, Britishness Since 1870, Routledge: 2004 (0-415-22017-3) [useful for historical background]


Andrew Gamble & Tony Wright (eds.) *Britishness: Perspectives on the British Question*, Wiley, & Poi (978-1-4051-9269-9)

Jeffrey Richards, *Film and British National Identity: from Dickens to "Dad's Army*, Manchester Univer 0719047435) [Resources]


N.B. This list is only indicative. For fuller advice please e-mail, philip.woods@tiscali.co.uk

### Internet Research Guidelines

The careful and critical use of internet resources is encouraged and a list of recommended websites will be to referencing these sources will be provided

### Additional Required Equipment

None

### Session 1

**Introduction to the course:** Images of British national identity: what are they and how have they been created? Tradition versus modernity in representations of national identity.

**Primary sources:** Tourist literature/websites; film; heritage sites; political use of national identity

**Videos:** *The Union Flag* (BBC:3.8.06) from Philip Woods


**Required Reading:**

Using these and other websites of your choice, prepare to discuss how well Britain manages to balance images of tradition and modernity in the way that it presents itself to the world.

**Websites:** [http://www.britannia.com/](http://www.britannia.com/)

[http://www.thisengland.co.uk/](http://www.thisengland.co.uk/)


### Session 2

**Debates on the formation of British national identity: (b) 1880-1980**

This session looks at the way that British national identity was forged on top of existing national identities for the four nations. It looks at the way in which those different nation
identities developed, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It also
examines the reasons why Ireland did not fit into the Union.

For discussion: how can national identity be ‘invented’ - what is needed to establish national
identity? What symbols, icons institutions? What are the equivalent myth of national identity in your
own country- historically? Consider ideologies, heroes, institutions etc.

Required Reading

Paul Ward

Britishness Since 1870; esp. chs. 1&2

or

Richard Weight

Patriots. National Identity in Britain 1940-2000,
Pan:2003, ch. 1 ‘Warriors’

or

Krishan Kumar

”’Englishness” and English National Identity’, in David
Morley & Robins (eds.) British Cultural Studies:
Geography, Nationality, and Identity, Oxford

Further Reading

R.Colls & P.Dodd, Englishness: Politics and Culture, 1880-1920, Croom
Helm: 1987 (978-0709945628)

Session 3

17 Feb.

Debates on the formation of British national identity: (b) 1880-1980

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national identities for the four nations. It looks at the way in which those different nation
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or

Krishan Kumar

”’Englishness” and English National Identity’, in David
Further Reading


Session 4

Political Institutions and national identity- Parliament and Monarchy

24 Feb.

*For discussion:* Why has Britain been able to keep such a traditional form of monarchy for so long whilst many other European countries have either become republics or have slimmed down or modernised their monarchies? In the same vein, why have British Parliamentary institutions held to traditional forms for so long? Do both monarchy and Parliament require radical overhaul if Britain is to modernise? Does the design of the Palace of Westminster (Houses of Parliament) symbolise an outdated view of British democracy?

Required Reading

Bruce Coleman                      Monarchy and Nation in Britain Since the Eighteenth Century’ in Keith Cameron (ed.) *National Identity*, Intellect Books, Exeter, 1999 (1871516056) [Resources]

OR


Further Reading


Saturday 27 February

9.50 am. Parliament Fieldtrip. Meet outside Houses of Parliament. Details to be confirmed

Session 5

War and the height of national unity- the People’s War? The Welfare State.

First short essay due
For discussion: Did the British achieve an unprecedented degree of cross-class unity in the Second World War or is this part of what Calder calls the ‘Myth of the Blitz’? How much did Government propaganda contribute to this sense of a unified national identity during the war? To what extent did a national consensus build around the development of a welfare state, especially as envisaged in the Beveridge Report (1942)?

