

Issue 3 Autumn 2008

Interfaith

FREE

Celebrating the diversity of London's faith and culture



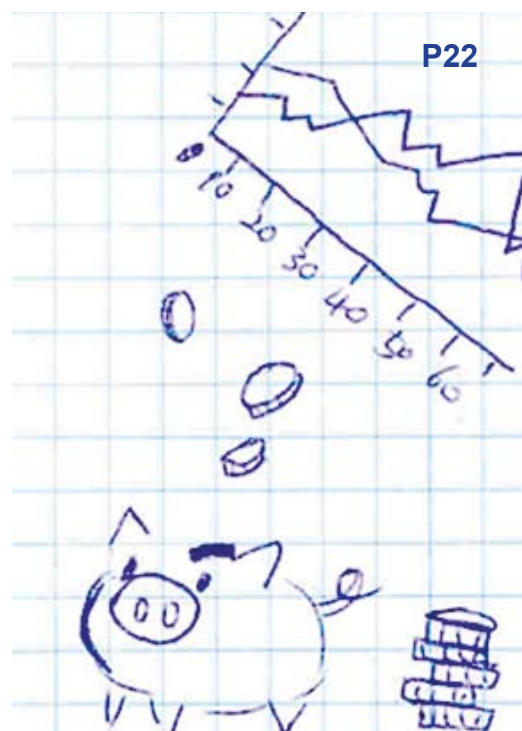
**What if God
is a woman?**

**Travel the World
on a Shoestring**

Can He take a joke?



P8



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EDITORIAL

London is the most multi-cultural city in the world: every country, every culture, every faith is represented here. Each cultural tradition, whether derived from faith or ethnicity, uniquely, but are all in their way constantly evolving, all striving to ensure survival of a cultural heritage in a modern world. **Inter-Act** aims to provide a platform for these cultures and this process, showing that culture provides a stage on which faith and ethnicities face no barriers for discussion, understanding and interaction. Interact is quite an ambitious project, a microcosm if you like of the attempt to promote understanding between multifarious faiths. In bringing together people from different backgrounds, in learning **to appreciate difference and in dismantling fallacies with respect to all cultures, we hope to build a harmonious society.**

Interact has gone through a period of transformation, and has come out with YOU, the London student population as its target. We will focus on the issues you want to hear about with advice to guide you along the way.

Yunran Zhu (Clare), 24
Graphic Design Student, Middlesex
University
"I just love here!"

Meftune Caglar, 24
Graduate, Graphic Designer
"Had fun".

Senien Syeda, 20
Studying Literature at Brunel
University
"...working with interact has
been a challenging but memo-
rable experience"



TEAM

You are probably reading this in the midst of '**fresher's fever**', so be sure to check out our Top Tips for Fresher's and some eye-opening information with our students finance page. And for those not swept up in the "Welcome to University" rush, take a look at our volunteering and social action pages. In the meantime, get your teeth stuck into topics such as the perception of God's gender, demystifying new religious movements, the relevance of comedy about faith and the influence of **violence in films**.

And why not **explore** the diversity of London with our events page or "Travel the World on a Shoestring". Before we forget, (we are an all-female team after all) browse through our sports section for highlights of the **Olympics** and what's coming up in **this season**.

P.S. Want to volunteer on the next editorial team, contact Interact on 02074824020 or e-mail magazine@interact-uk.org.uk

We hope you enjoy it!

Nasrin Yearwood, 20
Studying English at The University of Westminster
"Working as an Editor on Interact has been great fun and an enjoyable experience"

Zunaira Khan, 20
Final year student at Queen Mary – Politics
"Working on the magazine has been great fun!"

Ayia Al-Alsadi, 20
3rd year Medical Student at UCL
"Writing has always been a passion of mine so I jumped at the opportunity to work on Interact"

Fewien Berhane, 24
Graduate – International Relations & Politics
"Had great fun, thanks!"



Calendar of religious events

Zoroastrian

Sikh

Muslim

Jewish

Hindu

Christian

Chinese

Buddhist

Baha'i

October

2nd	Eid Ul-Fitr Jashne Mehergan Half Year Festival
7th	Pavarana
9th	Last Day of Durga (Puja and Dusshera) Yom Kippur
14th-21st	Sukkot
20th	Anniversary of the Birth of the Bab Ascension of the Guru Granth Sahib
22nd	Simchat Torah
22nd -29th	Interfaith Week of Prayer for World Peace
23rd	Khordad Roj Parab
28th	Diwali
29th	Annakuta, Gorvanda Puja and Go Puja
30th	Chung Yuan

November

1st	All Saint's Day
2nd	All Soul's Day
9th	Remembrance Sunday
12th	Anniversary of the birth of Baha'u'llah Birthday of Guru Nanak
24th	Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur
29th	Tir Roj Parab

December

8th	Bohdi Day
9th	Eid-ul-Adha
19th	Hajj –Muslim
21st	Jashne Yalda
22nd	Hannukah begins (ends 29th Dec)
23rd	Amardad Parab
24th	Christmas Eve
25th	Christmas Day
26th	Zartusht-No-Diso

TOP TIPS for Freshers

By Ayia Al-Asadi,
Zunaira Khan

Welcome to University! University is full of new experiences and hard work. It's easy to feel like you're on a roller coaster of ups and downs and we're here to help with some top tips to start you off...

1. Explore, explore, explore! Lectures and seminars can be all across campus. Exploring will save you getting lost and being late.

2. Join as many societies and clubs as you want. It is important to take part in extra-curricular activities, so visit your student union and find out what weird and exciting things are going on.

3. Introduce yourself to everyone. The only way to make the friends you want is by "trying people out". Be confident and open to new people and ideas.

4. It may be your first year and going to the careers service is probably the last thing on your mind right now, but it's helpful to know where it is when you need it. The careers service is a great facility to use when applying for jobs and internships.

5. Allocate a specific amount of your income solely for the fresher's period. There are so many things to do and see, and expensive nights out will make a sizeable dent if you haven't planned for them. So enjoy the money you've designated guiltlessly and stick to your budget after that!

6. If you have particular requirements needs, find out how your university caters for them and make sure you use it.

New to London don't miss out:

Take a tour of London. Whether you've been here all your life or you've just moved into this vibrant city, there is nothing better than getting yourself a one day travel card and touring to your hearts content. Go visit the historical landmarks in London like Buckingham's Palace, Westminster Abbey, Houses of Parliament and Big Ben, not forgetting our most recent attractions such as the London Eye. It's a good way to get a feel for the city and have loads of fun.

Play in London. Take a trip on the London Eye, spook yourself at the London Dungeons, stare at fake celebrities in Madam Tussaud's, go on a boat trip along the Thames and have endless picnics in beautiful Regent's Park.

