



ARTS-4388: Special Topics – Digital Cultural Narratives (CRN: 65340)
A Study Abroad Course for UTRGV Students in the UK, 2024
COURSE SYLLABUS
Summer II, 2024

COURSE INFORMATION:

Meeting Dates: July 8 - July 29, 2024

Meeting Location: Traditional Face-to-Face Course held in the Trip and Zoom Meeting Room

Course Modality:

Traditional Face-to-Face Course

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:

Instructor Name: Prof. Ping Xu

Phone: (956) 777-1126

E-Mail: ping.xu@utrgv.edu

Office Hours: By appointment for zoom meetings

<https://utrgv.zoom.us/j/3146949266>

Meeting ID: 314 694 9266

Blog: <https://pxstudio.us/blog/?cat=73>

OVERVIEW

The School of Art and Design is excited to offer a Study Abroad Course, providing students with a unique opportunity to participate in the Study Abroad UK 2024 Trip. This course aims to enhance students' artistic skills, cultural understanding, and global perspectives through immersive experiences in the vibrant art and design scene of the United Kingdom. Students will have the chance to explore renowned art galleries, museums, and historical landmarks, while engaging in hands-on artistic projects.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, students will embark on a captivating exploration of narrative and interactivity in the realm of digital media, focusing on the fascinating topics of European art history and design cultures. By utilizing the power of digital photographs and videos, students will have the opportunity to create immersive and engaging stories that bring these subjects to life. Throughout the course, students will undertake projects that delve into various aspects within the rich tapestry of British art history and cultures.

Course Details:

- Destination: England
- Duration: Three Weeks: July 8 - July 29, 2024
- Eligibility: Open to all UTRGV students without prerequisite
- Credits: Three credit hours

Course Highlights:

- Visits to prominent art galleries, such as the Tate Modern, National Gallery, and Saatchi Gallery, offering exposure to a wide range of artistic masterpieces.
- Workshops and demonstrations by the instructor, providing students with practical skills and techniques in various art disciplines.
- Excursions to historical sites, including Stonehenge, Jurassic Coast, Buckingham Palace, Old Downton of Edinburgh, and the British Museum, offering a glimpse into the rich history and cultural heritage of the United Kingdom.
- Additional lectures by the instructor, offering valuable insights into the art and design with artificial intelligence and emerging trends.
- Opportunities for students to showcase their work through exhibitions and presentations, gaining recognition for their artistic endeavors.

The Study Abroad Course itinerary and specific activities are subject to change based on factors such as availability, weather conditions, and unforeseen circumstances. The School of Art & Design will strive to provide an enriching and memorable experience for all participants.

Course Project:

The projects will allow students to delve deeper into their chosen themes, with a focus on two captivating aspects:

1. **British Folk Arts and Cultures:** Students will have the chance to delve into the rich traditions and artistic expressions found within British folk arts and cultures. They will explore a diverse range of music, dance, crafts, and customs that reflect the unique heritage of the British Isles.
2. **England Travel and Landscape:** Students will immerse themselves in the captivating landscapes and travel experiences offered by the British Isles. They will capture the essence of different regions, landmarks, and natural wonders through digital media, documenting their journeys and highlighting the unique charm and diversity of British travel destinations.

The course will feature lectures and demonstrations focused on digital designs and creation within above aspects. Students will have the opportunity to deepen their understanding and appreciation of British history and culture, exploring the context of British heritage and creativity.

Course Objectives:

1. **Cultural Immersion:** Immerse students in the rich artistic and cultural heritage of the United Kingdom, allowing them to gain firsthand experience and develop a deeper appreciation for the local art scene.
2. **Artistic Exploration:** Encourage students to explore different art forms, techniques, and styles through workshops and museum visits.
3. **Historical Context:** Expose students to the historical context of art and design in the UK, visiting iconic landmarks, architectural wonders, and cultural sites that have influenced artistic movements.
4. **Professional Development:** Provide students with insights into the professional art and design industry through guest lectures, portfolio reviews, and networking opportunities.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES FOR THE COURSE

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Digital Photography for Creating Narrative Documentation: Students will learn the art of using digital photography and digital imaging to create compelling narrative documentation of cultural stories.
- Photo Retouching and Image Manipulation for the cultural narratives: Students will develop skills in photo retouching and image manipulation techniques, enhancing their cultural journal with visually appealing and impactful imagery.
- Video Shooting and Video Editing: Students will acquire proficiency in digital video editing, enabling them to craft engaging narratives using video footage.