Required Reading:

For the Myth of the Blitz - see an outline of the debate in http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/britain_wwtwo/blitz_01.shtml


Angus Calder The Myth of the Blitz, Pimlico, new. Edn.: 1992 (978-0712698207)


Harold Smith (ed.) War and Social Change: British Society in the Second World War, Manchester University Press: 1986, esp. introduction & article by Jose Harris

Session 6

Film and British National Identity in the Second World War

Fieldtrip essay on Parliament due

9 Mar.

For discussion: Can the state use film to influence national identity? What is the evidence from state propaganda in the Second World War? What are the areas of particular strengths of British film? Has Britain a strong enough film industry to compete with Hollywood and maintain a sense of British identity in its films?

Required Reading

Jeffrey Richards Film and British National Identity: from Dickens to "Dad's Army, ch. 1 ‘National Identities’ [Resources]

Further Reading


Humphrey Jennings Listen to Britain; The Heart of Britain (DVDs- ask in Luke Harper’s NYUL office- 3rd floor)

Nicholas Reeves The Power of Film Propaganda: Myth or Reality?
Session 7

Fieldtrip to Southall

16 Mar.

Session 8

Empire & its Legacy

23 Mar.

For discussion: How was empire ‘sold’ to the British people in this period? What evidence is there that British people of all classes bought into the imperial idea? What legacies of empire are apparent in Britain today?

Required Reading

Paul Ward  
*Britishness Since 1870*, ch. 1 ‘Monarchy and Empire’

Catherine Hall  
‘British Cultural Identities and the Legacy of the Empire’ in Morley & Robins (eds.) *British Cultural Studies: Geography, Nationality, and Identity*, pp 27-39

OR

Denis Judd,  
‘Britain: Land of Hope and Glory?’, *History Today*, 49, 4, April 1999, pp.18-24 [resources]

OR John M. Mackenzie  

Further Reading

Wendy Webster  
*Englishness and Empire 1939-1965*, OUP:2007 (978-0199226641) introduction

A.S. Thompson  
*The Empire Strikes Back: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-nineteenth century* (Longman:2005) 0582438292

Stephen Howe  
‘ Empire & Ideology’ (pp. 160-4) in S. Stockwell (ed.) *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives* Blackwell: 2008 9781405125352 (introduces the debate on popular support for empire)

Session 9

Post-war immigration: from integration to multiculturalism

6 April

How well has the British self-image of tolerance and fair play stood up in its treatment of non-white Britons since the Second World War?

How did British policies towards immigration change over the period since 1948?

Why has there been a backlash against policies encouraging multiculturalism in recent times?

Required Reading

Paul Ward  
*Britishness Since 1870*, ch. 6 ‘A New Way of Being British: Ethnicity and Britishness’

**Further Reading**


David Goodhart *The British Dream: Successes and Failures of Post-war Immigration* (Atlantic: 2013) 1843548054, ‘Part 2 How Did We Get Here?’ [has good material using 2011 census data]


[http://movinghere.org.uk/] Moving Here: 200 Years of Migration in England

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**Session 10**

**Final date for Presentations on Primary text**

**Fieldtrip essay on Southall trip due**

**Cultural Institutions and British National Identity: the BBC, the Arts Council and Museums/Galleries.**

Is the BBC truly independent of Government influence and control? In what ways does the BBC support ideas of British national identity? Should Britain continue with a licence-based public broadcasting system in an era of multi-channel digital broadcasting? In what ways has the Government since the Second World War used the arts and heritage industries to contribute to a sense of British national identity?

**Required Reading**

**BBC**

Johann Hari ‘If We Care About the BBC We Must Fight to Defend It’, Independent, 2.10.09, [http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/johann-hari/johann-hari-if-we-care-about-the-bbc-we-must-fight-to-defend-it-1796270.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/johann-hari/johann-hari-if-we-care-about-the-bbc-we-must-fight-to-defend-it-1796270.html), accessed 16.4.13


**Further Reading**

**BBC**

Andrew Crisell *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting* (Routledge, 2nd edn. 2002) 0415247926

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**Arts Policy**
**Session 11**

20 April

**Challenges to a unified national identity: end of empire; membership of Europe; post-war immigration**

*For discussion:* 'Britain has lost an Empire and not yet found a role?' How true is Dean Acheson’s view of Britain’s post-war foreign policy? Why has Britain not joined the EURO? Should it? Is Britain too supportive of US foreign policy for its own good? Does Britain have a distinctive role in the world since it lost its empire? What has been the legacy of empire?

