

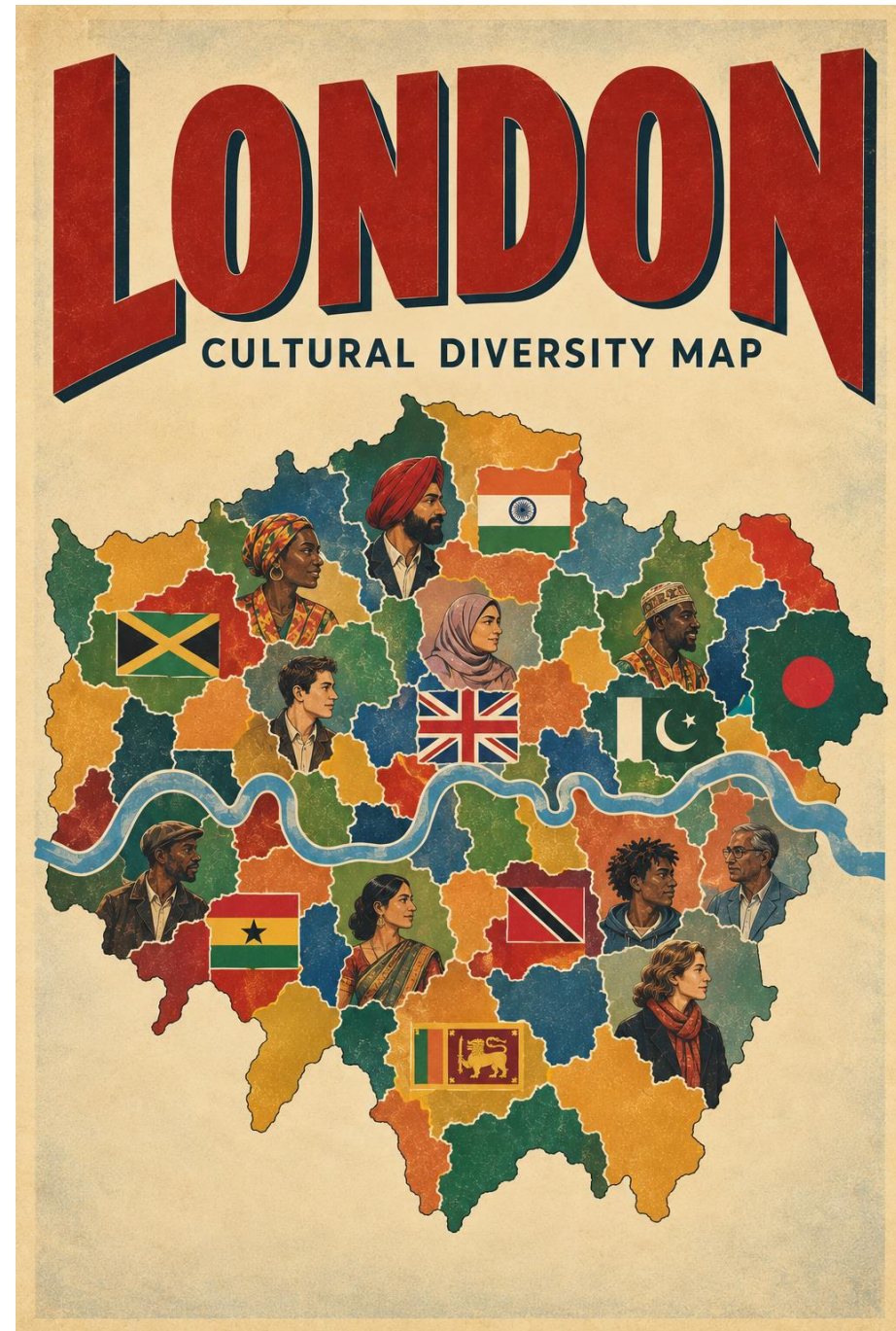


GINS3300/ MGDS5002:
Afterlives of Empire: Experiencing London as a Postcolonial Metropolis

20 June – 3 July 2027 | London, United Kingdom

Course Overview

- **Discover:** London as a living classroom that reveals the global legacies of empire and modernity.
- **Understand:** London's significance as both the imperial capital and a site of anti-imperial resistance.
- **Trace:** How colonial power, globalization, and postcoloniality shape London's streets, institutions, and everyday life.
- **Engage:** With core themes of Empire, Decolonization, and Migration to connect historical power to contemporary diversity.
- **Reflect:** What might it mean to think and act ethically in a world shaped by colonial legacies and global interconnectedness?