The academic and program goals of the course include fostering cultural awareness through digital media and providing students with an opportunity to learn about British cultures through travel, partner school visits, and field trips to art museums and galleries in England and Scotland.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR CORE CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS

A Bachelor of Fine Arts with Graphic Design Concentration at UTRGV prepares students for several professional works in the field. The curriculum emphasizes concept development and application, work with clients, and professional development, including establishing of a working portfolio. Students who graduate from the program are equipped with a broad range of practices in the design field, such as interactive design, art direction, publication design, including print and advertising, multimedia and web design, motion graphics, photography, and social service design in a variety of settings. UTRGV Graphic Design alumni follows a wide range of individual paths, including running their design studios, working for a large corporation, or specializing in web and interactive media. Some students also choose to earn a master's degree in the field, opening many possible horizons.

TEXTBOOK, TECHNOLOGY, AND RESOURCE MATERIAL

No textbooks will be required for this course as I will provide lectures and learning sources to you through the trip and lab hours.

Recommended Resources & Periodicals for the Inspiration of digital imaging

- [Behance](#)
- [Pinterest](#)
- [Dribbble.com](#)
- Communication Arts – Photography Annual
- [Smashing Magazine](#)
- [FastCompany Magazine](#)

Supplies & Materials

For backup/transportation purposes, please purchase:

1. 64 or 132 GB USB drive or an external hard drive.
2. 132 GB memory card for your camera (photo shooting and video shooting)

Recommended Programs for the Projects

- Adobe Photoshop
- Adobe Lightroom
- Adobe Premiere Rush
- Adobe Firefly

Recommended Hardware for the Projects

- Laptop & External Drive
- Digital Photo Equipment: Camera (DSLR, Mirrorless, or Point & Shoot), Tripod, Memory Cards
- Drone for Drone Photography (Optional)

GRADING POLICY

Student works in this course will be assessed based on professional standards, taking into account creativity, presentation, and content value. When determining students' grades, the following areas will be considered:

1. **Attitude:** Students' engagement, enthusiasm, and willingness to learn and participate in the course will be taken into account.
2. **Attendance:** Regular attendance and active participation in class activities and discussions will be considered.
3. **Constructive Participation:** Students' active engagement and contributions to class discussions, critiques, and collaborative activities will be evaluated.
4. **Development of Concepts:** The progression and development of students' ideas and concepts throughout the course will be assessed.
5. **Aptness of Thought:** The relevance and appropriateness of students' ideas and thought processes in relation to the assigned projects and course objectives will be considered.
6. **Originality:** The level of originality and uniqueness demonstrated in students' creative works and ideas will be evaluated.
7. **Composition:** The composition and arrangement of visual elements, such as layout, balance, and visual hierarchy, will be assessed.
8. **Construction:** The technical craftsmanship and execution of students' works, including attention to detail, precision, and quality of execution, will be evaluated.
9. **Curiosity:** Students' curiosity and willingness to explore new ideas, techniques, and approaches will be considered.
10. **Tenacity:** The level of effort, perseverance, and dedication demonstrated by students in completing assigned projects will be assessed.
11. **Inventiveness:** The ability to think outside the box, explore unconventional approaches, and demonstrate innovative thinking will be evaluated.
12. **Presentation:** The effectiveness of students' presentations, both in terms of visual communication and oral delivery, will be assessed.
13. **Technical Proficiency:** Students' proficiency and skill level in utilizing the technical aspects of digital media tools and techniques relevant to the assigned projects will be considered.

The final grade for the course will be calculated by summing up the scores of all projects and dividing it by the total number of projects completed by the students.

Grade Scale (applied to each project):

Excellence: 90 - 100 [A] Projects that demonstrate incredibly imaginative ideas and showcase excellent technical skills and presentation. These projects may go above and beyond the given parameters and show active participation in class discussions and critiques.