**Required Reading**

- ch. 27 ‘The End of Empire’ pp. 482-98
- ch. 28 ‘The Anglo-American Special Relationship’ pp. 499-516
- ch. 29 ‘Britain and Europe’ pp. 517-538

**Further Reading**


S. George *Awkward Partner, Britain in the European Union* (OUP: 1998) 0198782233, esp. conclusion

**Session 12**

27 April

**Sport: from amateur to professional**

*For discussion:* Do sports unite or divide the British? What cultural values underlay the British codification of sports in the nineteenth century? Is the cult of amateurism now dead?

**Required Reading**


Peter Wilby ‘Aside from football, sport in Britain is still a game for the elite’, *Guardian*, 1 Aug. 2012, [http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/aug/01/sport-britain-elite-privilege-schools](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/aug/01/sport-britain-elite-privilege-schools)

**Further Reading:**

Holt, R. *Sport and the British: A Modern History*, OUP 199

**Session 13**

Research essay due

Visit to Lord’s Cricket Ground
4 May

**Session 14**

Devolution - the challenge of Scottish and Welsh nationalism

Revision - Prepare Plans for seen exam questions

**Lord’s Cricket Ground Fieldtrip essay due**

*For discussion*: Why did Scottish and Welsh nationalism grow in the period since 1945 and why did the Government finally agree to devolution in 1997? Has devolution succeeded in reducing the chances of a complete breakaway of Scotland or Wales? Will Britain hold together in the future?

**Required Reading**

Paul Ward  
*Britishness Since 1870*, ch. 7 ‘Outer Britain’

Robert Hazell & Kevin Robins (eds.)  
‘Britishness and the Future of the Union’ in David Morley  
*British Cultural Studies: Geography, Nationality, and Identity*, pp. 101-111

**Further Reading**

Bill Jones  
1405832401

Christopher Harvie  
*Scotland and Nationalism: Scottish Society and Politics 1707 to the Present*, Routledge, 4th edn. 2004 (0415327245)

**Future of the Union**

Paul Ward,  
*Britishness Since 1870*, conclusion [optimistic that Britain will hold together]

Davies, Norman,  

A. Gamble & T. Wright (eds.)  

11 May

18 May

**Session 15**

Final Examination. Two 1000 to 1200

**Classroom Etiquette**

Eating is not permitted in any classrooms in Bedford Square Please kindly dispose of rubbish in the bins provided

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**Required Co-curricular Activities**

Saturday 27 February  
Fieldtrip to Houses of Parliament

Wednesday 16 March  
Fieldtrip to Southall Sikh Gurdwara

Wednesday 4 May.  
Fieldtrip to Lord’s Cricket Ground

**Estimated Travel Costs**

Estimated costs The estimated travel costs for this class is
Parliament: £4.80 zones 1 off-peak 2 singles
Southall: £5.60 zones 1-4 travelcard off-peak
Lord’s: £4.80 zones 1 off-peak 2 singles

Total = £15.20
This is a maximum amount—students using Oyster cards on buses, or walking (!) should be paying less.

**Suggested Co-curricular Activities**

Advised in class

**Your Instructor**

Dr Philip Woods lectured at Kingston University, London until recently. He studied History at the London School of Economics and at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. His doctorate, which was published, was on British-Indian politics after the First World War. His current research is on the British use of film propaganda in India and the role of war correspondents in Burma in the Second World War. He has published in a number of academic journals including *Historical Journal of Film Radio and Television*, *South Asia* and *Indian Horizons*.