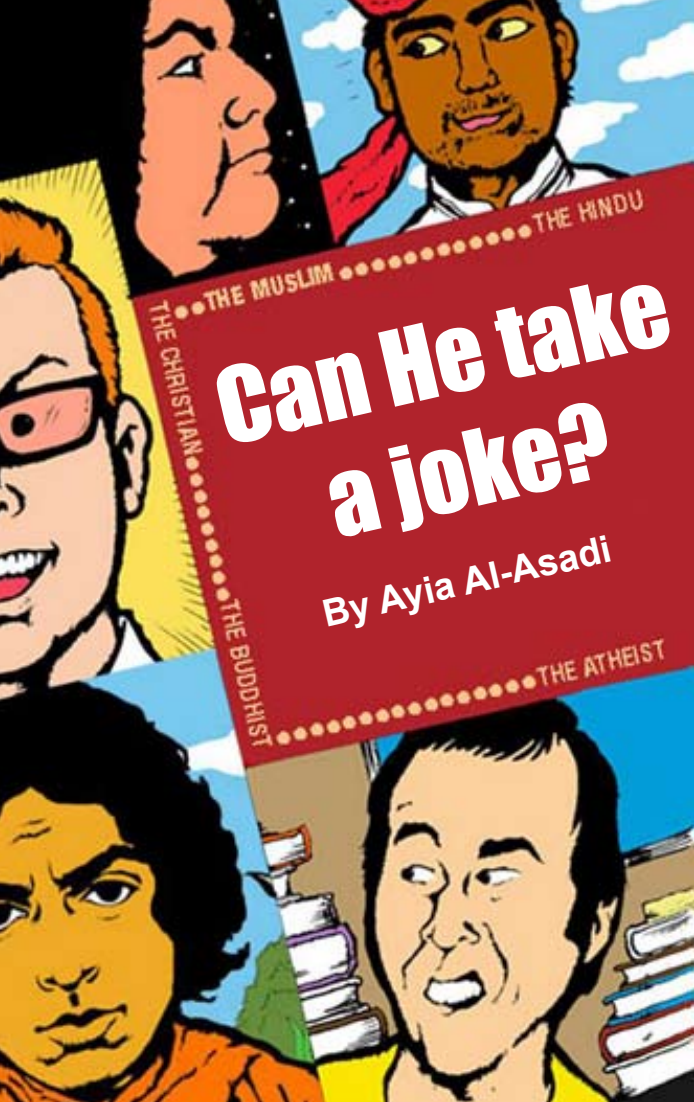
Visit the museums. Most are free entry and again a fun way to get to know London a little more.

Go to the theatre. You are at the heart of the West End in London, the home of some of the best productions in the world. So be sure to find out what's going on, where and go for it. Always look out for student and group concessions. Being five rows from the front or five from the back won't drastically change the performance but will make a dent in your budget!

Treat yourself to a London inspired (window) shopping trip. Male or female, there is no harm in strolling down the infamous Oxford Street, maybe jogging past Bond Street and perhaps just taking a look at Sloane Square. Home of the best designer labels and fashion artists it is worth checking them out, even if you end up in Primark at the end of it!

The first year is all about learning; don't worry if things don't go the way you expected. Just relax and enjoy university life.





At a time when some religious groups are putting more pressure on comedians than ever before, a new batch of wisecrackers find plenty to laugh about.

It is believed that comedy began in Ancient Greece around 450 BC and was defined by Plato as “all exhibitions which have a tendency to excite laughter”. Until recently religion and comedy have never walked hand in hand, with religion almost being this guarded place that comedians never dared to enter.

Over the past few years a new generation of comedians has surfaced, one that aims to break down cultural barriers, correct religious misconceptions and bridge the ever widening gap between those with faith and those without. Their tasteful use of respectful humour to address sensitive issues is what makes them unique.

One example is the blossoming comedy show, “Allah Made Me funny” which debuted in Washington in 2004. It was created by a group of American Muslim comedians in an attempt to counter the negative stereotypes and attitudes about Muslims and Arabs by joking about themselves, their communities and the prejudices they face.

The founder, Preacher Moss, an African American Muslim who worked as a teacher for the emotionally disturbed for eight years, set up the company to engage audiences in contemporary issues facing society through humour. He is joined by Mohammed Amer, a Palestinian refugee, who hopes to conquer ignorance and continue his aim of raising awareness about the hardships of being a stateless refugee.

The third member in this diverse trio is former lawyer Azhar Usman, a Native American born to immigrant Hindu parents, who was interested in waging peace through humour. He holds the honour of holding the first stand up comedy show in Egypt, in 2007; a sign that the world may be willing to hear what these comedians are trying to say.

Azhar Usman is also part of another unusual partnership with comedian Rabbi Bob Alper in their show entitled “One Muslim. One Jew. One Stage. Two Very Funny Guys” which aims to address the differences and similarities between these religions in a light hearted and most of all, peaceful way.

Those who have seen an “Allah Made Me Funny” show in America have commented on the diversity of the audience with trendy young professionals sitting alongside women in Islamic dress, African robes and Asian shalwar kameezes. The fact that a large proportion of the audience is not Muslim shows that people are interested in positive dialogue and understanding more about the often misguided and misplaced views surrounding Islam.

However, as well as showing Americans that most Muslims are not radical extremists, the comedians also hope to take the show to Muslim countries to help the Islamic world gain a better understanding of America. With such a noble cause at heart it may be easy to agree that using religion as a tool for constructive humour is not as shocking as it seems. In fact, humour should bring us all together irrespective of race, culture and religion.





The maddening thing for these comedians is that all the their good work can be undermined by the fury and extreme responses elicited towards fuelling claims that religion cannot take criticism. Would it not be better to rebut these claims by lightening up and laughing together, rather than attacking embassies and staging angry protests that incite hatred and division?

Another example of comedians who want us to laugh more and fight less is a comedy show called "A Muslim, a Mormon and a Jew Walk In to a Bar: The Comedy of Religion". Created by Jewish stand up comedian Lisa Geduldig, the intention was to bring people from different backgrounds together and have a comedy show with a palatable education factor. She is joined by perhaps the UK's most popular Muslim female stand up comedienne, Shazia Mirza, famous for starting her show in an Islamic headscarf with, "My name is Shazia Mirza, at least that's what it says on my pilot's license." She believes that comedy is the perfect way to make people laugh and think at the same time.

Bengt Washburn, the Mormon in the show, defines himself as someone who has trouble following the rules of his faith, like drinking coffee. Here's a bit from his act: "There are a lot of rules for Mormons; no drinking, no smoking, no premarital sex, no coffee. In fact that's the one rule that actually makes sense when you think about it. I mean, you can't drink, you can't smoke, you can't have sex, why stay awake?" Bengt Washburn believes that as a comedian the point is to expose a hidden irony and reveal the world in a different light. But cross over certain lines, make fun of what is considered sacred and it would not be seen as comedy anymore, because people haven't laughed.



The purpose of using religion as part of comedy is not to destroy or vilify it, but to encourage people to take it less seriously. This is certainly true of the last and most unusual example of a comic partnership entitled The Coexist Comedy Tour. Consisting of an atheist, a Hindu, a Muslim, a Christian and a Buddhist, this holy ensemble share a stage and happily make fun of each others beliefs and culture before sharing hugs and driving home together. It is definitely a novel approach to Interfaith dialogue but one that seems to be well received by the public as they go from strength to strength.

Humans have long fought, killed and angered one another over their religious differences, and that fostered hostility has spawned generation after generation of segregation, prejudice and racism. It does not take much to realise that instead of using religion as a weapon, we can use it to wage peace. The key to this it seems is comedy. Although we have a right to satirize any religion, we also have a moral imperative to at least question when to do so and why we are doing it.

It is easy to agree with and understand that combining religion and comedy is acceptable as long as there are limits set in place. The arguments arise when deciding where those limits are drawn. The truth is you can never please everybody. Conflict and disagreement make the world go round and it is this that encourages people like those mentioned above to make a stand and restore the peace, until the next time. For now, the unlikely alliance of religion and comedy seems to be working, and we just hope that people remember to keep laughing.

NEWS

Banned for wearing a bracelet

A Sikh school girl celebrates after a court overrode the school's decision to stop her from wearing a bracelet. Sarika Watkins Singh was expelled for breaking the school's no jewellery policy. She broke the rule not out of rebelliousness but for religious reasons.

The court has described the school's handling of the case as discriminatory. With the case on her side Sarika will now be admitted back into the girls' school in South Wales.

Caught at last

In Sarajevo thousands of people rejoice as the man who has been charged with an atrocious list of crimes is finally arrested. Radovan Karadic, the former Bosnian Serb leader who had been hiding under a false identity, worked ironically in a clinic.