Above Average: 80 - 89 [B] Projects that exhibit solid overall development with original thought throughout the project. They also demonstrate good design insight and work ethic. Regular participation in class discussions and peer critiques is maintained.

Average: 70 - 79 [C] Projects that meet the parameters of the assignment but may lack originality or effective communication of the exercise's goals. They may also have shortcomings in execution or presentation.

Weak: 60 - 69 [D] Projects that are below average and do not meet the expected standards. They may have significant flaws in concept, execution, or presentation.

Unacceptable: 0 - 59 [F] Projects that do not meet the minimum requirements and fail to demonstrate an acceptable level of proficiency or understanding of the subject matter.

The final grade for the course will be determined by averaging the scores obtained for each project, using the grade scale outlined above.

BLACKBOARD SUPPORT

Please get in touch with the Center for Online Learning and Teaching Technology (COLTT) if you need assistance with course technology at any time.

Campus:	Brownsville	Edinburg
Location:	Casa Bella (BCASA) 613	Education Complex (EEDUC) 2.202
Phone:	956-882-6792	956-665-5327

Toll-Free: 1-866-654-4555

Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Support Tickets Submit a Support Case via our [Ask COLTT Portal](#)

24/7 Blackboard Support

Need Blackboard assistance after hours? You can call our main office numbers, 956-882-6792 or 956-665-5327, to speak with a support representative.

Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to attend all scheduled class meetings. In the event of an excused absence, students should contact the instructor in advance and make arrangements to make up any missed exercises, work or examinations. **The instructor has the authority to drop a student from the course if the student exceeds five absences during the semester.**

Tardiness Policy:

A student will be considered tardy if they arrive more than 15 minutes late to class. Tardiness is not tolerated in this class. Three tardies will be counted as an absence. A tardy on a critique or presentation day will result in a grade reduction for the project.

Effort Policy: Students are expected to actively monitor their performance throughout the semester and seek guidance from available sources, including the instructor, if their performance drops below satisfactory levels. Students who are unprepared, late, absent from class meetings, or non-participatory in group projects may receive a reduced project grade when applicable.

Back-up Policy: It is strongly recommended that students regularly back up their essential files and project folders in two different locations or disks to prevent unexpected file damage or disk errors. Even in the case of late projects due to file damage, a grade deduction will still be implemented.

Absence/Sick Policy: For each unexcused absence during the project period, a two-point deduction will be applied to the project grade. If a student is absent on a critique or presentation day or delays a project, one letter grade will be deducted from the project grade.

It is important for students to adhere to the attendance, tardiness, effort, back-up, and absence/sick policies outlined above to maintain a satisfactory performance and avoid any negative impact on their project grades.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Members of the UTRGV community uphold the [Vaquero Honor Code](#)'s shared values of honesty, integrity, and mutual respect in our interactions and relationships. In this regard, academic integrity is fundamental in our actions, as any act of dishonesty conflicts as much with academic achievement as with the values of honesty and integrity. Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to: cheating, plagiarism (including self-plagiarism), and collusion; submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person; taking an examination for another person; any act designed to give an unfair advantage to a student; or the attempt to commit such acts (Board of Regents Rules and Regulations, STU 02-100, and UTRGV Academic Integrity Guidelines). All violations of Academic Integrity will be reported to Student Rights and Responsibilities through [Vaqueros Report It](#).

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects academic performance) who would like to receive reasonable academic accommodations should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) for additional information. For accommodation requests to be approved, the student must apply using the [SAS](#) and is responsible for providing sufficient documentation of the disability to SAS. Students must participate in an interactive discussion or an intake appointment with SAS staff. Accommodations may be requested at any time but are not retroactive, meaning they are valid once SAS approves. Please get in touch with SAS early in the semester/module for guidance. Students who experience a broken bone, severe injury, or undergo surgery may also be eligible for temporary accommodations.