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**NYU London Academic Policies**

**Academic Integrity**

At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community. By accepting membership in this community, students take responsibility for demonstrating these values in their own conduct and for recognizing and supporting these values in others.

At NYU London, students will submit electronic copies of their written work to Turnitin via their NYU Classes course site. Instructions will be provided to you separately.

**Late Submission of Work**

Written work due in class must be submitted during the class time to the professor. Late work should be submitted in person to a member of NYU London staff in the Academic Office (Room 308, 6 Bedford Square) during office hours (Mon – Fri, 10:00 – 17:00). Please also send an electronic copy to academics@nyu.ac.uk for submission to Turnitin.

Work submitted within 5 weekdays after the submission time without an agreed extension receives a penalty of 10 points on the 100 point scale.
Written work submitted more than 5 weekdays after the submission date without an agreed extension fails and is given a zero.

**Please note** end of semester essays must be submitted on time.

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**Attendance Policy**

Study abroad at Global Academic Centres is an academically intensive and immersive experience. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. As classes typically meet once a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course.

**To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance is mandatory and unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade.** Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.

**How to report an absence**
Absences from class must be reported to NYU London administrative staff using the online Absence Form: [http://tinyurl.com/nyulabsence](http://tinyurl.com/nyulabsence)

Absences can ONLY be excused if they are reported using this form. Students should NOT approach their class instructor for an excused absence. However, students should contact their class instructor to catch up on missed work.

**Medical absences**
If you are unable to attend a class due to ill-health, you must provide details of your illness and class(es) missed to NYUL staff using the online Absence Form WITHIN SEVEN DAYS of your return to class.

**Please do not use the form to report a medical emergency or to request urgent assistance.** In a medical emergency call 999 and ask for an ambulance. NYU London staff are available to offer support, whatever time of day. If you would like to speak to a member of staff urgently to request support with a medical problem, please call 0800 316 0469, selecting option 2.

**Non-medical absences**
If you have to miss class for an unavoidable, non-medical reason you must provide details to NYUL staff using the online Absence Form at least SEVEN DAYS PRIOR to the date(s) in question. Examples of valid non-medical reasons are as follows: religious holiday; family wedding; scholarship competition; family emergency. If in doubt please speak to a member of Academics staff or email academics@nyu.ac.uk. Failure to provide requested documentation for these types of absences will result in the absence remaining unexcused.

**Further information regarding absences**

**NYU London staff carefully monitor student attendance and absence records.** In most cases full completion of the online Absence Form will be sufficient to excuse your absence. However, in certain circumstances, you will be asked to provide additional information/verification before it can be excused. If we notice that you have multiple absences you will be contacted to arrange a meeting with a member of staff.

**Unexcused absences from exams are not permitted and will result in failure of the exam.** Students may not take an exam before or after other students in the class, and may not leave the programme before all course work has been submitted.

Please refer to the NYU Wikis Page for the full absence policy: [https://wikis.nyu.edu/x/awRgAw](https://wikis.nyu.edu/x/awRgAw)

Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. Students must notify their professor and the Office of Academic Support in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose.
Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in a class are encouraged to contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For more information, see Study Away and Disability.

NYU in London uses the following scale of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

- A=94-100
- A-=90-93
- B+=87-89
- B=84-86
- B-=80-83
- C+=77-79
- C=74-76
- C-=70-73
- D+=67-69
- D=65-66
- F=below 65

Where no specific numerical equivalent is assigned to a letter grade by the class teacher, the midpoint of the range will be used in calculating the final class grade (except in the A range, where 95.5 will be used).

NYU in London aims to have grading standards and results in all its courses similar to those that prevail at Washington Square.

NYU requires all instructors to submit midterm grades for their students. Midterm grading is considered an educational best practice, and plays an important role in schools’ early intervention programs, which enable advisers to identify and to respond to students in crisis.