

**LONDON AND MODERNITY 1880-1960 HIST 30102**  
**Course Unit Director: Professor Frank Mort**



**Course Description:**

Modernity, modernism, and modernisation - the course will explore these themes in relation to the changing character of London as a metropolitan centre from the late nineteenth century to the 1960s. Was London a 'unique city', as one commentator described it, or did it share similar characteristics with other metropolitan centres? We will explore key themes for detailed study including: empire and popular culture, plans, planners and architects, high society and the city's

low underworlds, homosexuality and prostitution, bohemian London and the post-imperial metropolis. The sessions will be informed by recent cutting edge research on urban cultures, historical geography, sexuality and post-colonialism. It will also provide students with the opportunity to encounter London as it is represented in visual media (newsreels, photography, television) as well as in written texts. You will be encouraged to develop a critical awareness of key primary and secondary sources and their use in researching metropolitan history and to examine specific thematic case studies in relation to the transformations of particular zones or quarters of the city (eg Soho and Notting Hill). There will be a study afternoon in London as part of the course which is always popular.

### **Assessment**

1. One 2,500 word essay. (50%) chosen from a selected list

2 One open book examination (50%)

Students will also give one 5 minute presentation to the seminar, with the opportunity for feedback.

### **Indicative Lecture and Seminar Programme:**

- Course Introduction: Lecture: Modernity and the City: the Case of London
- The Imperial City: Facets of Empire
- Gender, Popular Culture and Performance in the late-Victorian and Edwardian City.
- The Experience of War and the Planned Future
- Tradition and Modernity in the late Imperial City: The Coronation, 1953  
Society and the Social Elites in 1950s London
- 'The Most Polluted City in the World': Vice and Sexual Scandal in the Post-War Metropolis.
- English Bohemia: Soho
- The Post-Imperial Metropole: Case Study Notting Hill.
- 'Permissive' London: The Case of the Profumo Affair

### **Teaching Methods**

One weekly lecture followed by two-hour intensive seminar discussion. Office hour tutorials. The course will make extensive use of Blackboard. All course materials will be delivered via Blackboard. Essays will be submitted, marked, and returned with feedback via Blackboard. Students will engage in group discussion each week with a set of primary and secondary sources delivered via Blackboard

**Past Dissertation Topics:** Women and Postwar Advertising; London Planning and the Planners in the 1940s; Fashionable Metropolitan Masculinity and Social Class; Urban Exploration in late Victorian London; The Notting Hill 'Race Riots'; Teddy Boy Culture and Social Deviance; The New Look.

### **Indicative Bibliography**

Conekin, B. Mort, F. Waters, C. (eds) (1999) *Moments of modernity: reconstructing Britain 1945-63*, New York University Press/ Rivers Oram Press.

Feldman, D. and Stedman Jones, G, (1989) *Metropolis London: Histories and Representations*, Routledge.

Humphries, S. and Taylor, J. (1986) *The Making of Modern London*, Sidgwick and Jackson.

Mort, F. (2010) *Capital Affairs: London and the Making of the Permissive Society*, Yale.

Nava, M. and O'Shea, A. (eds) (1996) *Modern times: reflections on a century of English modernity*, Routledge.

Porter, R (1994) *London a social history*, Hamish Hamilton.  
Rasmussen, S.E. (1937) *London: the Unique City*, Jonathan Cape.  
Walkowitz, J. (2012) *Nights Out. Life in Cosmopolitan London*, Yale.  
White, J. (2000) *London in the twentieth century. A city and its people*, Penguin, 2001.