Empire → Decolonization → Migration

Empire → established the global hierarchies, institutions, and cultural narratives that defined Britain's reach and imagination.

Decolonization → began as resistance to Imperial power, challenging authority and transforming Britain's political and cultural landscape.

Migration → carried the histories of empire back to London, as communities from former colonies reshaped the city's identity and global connections.

From domination to resistance to renewal – The course frames London as a living record of the afterlives of empire.

A typical day in London

9: 45 – 12:45 AM

Guest Lectures at AKU.

12:45 – 1:45

Lunch Break

1:45 – 4:45

Field visits

4:45 – onwards

Explore London



Course Assessment: Research Poster

Students will prepare a research poster on one of the course themes that:

- Develops a clear argument
- Uses field observations and data
- Incorporates original photographs
- Draws on course materials and research
- Presents findings visually



2026 Research Posters

(Selection)

WHO BELONGS IN LONDON?

The living British Empire and selective marginalization, disguising itself through practices, norms, and structures of control

1 Southall Station
Southall Station, showing both Punjabi and English signage shows how migration has reshaped London's identity.

2 Whitechapel Station
Whitechapel Station, Whitechapel. A migrant community intertwined with London's transportation network.

3 Brick Lane
Brick Lane mural (2025). Cultural identity persisting amidst urban integration.

4 Chinatown
Chinatown entrance. Physical moments of migration are on the forefront of London's cultural identity.

5 Chinatown
ID Sports, Whitechapel Station. Cultural neighbourhoods becoming commercial spots.

6 Chinatown
The Three Lanes, Chinatown. Cultural spaces visibly being changed into areas for non-cultural consumption.

7 Chinatown
O'Neal's, Chinatown. Prof. Rai Sa's mural has been raised to nearly £50,000 per month in Chinatown, and shows the O'Neal's taking business away from both.

8 Chinatown
Robo Square. A current public space showing disproportionate care and a space used to "serve" London.

9 Chinatown
Chinatown side street. Neglected spaces showing the uneven distribution of care and what is cultural here.

10 Chinatown
Brick Lane, sign prohibiting graffiti. Regulating a public space known for visual expression to maintain a respectable image.

11 Chinatown
Graffiti with an accompanying CCTV camera. Brick Lane. Surveillance and removal of graffiti which were once visible in a public area.

12 Chinatown
Graffiti street is replaced by car art. Public expression erased and commodified.

Communities such as Whitechapel, Brick Lane, Chinatown, and more exist as enclaves of migration stories and offer the time of the British Empire, showing how a facilitated settlement has continued to define London's demographics today. Multiculturalism in Britain explained in response to postwar immigration, and efforts to maintain ethnic diversity ultimately recognized the formation of lasting migrant communities (Clegg, 2007, para. 4). Especially in East London, there is an abundance of people who "came to the East End to start a new life, escape persecution, or find a new place they could call home" (Paine, 2004, p. 2). The Underground station connecting these communities show how these cultural areas are embedded within the city's network, making their continuing interconnection and influence on the wider city of London. Instead of just being assimilated, these underground spaces along with significant cultural landmarks reveal how the legacy of the empire is upheld through everyday practices.

In addition to commodification, surveillance in London goes beyond CCTV, operating through embedded forms of control like neighborhood "watch" schemes, prioritized upkeep, and the marginalization of non-commercial spaces. The "quiet" spaces, the highly maintained and visible areas and the neglected side streets result from urban space is carefully managed. According to Gillian and Oliver (2006), "systematic dimensions of [London's] targeted history have as a result in the present city, shaping contemporary economic relations, racial politics, and cultural forms." With this, it is clear that the control of urban distribution of care, which demonstrates how power is shown by the state of effort put into different areas of London, deciding which spaces should be protected and which, and which are rendered invisible or excluded.

London demonstrates how the legacies of empire continue to shape twenty-first century global cities, in which diversity and globalization coexist with various methods of surveillance, spatial control and managed visibility that maintain social order and protect economic power.

LONDON AS A COMMUNITY FIGHTS BACK

1 Southall Station
Southall Station, showing both Punjabi and English signage shows how migration has reshaped London's identity.

2 Whitechapel Station
Whitechapel Station, Whitechapel. A migrant community intertwined with London's transportation network.