Karadic is responsible for the genocide in 1995 that saw the massacre of over 8,000 Muslim men and boys. The ethnic cleansing project will have to be answered for as he is extradited to the Hague.

Fingerprinting: Gypsies only

The Italian government has proposed to fingerprint the Roma population in a so-called attempt to catch criminals and immigrants. Security is not the only thing at risk here.

The Roma commonly referred to as 'gypsies' have previously been and still are the victims of prejudice-led attacks. The fingerprinting may be an extension of such attacks as the European Parliament insinuates.

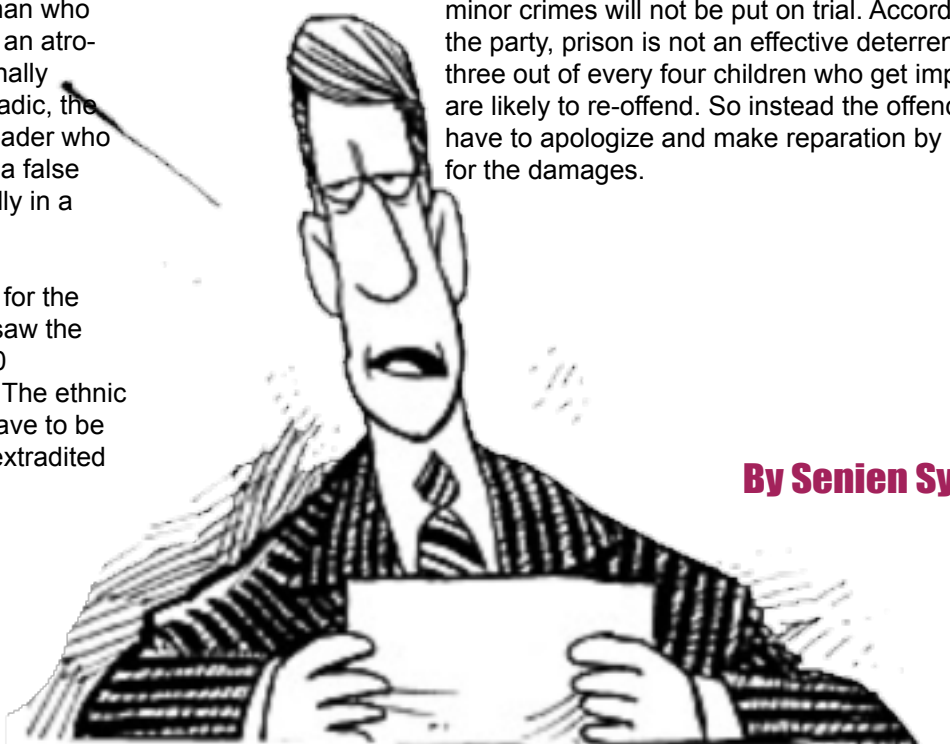
Hunger struck

Burma faces privation as the cyclone sweeps over the Irrawaddy delta. The large scale loss of crops and animals has prompted the UN World Food Programme to proclaim that the country is in need of a years supply of food.

Though helicopters laden with provisions have reached damaged areas, there still remain villages that have not seen assistance for more than a month. The Burmese government's show of reluctance over international aid has made the process of revival a painfully slow one.

Paying your way out

The Liberal Democrats have introduced a new policy whereby young people who are guilty of minor crimes will not be put on trial. According to the party, prison is not an effective deterrent as three out of every four children who get imprisoned are likely to re-offend. So instead the offenders will have to apologize and make reparation by paying for the damages.



By Senien Syeda

Cutting out the violence: are films culpable ?

By Senien Syeda

A police officer is dragged into a warehouse and tied to a chair. The man who has captured him prepares to torture his prisoner. Drawing out a knife he slashes off the officer's ear. Dancing over to his side, he splatters gasoline over the captive and fumbles with the cigarette lighter. His intention is averted when another man in the building suddenly seizes his gun and shoots him in the chest. This graphic description is taken from Quentin Tarantino's debut film *Reservoir Dogs* (1993). It seemingly has no connection to reality, however the boundary between fiction and reality can be blurry.



Hollywood blockbusters may be praised for entertaining but can also be accused of glamorizing violent behaviour. To suggest that youth crime is a direct result of what goes on in the big screen is of course absurd but equally absurd is the assumption that it has no affect. Audiences may not be homogenous, but for a few brutal images trigger adverse reactions. As one Observer article reports "Scream" movies are blamed by teenage girl's copycat killer' (2001). This case demonstrates that films are not 'innocent', but have the power to shape to a certain extent the conduct of others.

With the widespread occurrences of knife-related crimes the emphasis should be on curbing aggression and violence. One Guardian article entitled 'knife crime 'not increasing'' (2008) states that the 'most recent crime survey by the Metropolitan police showed that knife crime has actually dropped by 15.7% over the past two years.' The statistics may illustrate a fall in offences but as Elizabeth Stewart goes on to write '... that still amounts to a knife-related incident every 52 minutes.' In the BBC article 'schools facing gang challenge' (2008) 'experts estimate that the number of gang members under the age of 16 has doubled in the last five years.' The figures reveal that a minority of young people are swamped in a culture of violence.

Certain films contribute to this rising culture (of violence) by condoning criminal behaviour. The bad guys are portrayed as 'cool', the ending does not enact retribution and instead the characters are allowed to be 'let off.' While the thought of no sanctions may be alluring, it leaves the message that misconduct does not carry consequences. Another example is the movie 'Kill Bill' where the whole plot is driven by revenge. The storyline is overtaken by non-stop bloodshed. Carrying her murderous intentions to the extreme the protagonist escapes punishment and is rewarded with her daughter. I can hear you object and scream: 'it's only a movie!' and so it is but its influence reaches beyond the screen.



Cultivation theory in its rudimentary form proposes that the media has sway over the views of the audience with regard to issues such as violence. According to that theory the media distort reality. So that behaviour which we consider abnormal takes on the picture of normality. Instead of reacting against it viewers gradually 'cultivate' the values of that fictional world. A recent article in The Independent headed 'Grand Theft Auto IV is pulled from Thai shops after killing of taxi driver' (2008) reveals that this hypothesis is not without truth. Andrew Buncombe reports that the incident occurred out of 'an apparent attempt to recreate a scene from the controversial video game.' The Newson report (1994) carried out by Elizabeth Newson was released after the Jamie Bulger case where two 10 year old boys were charged with the toddler's murder. It also points to the undeniable correlation between television, violence and crime. The judge maintained that the killing in this case may have occurred as a result of toying with violent video games.

There is no easy way out. One thing remains clear however: censoring boards such as the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) need to introduce boundaries. They have recently announced that they no longer censor new releases. Unwarranted violence should be regulated especially at a time when the media are reporting a multitude of crimes. And a portion of that crime, however small it may be, is in part the result of watching violence on screen.

AUTUMN

Speedy Spaghetti Meatballs

1/2 pack of spaghetti
1 tbsp of extra virgin olive oil
1 clove of garlic, crushed
1 can of tomato and basil sauce
A handful of fresh basil to garnish

For The Meatballs

1/2 kilo of minced lamb
2 onions, finely chopped
A handful of parsley, finely chopped
Salt and pepper seasoning

1. Cook the spaghetti according to pack instructions then drain well. Keep warm in the pan with the lid on.
2. Add the minced lamb, onions and parsley into a large bowl and season. Mix them well by hand then roll pieces of the mixture into small balls and set aside.
3. Heat the oil in a frying pan on high heat and add the garlic. Fry the meatballs until golden brown and well cooked, which is roughly 10-12 minutes.
4. Stir in the sauce and leave to simmer for 6 - 8 minutes on a low to medium heat.
5. Pour the sauce over the spaghetti and toss well to cover. Season with ground pepper, sprinkle the parmesan cheese and garnish with the fresh basil.

