Sample Programme Synopsis: Introducing Britain

Week One: Manchester: ‘Changing Political Structures’

The course begins in Manchester, where we discuss the changing political structures of Britain and British society. Students examine diverse representations of Britain in the eighteenth century, from celebration of Britain as an emerging colonial power to engagement with European revolutionary ideals. Based in Manchester, the students are able to learn about the developments and social and economic consequences of the Industrial Revolution in Britain, incorporating a visit to a local cotton mill, Quarry Bank Mill in the village of Styal. A day trip to Liverpool allows further investigation of political developments following the two world wars and the impact of Chinese migration into Britain in a new global era.

Week Two: The Lake District: ‘Culture and Communication’

This week the course is based in the scenic Lake District, where students read and explore the literary outputs associated with the political, cultural, and social changes learned about in week one. We use a variety of different fiction and non-fiction writing to show how modes of communication in Britain have changed over the past three hundred years. This includes a focus on language and linguistic variation, and how distribution of and access to literature has evolved. Being situated in the Lake District, students study the work and visit the houses of the famous writers William Wordsworth and John Ruskin, and also learn about the Industrial fiction of the nineteenth-century North West author, Elizabeth Gaskell.

Week Three: Lancaster: ‘Movements and Migrations’

The last week of the course is based in Lancaster, and incorporates local trips, including a tour of the war memorials in the city. In this week, we focus on the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, considering the impact that the two world wars had on Britain and on Britain’s relationship with the rest of the world. Students learn about individual and cultural experiences in a geographically and demographically changing Britain, culminating with an analysis of some of the causes and political implications of Brexit. Texts studied in this week include a story from The Good Immigrant, a recent collection of personal accounts about life in a multi-racial Britain, along with extracts from the political arguments used for and against the Brexit vote.

Social Events:

The course provides a wide range of extracurricular activities aimed at providing an insight into British culture and introducing students to the North West. An active calendar and team-building social events, designed to fit in with the residential aspect of the course, helps students get to know each other. As well as visiting historically and culturally significant sites we also incorporate location-specific social events, walking in the Lake District and visiting entertainment venues, such as the cinema, in Manchester. Tutors and other staff are available throughout the duration of the trips to help guide students around their new environments.