3 Brick Lane
Brick Lane mural (2025). Cultural identity persisting amidst urban integration.

4 Chinatown
Chinatown entrance. Physical moments of migration are on the forefront of London's cultural identity.

5 Chinatown
ID Sports, Whitechapel Station. Cultural neighbourhoods becoming commercial spots.

6 Chinatown
The Three Lanes, Chinatown. Cultural spaces visibly being changed into areas for non-cultural consumption.

7 Chinatown
O'Neal's, Chinatown. Prof. Rai Sa's mural has been raised to nearly £50,000 per month in Chinatown, and shows the O'Neal's taking business away from both.

8 Chinatown
Robo Square. A current public space showing disproportionate care and a space used to "serve" London.

9 Chinatown
Chinatown side street. Neglected spaces showing the uneven distribution of care and what is cultural here.

10 Chinatown
Brick Lane, sign prohibiting graffiti. Regulating a public space known for visual expression to maintain a respectable image.

11 Chinatown
Graffiti with an accompanying CCTV camera. Brick Lane. Surveillance and removal of graffiti which were once visible in a public area.

12 Chinatown
Graffiti street is replaced by car art. Public expression erased and commodified.

"What is the British Empire?"
The empire never came to an end
- Professor Bashir
Zain, Aga Khan University

Contesting Memory and Redefining the Metropole

The afterlives of empire exist in a constant two-way exchange. London's institutional spaces maintain sanitized legacies of colonial rule, while diasporic communities continuously redefine the metropole's urban identity through local culture and memory.

1 Southall Station
Southall Station, showing both Punjabi and English signage shows how migration has reshaped London's identity.

2 Whitechapel Station
Whitechapel Station, Whitechapel. A migrant community intertwined with London's transportation network.

3 Brick Lane
Brick Lane mural (2025). Cultural identity persisting amidst urban integration.

4 Chinatown
Chinatown entrance. Physical moments of migration are on the forefront of London's cultural identity.

5 Chinatown
ID Sports, Whitechapel Station. Cultural neighbourhoods becoming commercial spots.

6 Chinatown
The Three Lanes, Chinatown. Cultural spaces visibly being changed into areas for non-cultural consumption.

7 Chinatown
O'Neal's, Chinatown. Prof. Rai Sa's mural has been raised to nearly £50,000 per month in Chinatown, and shows the O'Neal's taking business away from both.

8 Chinatown
Robo Square. A current public space showing disproportionate care and a space used to "serve" London.

9 Chinatown
Chinatown side street. Neglected spaces showing the uneven distribution of care and what is cultural here.

10 Chinatown
Brick Lane, sign prohibiting graffiti. Regulating a public space known for visual expression to maintain a respectable image.

11 Chinatown
Graffiti with an accompanying CCTV camera. Brick Lane. Surveillance and removal of graffiti which were once visible in a public area.

12 Chinatown
Graffiti street is replaced by car art. Public expression erased and commodified.

13 Chinatown
Chinatown side street. Neglected spaces showing the uneven distribution of care and what is cultural here.

14 Chinatown
Brick Lane, sign prohibiting graffiti. Regulating a public space known for visual expression to maintain a respectable image.

15 Chinatown
Graffiti with an accompanying CCTV camera. Brick Lane. Surveillance and removal of graffiti which were once visible in a public area.

16 Chinatown
Graffiti street is replaced by car art. Public expression erased and commodified.

17 Chinatown
Chinatown side street. Neglected spaces showing the uneven distribution of care and what is cultural here.

18 Chinatown
Brick Lane, sign prohibiting graffiti. Regulating a public space known for visual expression to maintain a respectable image.

19 Chinatown
Graffiti with an accompanying CCTV camera. Brick Lane. Surveillance and removal of graffiti which were once visible in a public area.

20 Chinatown
Graffiti street is replaced by car art. Public expression erased and commodified.

Docks & Diaspora: How Imperial Trade Shaped Modern-Day London

Through its bustling economy, many multicultural communities, and unique historical sites, London demonstrates how the former British Empire still influences the modern city. The same imperial trade connections that brought London to the forefront of global wealth and influence have since become the catalyst in shaping the city's diverse make-up. The following twelve photographs include visual evidence relevant to this thesis, and will further be supported with brief analytical captions.

1 Southall Station
Southall Station, showing both Punjabi and English signage shows how migration has reshaped London's identity.

2 Whitechapel Station
Whitechapel Station, Whitechapel. A migrant community intertwined with London's transportation network.