Tuna Steaks with Mango and Avocado

2 mangoes, peeled, stoned and cubed
1 large avocado, peeled, stoned and cubed
1/2 red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped
A handful of fresh mint, roughly chopped
A handful of fresh basil, roughly torn
A handful of fresh coriander, roughly chopped
Juice of 2 limes and grated zest of 1 lime
Yellow-fin tuna steak from the fresh fish counter
(choose the number you need depending on how many people you want to feed)
1 tbsp olive oil

1. Place the mango, avocado, chilli, herbs, lime juice and zest in a bowl and season. Mix together and set aside.
2. Place a frying pan on a high heat. Brush the tuna steak(s) with the olive oil and season. Cook for 1 - 1.5 minutes on each side for rare, or 2 minutes on each side for medium.
3. Serve with salsa, lime wedges and anything else you want !!

TIP: You can replace the tuna with any other type of fish or even chicken remembering to leave the chicken to cook for a little longer.



RECIPES

Seven - Spice Pilau with Coriander Butter

300g basmati rice
6 medium Columbian Blacktail free range eggs
50g lightly salted butter
20g pack fresh coriander, chopped
4 tsp Schwartz stir-fry thai 7 spices seasoning
1/2 tsp ground turmeric
400g frozen Waitrose Pea and Bean mix
50g Unsalted Cashew Nuts

1. Cook the basmati rice in plenty of boiling water for about 10 - 12 minutes until tender. Meanwhile, hard boil the eggs in a small pan of simmering water for about 6 minutes. Carefully remove the eggs with a slotted spoon, and rinse out the pan.
2. Add 3/4 of the butter to the rinsed pan with half the coriander, and leave until melted. Set aside. Melt the remaining butter in a large frying pan or wok, add the Thai spices and turmeric, and cook gently for 30 seconds.
3. Drain the rice thoroughly and add to the peas and beans. Add the remaining coriander and the cashew nuts, and stir over the heat until the rice is coated in the spices.
4. Shell and quarter the eggs and serve on top of the rice mixture. Spoon over the coriander butter and serve immediately, with lime wedges.

Sweet Potato Pudding

1kg sweet potato
1 medium cho cho (cooking apple)
1 litre coconut milk or milk
1/2 cup raisins
1 tsp vanilla essence
1/2 tsp nutmeg
sugar to taste

Topping

1 cup coconut milk
1/2 cup sugar
handfull of raisins

1. Peel and grate the sweet potatoes and cho cho, mix the milk, raisins, essence, nutmeg and sugar to taste (the mixture should be runny).
2. Pour into a buttered baking pan and bake at 180C or a gas mark 4, for 1 hour, or until the top becomes solid.
3. Take a fork and scrape the top, and add the topping ingredients mixed together.
4. Bake for a further 30 minutes.



GENDER &

The idea of gender and faith are two subjects that are frequently tied together in terms of how they **influence** and reinforce one another. The key question is whether religions tend to discriminate on grounds of gender and sexual orientation, and the status of religion in the modern world.

Although all major world religions- **Christianity**, **Islam**, **Judaism** and **Buddhism**- deal with spiritual matters, the idea of gender is known to play an important role in terms of the expectations of both sexes and the specific hierarchal implications that are suggested through the holy scriptures. It is evident, however, that with all binary oppositions there will always be one side that is more favoured than the other, and in this case the fact that God created two sexes and is frequently referred to as 'He' is likely to lead individuals to question equality through spiritual as well as cultural means. The fact that the idea of God is geared towards that of a male figure within many religions may bring up questions of whether religion discriminates on grounds of gender by depicting the male as the dominant figure in humanity in which their female counterparts must respect and obey.

In order to get opinions about their perception of God and the idea of gender we asked three students, they replied:

"God is referred to as **'He'** because man is known to be the stronger figure and world leaders. Religion therefore proves that men dominate the world. I don't think religion is important but that's one area I agree with".- **Marvin Simeon**

"Religion is very **important** because it keeps you on the right track. God created men and women to be equal, with certain guidelines that they should follow. It doesn't mean that it discriminates, it just means that men and women are different"- **Donna Sherry**

" I think that religion definitely discriminates on grounds of gender because there's a lot of focus on how **men** and **women** should behave. It talks more about the differences and superiority of men rather than about equality between the sexes.'" - **Kiran Usman**

& FAITH

The fact that many religious texts e.g. **The Bible**, **Qu'ran**, **Torah** etc may express relevant guidelines to male and female behaviour within society, individuals, however, are likely to question these differences and hold their own opinions in terms of the areas they feel are discriminative or fair/unfair with reference to the development and changes in modern culture and society. Linked to this, it is also possible to consider the idea of religion and sexual orientation.



“49 % agreed that religion discriminates on gender”

In the traditional sense, heterosexuality was considered the only correct and morally decent way for individuals to conduct themselves, however in modern society homosexuality has become more accepted and sexuality a subject now

open for interpretation. The development of **gay** and **lesbian** marriages in the UK may also prove to be revolutionary in terms of the religious implications tied to it.

“56% said religions discriminate on sexual orientation”

According to a poll carried out by Populus (on behalf of the Movement for Reform Judaism), in May this year; nearly half (49%) claim that religions fundamentally discriminate on grounds of gender and 56% said that all religions discriminate on grounds of sexual orientation. An interesting point to note is that these views have been put forward largely by male respondents. Less female respondents tend to agree with these statements perhaps indicating the gendered differences in perceptions and opinions.

“Four out of ten thought it right that God should be solely referred to as a He”

“Amongst 18-24 year olds that figure fell to fewer than three in ten (28%)”

These quotes, however, show varying opinions and attitudes towards the idea of faith and gender. Although many individuals hold different opinions and attitudes towards religion, it is clear that the idea of the gender of God is known to be a factor that clearly exists and is open for interpretation.





Olympic Quiz

Test your knowledge of the Olympics in time for 2012...

Q1

In each Olympic opening ceremony, which country traditionally enters the stadium first?



Q2

What did the original Olympic athletes of Ancient Greece wear while participating in their respective sporting competitions?



Q3

What is the Olympic motto?

Q4

What does the Olympic emblem symbolize?



Q5

During each Olympic opening ceremony, a cauldron is lit up. What does the lighting up of this cauldron mean?

Q6

Why are doves always shown in every Olympic ceremony?



Q7

The Summer Olympics has two "sister competitions". What are they?

Q8

Which country holds the record for the most gold medals won in Olympic history?

Q9

In the Ancient times, what rewards awaited successful Olympic athletes?



Q10

War has halted the holding of the Olympics on three occasions so far. When did this happen?

By Joshua Allanigue

Congratulations to the Great Britain team!!



With a stunning opening ceremony, filled with superb choreography, brilliant props used to teach us a short and spectacular Chinese history lesson, awe-inspiring firework displays, not to mention its own rather amusing set of controversies: the Beijing Olympics 2008 had the world glued onto their screens, watching our future overlords at their best. The host nation confirmed its leading status in the world stage, and possibly had the London Olympics organizers biting their nails over how they could possibly top the event. Now the Olympic torch has passed to London. For 8 minutes, billions across the globe watched in awe as London flexed its promotional muscles, with the help of a good old red double decker bus, football icon David Beckham, rock god Jimmy Page and world singing sensation Leona Lewis. Plus the antics of our very own bouffant haired, chuckle inducing Mayor Boris Johnson to wrap it all up. London proved it is indeed prepared to go under the sports spotlight!!

