

TRANSATLANTIC IDENTITIES

originally listed as "Our First Century Apart"



English-Speaking Union poster, 1948

TRANSATLANTIC IDENTITIES

WHY THE CHANGE OF TITLE? Although the original, "Our First Century Apart," suggested that this would be a course about Britain and America in the Nineteenth Century, it said nothing about content. It is a course about *ideas*, how ideas shape a nation, and how those ideas are reflected in the arts and literature of their respective countries. In declaring independence from Britain, The United States was guided by the ideal of equality, an ideal that established a National Identity, and that it has been trying to live up to ever since. Most people in Britain—England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland—would have felt no need to define a National Identity; they could simply continue on as before. But pressures between the constituent parts of British society, the pace of commerce and industry, and the Romantic emphasis on the role of the individual led to an evolving sense of identity there too. In both countries, such changes would lead to laws and action, but also be reflected in the arts, high and low. And from these we hope to learn. *rb.*



1. The Declaration (Sep. 20)

The class will focus on two people: Jefferson, whose Enlightenment views gave America its first statement of principle, and Franklin, the natural genius who became America's first model of the self-made man.

2. Nature and Nature's God (Sep. 27)

American artists, newly arrived from Europe, saw the land as a second Eden, offering the chance to begin again. Meanwhile old-world artists began to depict Nature as a mirror of their own feelings of love, loss, or wonder.



OSHER AT JHU, FALL SEMESTER, 2023

WEDNESDAY MORNINGS ON ZOOM

ROGER BRUNYATE, INSTRUCTOR

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3. Aiming at Eternity (Oct. 4)

Architecture aims at Eternity, said Christopher Wren. After looking at buildings that use old styles to make political statements about their countries, we turn to those that serve new purposes or use new materials, often free from stylistic constraints.



8. Family Values (Nov. 8)

Judging from their arts and literature, Victorians were obsessed with personal morality. In the US, Hawthorne and Melville addressed the subject in a more elemental way. What is the role of faith and morality in the two countries?

4. Industrial Impacts (Oct. 11)

The First Industrial Revolution came earlier in Britain than America, transforming the land and polarizing attitudes. The Second, towards the end of the century, was led by America, with a rather different set of social and economic outcomes.



9. The Sound of a Nation's Soul (Nov. 15)

Britain used to be disparaged as "the land without music." For most of the 19th century America would sing in a borrowed voice. But that was the classical sphere; in the popular vein, America at least was poised to lead the world.



5. Dickens in America (Oct. 18)

Charles Dickens was feted as a celebrity when he came to America in 1842. We look at of his often ambivalent reactions, and also at some of the authors he met and read. By the time he returned in 1867, much had changed.



10. Created Equal? (Nov. 29)

"All men are created equal" apparently did not apply to women; not until WW1 would women in either country win the right to vote. Nonetheless, they did remarkable things. We study their struggle and achievements.

6. An Alarm Bell in the Night (Oct. 25)

Slavery, which troubled Jefferson like "an alarm bell in the night," was not just an American issue. We look at Britain's roles in the early slave trade and abolition, as well as the American experience during the Civil War and Reconstruction.



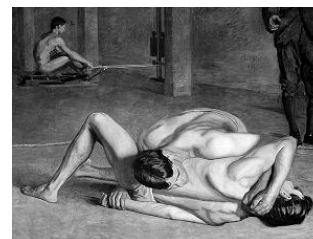
11. The Fabric of Self (Dec. 6)

We look at the emergence of a mass culture, theaters both serious and popular, department stores and shopping for pleasure, public parks, and sports—anything, in fact, that has to do with how people lived and spent their leisure time.



7. Empire (Nov. 1)

"Empire" to a Victorian meant the Queen's dominions around the world. Americans used the word interchangeably with "Manifest Destiny" to refer to Western expansion. Both senses bear moral ambiguities and a rich artistic legacy.



12. Taking Stock (Dec. 13)

Where do the arts stand at the dawn of the new century? Britain seems mired in a gilded nostalgia. The US is hardly touched by European modernism—but it does have its own gritty realism that will develop into a particularly American view.