3 Brick Lane
Brick Lane mural (2025). Cultural identity persisting amidst urban integration.

4 Chinatown
Chinatown entrance. Physical moments of migration are on the forefront of London's cultural identity.

5 Chinatown
ID Sports, Whitechapel Station. Cultural neighbourhoods becoming commercial spots.

6 Chinatown
The Three Lanes, Chinatown. Cultural spaces visibly being changed into areas for non-cultural consumption.

7 Chinatown
O'Neal's, Chinatown. Prof. Rai Sa's mural has been raised to nearly £50,000 per month in Chinatown, and shows the O'Neal's taking business away from both.

8 Chinatown
Robo Square. A current public space showing disproportionate care and a space used to "serve" London.

9 Chinatown
Chinatown side street. Neglected spaces showing the uneven distribution of care and what is cultural here.

10 Chinatown
Brick Lane, sign prohibiting graffiti. Regulating a public space known for visual expression to maintain a respectable image.

11 Chinatown
Graffiti with an accompanying CCTV camera. Brick Lane. Surveillance and removal of graffiti which were once visible in a public area.

12 Chinatown
Graffiti street is replaced by car art. Public expression erased and commodified.

LANDSCAPES OF EMPIRE: EXPLORING MEMORY, MIGRATION, AND EVERYDAY LIFE IN LONDON

THEME: THE AFTERLIVES OF EMPIRE: HOW HISTORY, MEMORY, AND MIGRATION SHAPE EVERYDAY URBAN SPACES IN LONDON

London's everyday spaces reveal the enduring afterlives of empire. Through neighbourhoods, markets, public art, places of worship, and commercial streets, imperial histories continue to shape memory, migration, belonging, and inequality. This visual essay examines Whitechapel, Brick Lane, Chinatown, and Borough Market as living archives of empire, showing how communities reinterpret the past and shape London's contemporary urban landscape.

SITES OF MEMORY AND MIGRATION: BOROUGH MARKET AND WHITECHAPPEL AND BRICK LANE

Figure 1
Borough Market became one of London's most important food markets, serving merchants, local residents, and traders from across Britain and the wider Empire.

Figure 2
This Indian street food stall in Borough Market reflects London's multicultural identity, shaped by centuries of imperial trade and migration.

Figure 3
The Bangladeshi arch marks the heart of London's British Bangladeshi community.

Figure 4
This mural celebrates Bangladeshi heritage and migration, turning a public wall into a symbol of community identity and cultural belonging within East London.

Figure 5
This public mural celebrates the history and identity of Brick Lane's Bangladeshi community, turning a street wall into a visible expression of memory, belonging, and cultural heritage.

COMMUNITIES SHAPED BY EMPIRE: BRIXTON AND SOHO

Figure 6
This mural celebrates Brixton's diverse communities and Caribbean heritage. It reflects how migration from former British colonies has shaped the neighbourhood's identity, creating a strong sense of belonging and cultural pride.

Figure 7
This memorial recognizes African and Caribbean servicemen and women whose contributions to the British Empire and Commonwealth were often overlooked. It transforms public space into a site of remembrance, revealing how imperial histories continue to shape collective memory in London.

Figure 8
This mural commemorates the Windrush generation and the cultural contributions of Caribbean migrants to Britain.

Figure 9
This mural inside Brixton Station celebrates the neighbourhood's diverse communities and histories of activism, migration, and cultural expression.

Figure 10
While the gate symbolizes London's Chinese community, it also reflects the influence of globalization and tourism. Rather than representing a purely traditional Chinese space, Chinatown is a hybrid landscape where histories of empire, migration, commerce, and cultural branding intersect.

COMMUNITIES SHAPED BY EMPIRE CONT'D

Figure 11
The multilingual signage at Southall Station reflects the area's strong South Asian identity and the lasting impact of imperial migration on London's urban landscape.

Figure 12
The Gurdwara serves as one of the largest Sikh religious and community centres outside India. Beyond being a place of worship, it represents how migrant communities have established spaces of belonging, mutual support, and cultural continuity within postcolonial London.

Figure 13
The Gurdwara serves as one of the largest Sikh religious and community centres outside India. Beyond being a place of worship, it represents how migrant communities have established spaces of belonging, mutual support, and cultural continuity within postcolonial London.

CONCLUSION

London demonstrates how colonial cities continue to be shaped by the afterlives of empire. Through neighbourhoods, markets, materials, public art, and places of worship, histories of migration, memory, and belonging remain embedded within everyday urban life.

However, these spaces are not neutral. They function as sites of resistance where communities preserve cultural traditions, commemorate marginalized histories, and challenge the social and spatial inequalities produced by colonial and imperial systems.