Beijing Olympics

What a glorious sporting extravaganza the Beijing Olympics was!! World records were reset, new and old sporting champions were crowned and most importantly, the perception of Great Britain as a nation of sporting losers has been changed. Great Britain had its most successful Olympic campaign in 100 years, collecting a total 47 medals – 19 gold, 13 silver and 15 bronze – to place fourth in the Olympics overall, an impressive feat which prompted wild cheers and beaming smiles across the country. A particular highlight of the British Olympic campaign was the “Super Weekend” of 16-17 August when the GB team won a total of 17 medals-8 golds, 4 silvers and 5 bronzes!!



Answer: It being the country where the Olympics originated, the Greece's Olympic team enters the stadium first. The host country enters the stadium last.

Answer2: Nothing!! The Ancient Greek athletes traditionally competed nude!! The reason for this is believed to be because of bad weather but also a way of celebrating the achievements of the human body.

Answer3: "Citius, Altius, Fortius", which means "Faster, Higher, Stronger" in Latin. The motto is intended to place emphasis not on winning the competition undertaken, but to push one's body to the limit to achieve for oneself the best possible result.

Answer4: The famous Olympic emblem, consisting of five overlapping rings of different colours, represents the five continents of the world (excluding Antarctica).

Answers: It symbolizes the continuity between the Ancient and Modern Games. In modern times, the games start officially with the carrying of the Olympic torch from the Temple of Zeus at Olympia by runners, which is then carried by the runners across countries to the nation hosting the games for the given year.

Answer6: The lighting of the cauldron was traditionally followed by the releasing of doves, which is meant to symbolize peace. Now the "releasing of the doves" take the form of a "showing of the doves" instead as a response to incidents in previous Olympic openings, when the released doves were burnt alive by the cauldron's flames.

Answer7: The Winter and Paralympic games.

Answer8: As of the 2008 Summer Olympics Games, it is the United States of America with 973 (895 in the Summer Olympics; 78 in the Winter Olympics), (Source: wikianswers)

Answer9: The successful athletes of ancient times were rewarded with olive wreaths and a substantial sum of money. In modern days, winning athletes receive medals, a diploma as well as the possibility of financial reward because of their new found fame.

Answer10: World War 1 cancelled the 1916 games, the 1940 summer and 1944 winter games were cancelled as a result of World War II.

Football

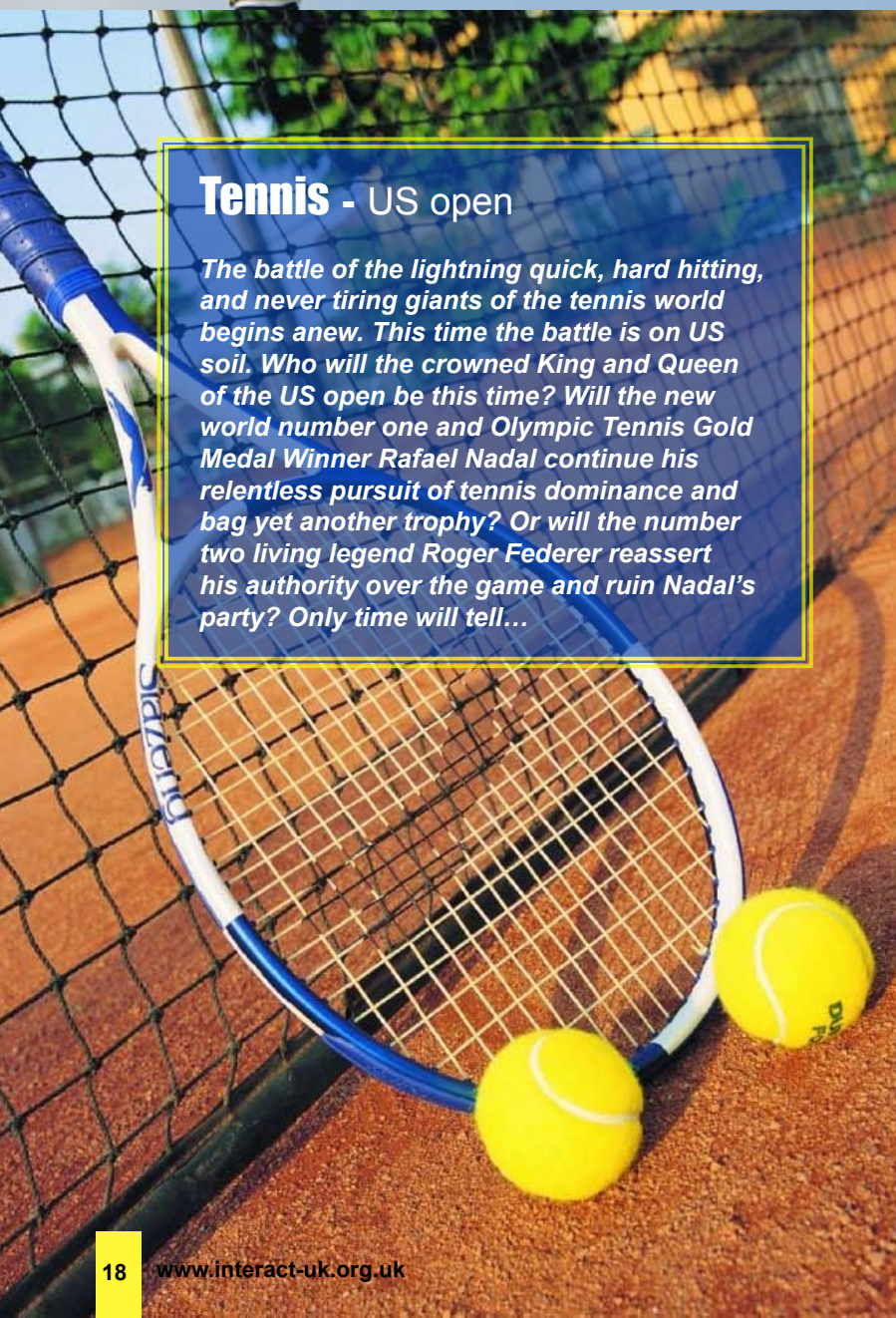
After a summer of waiting, the new football season is upon us. Many questions abound. After Chelsea's second place finish in both the Premiership and the Champions League, will the leadership of World Cup Winner Phillip Scolari and the new signings of Portuguese internationals Deco and Bosingwa finally lead the Blues to that elusive and much coveted double?



Or will the ridiculously trophy (not to mention money) saturated Alex Ferguson and Manchester United continue their football dominance, doing the as yet unachieved and successfully defend both the European Cup and the Premier League Cups? The outstanding leadership of Steven Gerrard and the superb striking of Euro Champ Fernando Torres do an "Istanbul", might once again snatch the Champions League or Premier League Trophy away from the clutches of the unsuspecting current football leaders.

Tennis - US open

The battle of the lightning quick, hard hitting, and never tiring giants of the tennis world begins anew. This time the battle is on US soil. Who will the crowned King and Queen of the US open be this time? Will the new world number one and Olympic Tennis Gold Medal Winner Rafael Nadal continue his relentless pursuit of tennis dominance and bag yet another trophy? Or will the number two living legend Roger Federer reassert his authority over the game and ruin Nadal's party? Only time will tell...



Autumn Sport

By Joshua Allanigue

Rugby

If it is a spectacular show of lightning reflexes, bone crunching power and unparalleled intensity you want, then look no further than rugby. Watch out for these two England internationals to have a taste of what this sport is all about
Saturday, 15 November 2008
England v Australia, 14:30
Saturday, 22 November 2008
England v South Africa, 14:30



Interview: Rushanara Ali

Rushanara Ali is the first Bengali Muslim women to be selected as a candidate for a winnable seat in Parliament. She is campaigning in Bethnal Green and Bow awaiting the next election.

