

Inštitút anglistiky a amerikanistiky FF PU v Prešove

Program: anglický jazyk a anglofónne kultúry, Mgr.

Štátnicové témy

British studies

Brief exam description: The exam focuses on a variety of issues surrounding the topics listed in this document, related to British history and culture. As the cultural tradition of the UK is very rich and complex, the focus will be put on general topics (involving specific examples) consisting of the students' knowledge related to various historical events, historical figures, their (often far-reaching) impact on contemporary society and culture of the UK, as well as up-to-date information concerning the present-day status of societal and cultural aspects of the UK.

Areas of competence required:

Candidates are required to demonstrate their ability of creative thinking and to analyze, compare and contrast a variety of issues relevant to the chosen topic, using specific examples they consider relevant and avoiding unsupported generalizations.

- Candidates are required to identify various idiosyncrasies of British culture in order to be able show adequate understanding of the issues presented.
- Candidates are required to provide support for their general claims, i.e. to use specific examples from relevant sources, referring to specific events, historical figures, etc.
- Candidates are required to introduce the chosen topic briefly, then move on to discuss relevant details, and try and respond to any questions raised or comments made by members of the state exam committee.
- Candidates are required to avoid stating the obvious (e.g. irrelevant claims, extended biographies or historical accounts, etc.).
- Candidates are required to make references to any of the recommended literature they consider relevant.
- Candidates are required to use established academic terms/concepts related to cultural theory or history rather than non-academic ones.
- Most importantly, candidates are encouraged to use their original ideas and interpretations, however unusual or controversial, as long as they can be supported by evidence from sources relevant to the chosen topic.

Exam topics and areas:

1. Confronting and comparing definitions: What is culture? What is pop culture? How is the perception of culture changing (from high to low culture and popular culture) in Britain?
2. Describe how Britain moved to a full constitutional monarchy between 1688 and 1928? What roles did the parliament in the eighteenth century and voting reform in the nineteenth century play?
3. What are differences and similarities between political parties in Great Britain? What are the main advantages and disadvantages of the pluralist system and proportional representation? What is the role of the House of Lords in British society? Is the House of Lords still relevant and is this particular political institution truly democratic?
4. What are the devolved powers of the regional assemblies of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales? What specific political and social issues have these countries had to deal with during the last few decades and how would you characterize their relationship with England?
5. What is the role of cultural studies in British academic context? How has Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies influenced the studies of culture? Which theories and research methods do you consider to be most appropriate regarding cultural studies and how can they be most successfully applied to the study of culture?
6. What do you understand by the Welfare State in the British context? What are the main pillars of the Welfare State? What political problems has it created and which aspects of the welfare state are most important to the British?
7. Is Britain still characterized by differences in class? To what extent can social class be manifested in popular culture? Is it possible to consider UK to be 'class-less' nowadays? Characterise the phenomenon of 'social mobility'.
8. What changes in the primary and secondary sectors of education in England, Northern Ireland and Wales took place as a result of the 1988 Education Act? What key differences exist between the British and Slovak education systems and how would you explain the different realities in the two countries?
9. What is the role of the mass media in the contemporary British culture? How are media changing and shaping culture and society? What are the defining characteristics of tabloid and broadsheet journalism, State and commercial television? Describe the role of the BBC in British media.
10. How have patterns of immigration into Britain changed since 1945? Is the wave of immigration post-2004 different in any way from what came before it? Which socio-cultural theory most appropriately describes the structure of multicultural British society? What have been the major areas of British culture to have been shaped, influenced, or changed by modern in-migration?
11. Questioning cultural stereotypes – In what ways do you think Britain deserves its reputation as a conservative country in comparison to Slovakia and in what ways is it more liberal and

progressive? Try to give specific examples.

12. What were the main arguments and reasons for Brexit? How is Brexit influencing domestic and international politics in the UK (consequences of Brexit)?
13. The ‘Celtic periphery’. Which nations make up the ‘Celtic periphery’? How do these nations manifest their ‘persistence of difference’ (cf. Tripp 2014) in relation to the English?
14. Sport in Britain. Pre-industrial sports. The evolution and organization of sport; sport & the British Empire and the Industrial revolution. The role of masculinity and social class in sport. The cultural and social role of sport in British; Hobsbawm’s “imagined community”.
15. Humour in British culture. Characteristic features of British humour. Differences between British and Slovak humour. Humour as tool in social interaction. Humour as a foundational marker of British cultural identity.
16. The role and function of the British monarchy; how has the monarchy evolved and changed; milestones in the evolution of the British monarchy; How does the monarchy contribute to Britain’s ‘soft power’ influence? How is the monarchy portrayed in popular culture?

Recommended literature:

- Abercrombie, N. – Warde, A. *et al.* 2000. *Contemporary British Society*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bassnet, S. (ed.). 2003. *Studying British Cultures*. Routledge.
- Bew, P., Gibbon, P. and Patterson, H. 1996. *Northern Ireland 1921 – 1996: Political Forces and Social Classes*. London: Serif.
- Chapman, M. 1992. *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gourvish, T. R. – O’Day, A. *et al.* 1991. *Britain Since 1945*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Grant, A. – Stringer, K. 1996. *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History*. Routledge.
- Haenfler, R. 2013. *Subcultures: The Basics*. Routledge.
- Harvie, Ch. 2004. *Scotland and Nationalism*. Routledge.
- Hebdige, D. 1979. *Subculture: the meaning of Style*. Methuen.
- Hobsbawm, E. – Ranger, T. (eds). 2012. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kearney, H. 2012. *The British Isles: A History of Four Nations*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lee, J. J. 1990. *Ireland 1912 – 1985: Politics and Society*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lydon, J. 2012. *The Making of Ireland: From Ancient Times to the Present*. Routledge.
- McDowall, D. 1989. *An Illustrated History of Britain*. Pearson Education Ltd.
- Mackie, J. D. 1991. *A History of Scotland*. Penguin.
- Morgan, K. *et al.* 2010. *The Oxford History of Britain*. Oxford: OUP.
- Oakland, J. 2002. *Contemporary Britain*. Routledge.
- Smith, D. 2013. North and South: Britain’s Economic, Social and Political Divide. Endeavour Media.
- Webb, R.K. 1969. *Modern England from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*. Allen & Unwin.
- Williams, G. – Ramsden, J. 1990. *Ruling Britannia: A political History of Britain 1688 – 1988*. Addison-Wesley Longman Ltd.

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