Field Visits



Museums, Galleries and Theatre

When, Where, and How Much

Dates

Late Summer 2 July – 25 Aug 2027

Pre-Travel Sessions: 14 – 18 June 2027 (online)

Time in London: 20 June – 3 July 2027

Post-travel Canada: 5 August 2027: submit posters

Venue: The Aga Khan Center, Central London

Cost: CAD 3500.

Included: Academic facilities, Administrative support, Housing, Public transport day passes, Field visit entry fees and Guest Speakers honoraria.

Not included: Carleton Tuition (check with the registrar's office), airfare, insurance, daily meals.

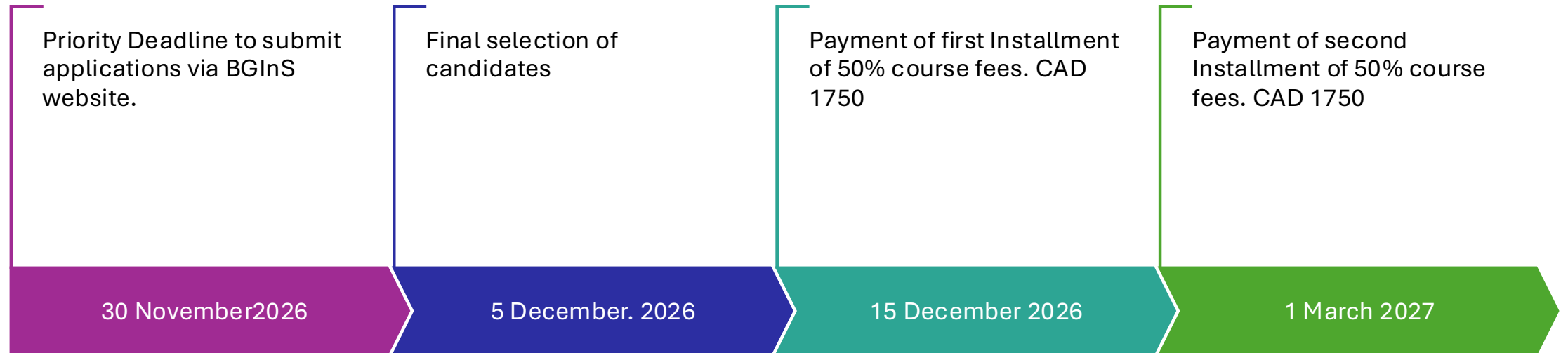


Housing: Dinwiddy House

- London Zone 1 (15 min walk to King's Cross)
- Single Ensuite Rooms (6-room apartments)
- Common Room and Kitchen
- Free broadband and WIFI
- Onsite Laundry
- Bike Storage
- On-site security and CCTV
- Garden area
- Weekly linen change & Towels



Registration and Financial Information

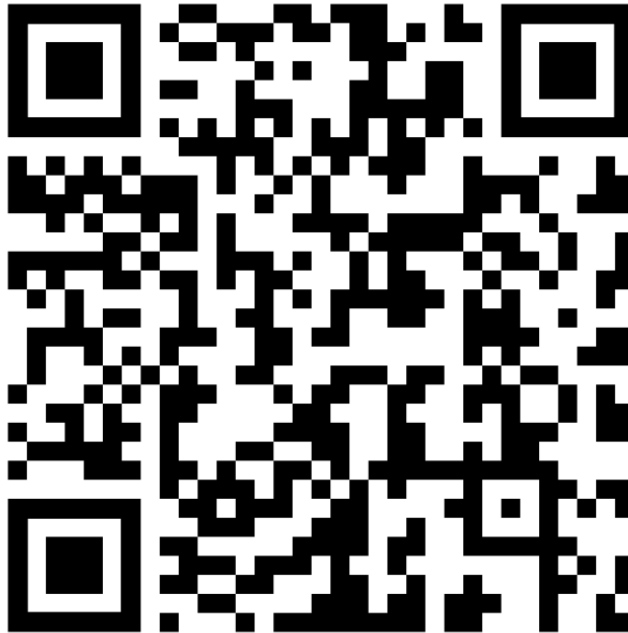


Note: The program is capped at 20 places (undergraduate and graduate combined). Applications submitted after 30 November 2026 will be considered if places remain.



2026 Cohort

Application Link



<https://carleton.ca/bgins/study-abroad-program-london-uk/>

More Information

Hassan Bashir

Email: hassanbashir3@cunet.carleton.ca

Najia Haneefi

NajiaHaneefi@cunet.carleton.ca

Andrea Kayembe

Email: andrea.kayembe@carleton.ca