How do you feel being the first bengali woman to be put to a winnable seat?

I feel delighted that I have been chosen, especially as it is from the government party. Being a Muslim woman, I hope it inspires other women (especially from minority backgrounds) to get involved in politics.

"I hope [I] inspire other women to get involved in politics."



How did you get where you are now?

I have always been interested in politics and my local area, and was 17 when I joined the Labour Party. I was very frustrated about the fact that there was a lot of poverty and injustice especially here in the East End of London. This encouraged me to get involved and make a difference. I [studied] Politics, Philosophy and Economics at university and whilst a student I worked for the founder of the 1945 Labour Party Manifesto –he taught me a lot.

"Politics is always challenging,"

A lot of young people feel that they have nothing to do with politics. How is the labour party trying to get young people involved in politics and make a positive difference?

I think it is important ... to really capture the imagination of young people, to make them central to campaigning - mobilising them. Issues should be brought up that they really care about and act on to restore the faith of young people. It is a challenge to make politics exciting for young people but it is a challenge that parties should equip themselves with to face and speak the language of young people.

What do you feel is the most pressing problem in multi-cultural London today, and what do you think is the best way to tackle it?

There are a number of challenges we face. We are a very diverse and dynamic city and looked up to by the international community. A third of Londoners are from ethnic minority backgrounds. I think the areas that we need to work on are making sure young people, particularly from Muslim backgrounds, are not treated unfairly especially by the police with regards to terrorism as this can create tension. Youth crime is another challenge. We need to see how to move young people away from crime and drugs so we don't waste all their talent and potential.

Is there any advice that you would like to give to our readers who would be interested in a political career?

Hard work has no substitute, "persistence and determination go a long way". Find yourself mentors; ask for advice and guidance. If you are interested in politics, it is important to volunteer and get networking. Hard work is key and it is important not to give up at any stage of your life.

By Zunaira Khan

Travel The World On A Shoestring

'Around the World in 80 Minutes'

Experience world culture without leaving the capital!

For those budding explorers out there, you may begin to realise that an around the world trip isn't on the cards - and probably won't be for a few years. Luckily for you, you're living in one of the most diverse and multicultural places in the world. London's architecture, theatre, festivals and food are some of the few things that have been impacted by the cornucopia of cultures, races and religions that are represented here.

So, whether you fancy a jaunt in Japan or a vacation in Vienna the Big Smoke will never disappoint. All you'll need is an oyster card and this brief guide, and before long you'll be boring your mates with anecdotes from your 'trip'.

India:



Steer clear of day-glo Tikka Masala and Anglo-Indian curry houses - sample some authentic Indian food instead. Dishes such as samosas, kheema matar (slow-cooked spicy lamb) and spiced rice pudding will fool your taste buds into thinking you've landed in Delhi.

For authentic Indian cuisine on a budget try Imli in Wardour Street, Soho. This wallet-friendly choice is a branch of the up-market restaurant Tamarind and boasts a range of snacks and curries.

An unmissable event for those interested in civil rights is 'Gandhi in London: The celebrated London Walk'. This two-hour walk takes you back to the London that Gandhi saw as a student and then as a lawyer. With plenty of stories and a walk that promises to happen "unless the Met issues a hurricane warning", this should be a unique perspective on the life of a great man.

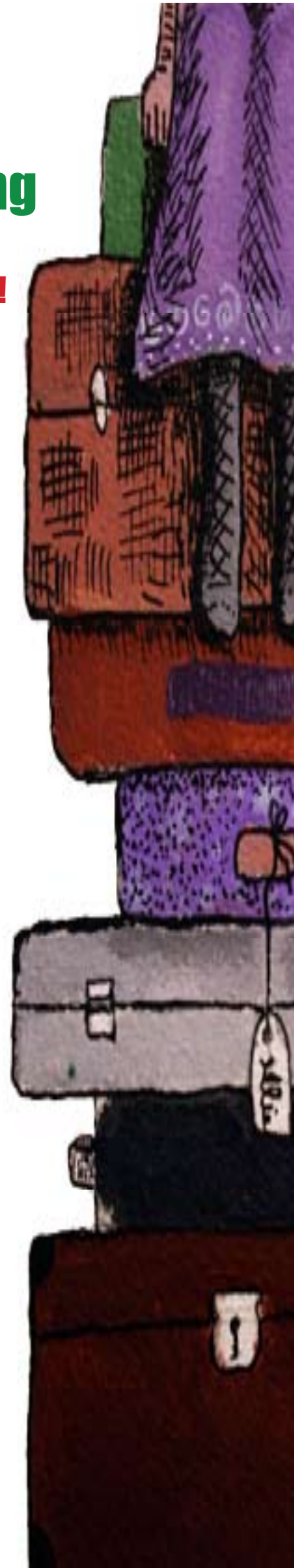


Greece:

Religion obviously played a huge part in the early Greek community, and that's reflected in the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Saint Sophia in Bayswater. This building has a beauty that easily rivals the Parthenon, and is worth a visit, and is easily reached by tube (just get off at Bayswater tube station on Circle and District lines).

Though Greece has moved on from the Gods of Mount Olympus, modern culture has embraced the plays, myths and legends. Who hasn't heard of Aphrodite or the legend of Troy? Shakespeare certainly had, and it proved the influence for many of his greatest plays. Catch a showing of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (until October 4th) at Shakespeare's Globe in south London. Though written by a Londoner, the comedy is set in ancient Athens and performed in a theatre loyal to the Globe of Shakespeare's day. In fact, everything is replicated except the warm Greek sun - so dress warm as the theatre is open-roofed!

For authentic Greek food on a budget, you can expect to eat kalamari (deep-fried squid), hummus, souvlaki (cubed meat on a skewer) or moussaka. The Mediterranean diet is renowned for its healthy properties, so feel free to try a bit of everything!





China:

Has the Beijing Olympics whetted your appetite for a taste of Chinese culture? Then avoid the ten-hour flight and take a left at Leicester Square to get to Chinatown. Here you'll find 78 restaurants ranging from budget to fine dining, specialist grocers and acupuncturists amongst others, as well as festivals throughout the year. On September 30th don't miss the Lantern Moon Festival in Chinatown, which celebrates a successful summer harvest and the Autumn Equinox, when the moon is at its highest and fullest. Planned celebrations include performances from Chinese artists, a red and gold lantern street display and 'dragons' roaming the street!

As this is a national holiday in China and dates back over 3000 years, expect a spectacular display. Pay a visit to experience the culture and buzz of Beijing without inhaling the far from fresh air.

Find out more about modern China at the 'China Design Now' exhibition in the V&A Museum. This presentation focuses on a different element of design in Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen. Four years in the making, this must-see exhibition features a variety of media types that showcase China's relatively young history with design.

By Alexandra Sheppard



Egypt:

London has a huge collection of Egyptian antiquities thanks to some rather obsessive Egyptologists. The renowned British Museum is essential for anyone with a passing interest in Ancient Egypt, and is arguably the country's best museum. You can wander through the galleries and explore 6000 years of ancient Egyptian history under one roof, a collection that rivals many Egyptian museums!

If however you're slightly more pressed for time then head to the ancient burial gallery where you'll find the world famous Ginger (an unwrapped mummy) and hundreds of examples of the fascinating process of mummification.

The British Museum is easily accessible by tube, with the nearest stations being Holborn and Russell Square, and it is open seven days a week. For more information see BritishMuseum.org.

If you'd rather avoid the crowds of tourists in the British Museum, then head for the Petrie Museum on Gower Street. Though it doesn't have big crowd-pullers, its quirkiness and intimacy make it far more attractive. Here you'll find anything from fragments of pottery to shrunken heads and unwrapped mummies housed in giant clay pots, all behind glass cabinets built wherever there's space. With torch in hand (there are a few lighting problems) you can release your inner child and go exploring!