Pregnancy, Pregnancy-related, and Parenting Accommodations

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination, which includes discrimination based on pregnancy, marital status, or parental status. Students seeking accommodations for pregnancy, pregnancy-related conditions, or parenting (reasonably immediate postpartum period) should submit the request using the form found at [Pregnancy and Parenting | UTRGV](#).

Student Accessibility Services staff can be contacted at either campus:

Brownsville Campus:

Music and Learning Center building (BMSLC, 1.107), phone (956) 882-7374, email ability@utrgv.edu.

Edinburg Campus:

University Center (EUCTR, 108), phone (956) 665-7005, email ability@utrgv.edu.

MANDATORY COURSE EVALUATION PERIOD

Students are encouraged to complete an ONLINE evaluation of this course, accessed through your UTRGV account (<http://my.utrgv.edu>); you will be contacted through email with further instructions.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT and MANDATORY REPORTING

By UT System regulations, your instructor is a “Responsible Employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and so must report to the Office of Institutional Equity & Diversity (OIED@utrgv.edu) any instance occurring during a student’s time in college of sexual misconduct, which includes sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, and sexual harassment, about which they become aware during this course through writing, discussion, or personal disclosure. More information can be found at www.utrgv.edu/equity, including confidential resources available on campus. The faculty and staff of UTRGV actively strive to provide a learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect that is free from sexual misconduct, discrimination, and violence. If students, faculty, or staff would like confidential assistance or have questions, they can contact OVAVP (Office for Victim Advocacy & Violence Prevention) at (956) 665-8287, (956) 882-8282, or OVAVP@utrgv.edu.

COURSE DROPS

According to UTRGV policy, students may drop any class without penalty, earning a grade of DR (drop) until the official drop date. Following that date, students must be assigned a letter grade and can no longer drop the class. Students considering dropping the course should be aware of the “3-peat rule” and the “6-drop” rule to recognize how dropped classes may affect their academic success. The 6-drop government refers to Texas law that dictates undergraduate students may not drop more than six courses during their undergraduate career. Courses dropped at other Texas public higher education institutions will count toward the six-course drop limit. The 3-peat rule refers to additional fees charged to students who take the same class for the third time.

STUDENT SERVICES

Students who demonstrate financial need have various options for paying for college costs, such as scholarships, grants, loans, and work-study. Students should visit the Student Services Center (U Central) for additional information. U Central is located in BMAIN 1.100 (Brownsville) or ESSBL 1.145 (Edinburg) or can be reached by email (ucentral@utrgv.edu) or telephone: (956) 882-4026. In addition to financial aid, U Central can assist students with registration and admissions.

Students seeking academic help in their studies can use university resources in addition to an instructor’s office hours. University Resources include the Advising Center, Career Center, Counseling Center, Learning Center, and Writing Center. The centers provide tutoring, writing help, counseling services, critical thinking, study skills, degree planning, and student employment. In addition, services such as the Food Pantry are also provided. Locations are listed below.

Center Name	Brownsville Campus	Edinburg Campus
Advising Center AcademicAdvising@utrgv.edu	BMAIN 1.400 (956) 665-7120	EITTB 1.000 (956) 665-7120
Career Center CareerCenter@utrgv.edu	BINAB 1.105 (956) 882-5627	ESTAC 2.101 (956) 665-2243
Counseling Center Counseling@utrgv.edu Mental Health Counseling and Related Services List	BSTUN 2.10 (956) 882-3897	EUCTR 109 (956) 665-2574
Food Pantry FoodPantry@utrgv.edu	BCAVL 101 & 102 (956) 882-7126	EUCTR 114 (956) 665-3663
Learning Center LearningCenter@utrgv.edu	BMSLC 2.118 (956) 882-8208	ELCTR 100 (956) 665-2585
University Library circulation@utrgv.edu www.utrgv.edu/library	BLIBR (956) 882-8221	ELIBR (956) 665-2005
Writing Center WC@utrgv.edu	BLIBR 3.206 (956) 882-7065	ESTAC 3.119 (956) 665-2538

CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES (STUDENTS IS REQUIRED TO COMPLETE ONLY ONE PROJECT)