There are quite a few places that serve authentic North African food in London. Unfortunately the North African prices aren't replicated, but they're cheap enough! Expect falafel, baklava and lots of lamb. Eat it by the Thames on a sunny day and pretend it's the Nile!

London is one of the few places in the world where you can experience world culture without booking a plane ticket and getting jabs. If only the weather was the same...

Top 10 student finance tips

By Nargis Ahmad

“

If you are heading off to university, finances are probably the last thing on your mind. For most students it's not until Fresher's Week is long gone and the bank balance starts heading to zero, that students start worrying about the money side of student life. But with a little bit of planning, you can enjoy university life without the worry of financial stress.

”



1. Choose your bank account wisely

For many students, the student loan will be the first time many will have financial freedom and that can be an exciting (and sometimes daunting) thought! All the banks are offering incentives from gadgets and gizmo's to cash. But take a good look at what is being offered to you and scrutinize the small print. Check the overdraft limits and penalty charges and even the location of the bank. Some students prefer to choose a bank close to their university, so if there is a problem, they can deal with it straight away. If you have yet to apply for your loan, do it soon. Even if you are a home student, the extra money will come in handy.

2. Manage your money

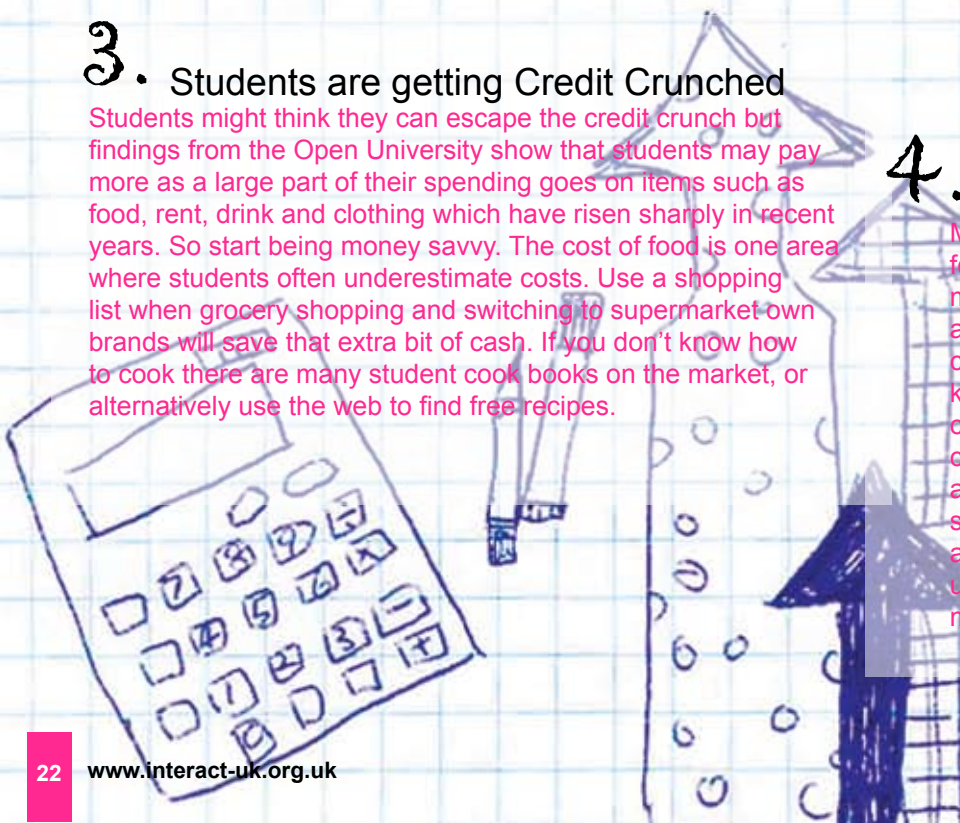
Many students don't realize the real cost of university life. According to a survey by the NUS, undergraduate students underestimate the costs by £450 a year. How many times are students told to stick to a budget? But having spoken to many students across the country, many say they struggle with budgets, most being ditched within a month of starting university. Work out how much money you have each month, then deduct expenses such as rent, electricity, travel, food, costs of course materials and you will know how much disposable money you really have. Often, it's not a lot, so use your NUS card to get money off. It will take you a few weeks to understand your spending habits, so allocate that little bit extra for the start of term for socializing. This way, you won't be wondering where the money has gone. Even if you do ditch your budget, having a rough outline for the week ahead will help you plan and prevent overspending.

3. Students are getting Credit Crunched

Students might think they can escape the credit crunch but findings from the Open University show that students may pay more as a large part of their spending goes on items such as food, rent, drink and clothing which have risen sharply in recent years. So start being money savvy. The cost of food is one area where students often underestimate costs. Use a shopping list when grocery shopping and switching to supermarket own brands will save that extra bit of cash. If you don't know how to cook there are many student cook books on the market, or alternatively use the web to find free recipes.

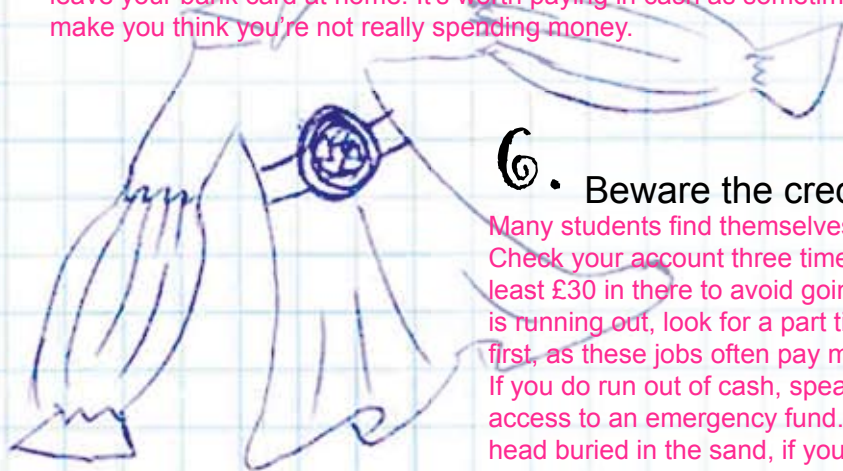
4. Make the most of the web

Many students shop online so look out for online voucher codes such as www.myvouchercode.co.uk to save money at the virtual checkout. Check out price comparison websites such as www.kelkoo.co.uk and www.pricerunner.co.uk to make sure you are buying the cheapest goods. Also, online banking is a good way to keep tabs on your money, so every time you check your Facebook account to find out what your friends are up to, it's also worth seeing how your money is doing too!



5. Stretch your loan

Your student loan won't be around forever so think carefully about how you use it. If you can put a little money in an emergency account, do so. If you know you spend a lot of money when out socializing, withdraw a set amount of cash earlier in the week and leave your bank card at home. It's worth paying in cash as sometimes using your cards make you think you're not really spending money.



6. Beware the credit trap

Many students find themselves with overdraft or credit card problems. Check your account three times a week and make sure there is at least £30 in there to avoid going into the red. If you notice the money is running out, look for a part time job. Check out the student union first, as these jobs often pay more and have good working conditions. If you do run out of cash, speak to your university as you could get access to an emergency fund. Whatever the problem, don't keep your head buried in the sand, if you do find yourself in difficulty, get help as there are people there to help you. What students don't realize is that your credit rating will follow you around for life, so being responsible with money now will set up good money habits for life.