Date	Topic	Assignment
July 8, 2024	UK Trip Begins	Project Brief Review Project-A: Digital Cultural Narratives Via Photography Project-B: Digital Cultural Narratives Via Video
July 10 – 13, 2024 Travel Time in England	Brainstorming and Idea Generation for the DCNU Project	Material Preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape Photography • Video Shooting • Museum Visit & Field Trips • Materials (Photos and Articles) • Essay Drafting
July 14 - 23, 2024	Project Execution	Digital Cultural Narratives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials (Images and Text) • Digital Photography for the Trip • Story-telling Videos Editing
July 25 - 30, 2024 Lab Hours (EVABL 1.223)	Project Finalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Photography for the Trip • Story-telling Videos Editing • Essay & Testimony

SUMMER II, 2024

July 8	First day of class and the departure day from Dallas to London
July 24	Returning day from UK
July 26 - June 30	Lab hours for finalizing the DCNU project
July 31	Project due

DEAN OF STUDENTS

The Dean of Students office assists students when they experience a challenge with an administrative process, an unexpected situation such as an illness, accident, or family situation, and aids in resolving complaints. Additionally, the office facilitates student academic-related requests for religious accommodations, supports students formerly in foster care, helps to advocate on behalf of students and inform them about their rights and responsibilities, and serves as a resource and support for faculty and campus departments.

[Vaqueros Report It](#) allows students, staff, and faculty to report a concern about a student's well-being, seek assistance in resolving a complaint, or report allegations of behaviors contrary to community standards or campus policies.

The Dean of Students can be reached by email (dos@utrgv.edu), phone (956-665-2260), or by visiting one of the following office locations: Cavalry (BCAVL) 204 or University Center (EUCTR 323).

DETAILED TRIP ITINERARY:

Day 1: Departure to London

- From McAllen to Dallas and London (MFE-DFW-LHR)
- From Brownsville to London (BRO-DFW-LHR)

Day 2: Arrival in London

- Arrive at London Heathrow Airport
- Accommodations: Budget-friendly hostel
- Transportation: Utilize London's public transport system with Oyster Cards.
- Meals: A mix of dining out and budget-friendly meals.
- Tour the Bloomsbury area

Days 3-7: Exploring London

- Walking tour of Central London
- Visit to the British Museum
- Explore the iconic Tower of London
- Thames River cruise
- Stroll through St. James's Park
- Visit Buckingham Palace
- Explore the Victoria and Albert Museum

- Street photography workshop in Covent Garden
- Evening theater performance

Days 8-10: Art and Culture

Activities: Most major museums and galleries offer student discounts or free admission.

- Visit the Tate Modern and Tate Britain
- Guided tour of the National Gallery
- Explore the Design Museum
- Photography session along Southbank
- Explore the Saatchi Gallery
- Visit the National Gallery
- Explore Borough Market
- Notting Hill and Portobello Road Market.

Days 11-14: Historical England

- Day trip to Oxford
- Day trip to Eynsford
- Day trip to Manchester
- Explore Warwick Castle
- Visit the historic city of Bath
- Explore the Jurassic Coast
- Travel to Stonehenge
- Return to London

Days 15-18: Cultural Immersion

- Visit the Museum of London
- Day trip to Greenwich (visit Royal Observatory)
- Guided tour of the Houses of Parliament
- Explore London streets for a guided street photography session.
- Explore Notting Hill and Portobello Market
- Attend a West End musical
- Workshop on storytelling through photography

Days 19-22: UN Heritage and Project Work

- Visit Westminster Abbey (UNESCO site)
- Day trip to Windsor Castle
- Explore Kew Gardens (UNESCO site)
- Workshop on digital storytelling and project planning
- Students work on their digital cultural narratives project

Departure:

- Check out from accommodation
- Transfer to London Heathrow Airport
- Departure: Travel Home

Design studio / lab hours for finalizing project:

- Group presentation of digital narratives in EVABL 1.223 (two students for each group)

Please note that this itinerary provides a balanced mix of cultural exploration, education, and opportunities for students to work on their digital cultural narratives projects. Given the student budget of approximately \$4,000 per person, cost-effective options have been prioritized while still ensuring a rich and meaningful experience in London and England.