7. Check out cheap or free entertainment

There's a lot students can do in London without spending a single penny! Get free tickets for the weekend at www.londonisfree.com including tickets for TV and radio recordings and see a movie or gig for free. Be creative with your time, hire a film from the library and hold a popcorn evening with friends.



8. Become a frugal shopper

Look for cheap clothes, check out charity shops instead of the high street and the markets in London. Customize old clothes or buy a new accessory that can liven up an outfit. If you are into computer games, buy them second hand instead of forking out £40 for a new one, or borrow that new game from a mate.

9. Make the most off freebies and discounts

What student doesn't like a freebie? You will be inundated with these during Fresher's Week but here's how to continue getting freebies for the rest of the year. Department stores give free samples, so save money on beauty the next time you are in town. Check out the net, www.freecycle.org will locate old furniture that needs a new home. If you can't get a freebie, get a discount instead. Restaurants such as Yo! Sushi offer discounts to students during off-peak hours if you sign up for a pass.

10. Don't worry if you make a mistake

Money skills take time to learn. Even the most clued-up saver will falter every once in a while. So if you do go over budget or dip into your overdraft, get up and do something about it. And if you think you are heading towards debt, speak to your Student's Union and university finance team, they are there to help.



Nargis is a money blogger. If you would like more money saving tips, check out her blog at: <http://bollywoodgirlsguidetolife.blogspot.com/>

INTER - ACT

Volunteering Opportunities

Are you a budding writer, journalist or graphic designer?

Then why not apply to join the Editorial Team for the next issue of Interact Magazine. In a team of 8 you will gain valuable experience of writing, designing and producing a magazine, mentored by a professional journalist, editor or designer

Alternatively contribute an article, feature or opinion column on a topic of your choice. E-mail all contributions to mag@interact-uk.org.uk

Inter-faith Action is a not for profit organisation working across London to increase understanding and respect between faiths through dialogue and voluntary action.

Inter-Act supports the development of these groups, and encourages them to engage side-by-side (social action) as well as face-to-face (dialogue).

If you or your inter faith group are interested in developing a group volunteer project to expand your activities please get in touch.

Project Assistant(s)

Required to support delivery of projects and general administration in the Inter-Act office. Looking for experience in the voluntary sector, want to develop your project management or administrative skills? As long as you can volunteer at least one day a week, for 8 weeks we would like to hear from you. Opportunities available throughout the year, but apply early to avoid disappointment.



Editorial Team for Autumn 2008 issue

Join the Safe Garden Project

The Safe Garden Project is a pilot initiative with three aims to promote good relations between people from different faiths and cultures (inter-faith) increase understanding and respect between young people and elderly residents in the Ponders End area of Enfield (inter-generational) reduce anti-social behaviour and crime specifically

“Safe Gardens Project”



burglary and vandalism targeted at elderly or disabled residents (community safety and cohesion) their gardens due to age, illness or disability. Evidence shows that vandals

and burglars often target homes of residents whose gardens are untidy or overgrown because they are easy to identify, therefore elderly residents are often more vulnerable.

Volunteers will support residents by tidying their gardens. Tasks include cutting grass and trimming edges, sweeping, weeding, pruning, planting and painting fences or gates. You will volunteer on a fortnightly basis, for 3-4 hours at a time.

UPDATE

UCL

Many universities have inter faith groups, forums or societies; meeting regularly to develop deeper understanding and respect of each other through a variety of activities. If you would like support in setting up an inter-faith society at your university get in touch on **02074824020** or e-mail **info@interact-uk.org.uk**



UCL Images

Each issue we will profile an interfaith group at a different university. Ayia al-Asadi tells us about the Society at UCL.

Group Name: UCLU Interfaith

Started in: 2005/2006

Aims and Objectives:

1. Promote religious values and principles
2. Provide a forum for inter-religious dialogue and activity
3. Raise awareness of spirituality and divinity amongst students

What does the society and its members do/has done?

The society hosts regular events based on scriptural reasoning, reviewing different religious texts on various topics of interest. For example, does God exist? Is God male or female? Food and religion; sex and religion. An inter-faith pilgrimage was organised around London, which involved travelling to different places of worship and learning about the traditions and habits of each religion. There was also a Water Aid Fundraiser organised by one of the members with support from the group where a Middle Eastern Food Sale was held in UCL's open quad. Social events included the annual inter-faith quiz and regular dinners.

What are your future plans?

UCLU Interfaith will hopefully continue to grow in support, loyalty, understanding and achievements. The aim is to bring as many different religions, cultures and belief systems together and embrace our differences. The inter-faith pilgrimage will be a regular event expanding to the less mainstream faiths such as Hare Krishna monks and Jainism.

In addition, further plans include holding fortnightly prayer sessions with different faiths leading the sessions each time. The scriptural reasoning groups will continue as a method to debate controversial topics within religion. The main hope is to form long-lasting and beneficial partnerships with other faith societies at UCL and other universities, transforming UCLU Interfaith into an umbrella society that unites different societies, and works to highlight the strengths of each one.

How is the society organised/managed?

It consists of a President, Treasurer, Secretary and loyal members. In actual fact the organisation, decision making and input is shared by everyone. It's one big ensemble.

Reviews

WALL-E

The Earth is a harbour of garbage, and its decayed atmosphere surrounded by a coat of dead mechanical satellite waste. The only humans left, cradled in hovering chairs and eating fluid everything, have not seen their native planet for centuries. They travel in unknown space ever since they had to evacuate Earth because the same global corporation that destroyed the environment who promised to clean the planet in 5 years, has still not delivered in 700 years. Meet Wall-E the last waste compactor robot left alone on earth to wonder about the curious artefacts left behind to clear up. So how does the most innocent robot in the universe save our beloved planet and future generations? Well it's definitely worth a watch. DVD available from November 24th.



Batman: The Dark Knight

If by some miracle you didn't see this at the cinema, then the DVD is released on December 8th. I don't know what it is, it might be the special effects or the panoply of gizmos from the Batmobile to the striking motorcycle but you can't help thinking that it was a good movie. Some scenes are quite surreal, definitely not of this world. Like a boulder that has been pushed the action keeps on rolling, threatening not to come to a halt. Don't expect conversation the camera does not pause for much. Batman has been assigned on a never-ending rescue mission: buses, hospitals, ferries are all under siege. The psychologically disturbed Joker of course is at the bottom of this carnage. The plot though lengthy is brought together by an underlying moral belief: the residents of Gotham city are not quite as corruptible as the Joker believes them to be. So, good lives on. For those who like flashy and fast-paced action it definitely should be put on the list of things to watch.



Dido



The release of her third and newest album *Safe Trip Home* is scheduled on November 4th. This will be her first album in five years since her last, *Life for Rent*. Meanwhile, the album's new official single, *Don't Believe in Love*, will be arriving digitally on September 9th. A free download of her latest song *Look No Further* is available for download at www.didomusic.com.

AC/DC



Australian music icon AC/DC will release its long-awaited new album *Black Ice* on October 18th. It will be the band's first full-length studio album of new material in eight years containing 15 new tracks by the band famous for hits like *It's a Long Way to the Top* and *Thunderstruck*. *Black Ice*, which was produced by Brendan O'Brien at the Warehouse Studio in Vancouver, Canada, is AC/DC's first album since *Stiff Upper Lip* in 2000. Formed in Sydney in 1973 by brothers Angus and Malcolm Young, AC/DC is considered a pioneer of hard rock and heavy metal.

NE-YO



The third album by RnB sensation Ne-Yo is scheduled to arrive in stores September 16th. Ne-Yo takes a more mature approach by bringing back the image of men in three piece suits and tilted top hats- the kind that ladies just cannot resist! Ne-Yo's unique RnB/Hip Hop style takes a new direction in this album - some pop; some classic RnB; while others take a unique sounding middle ground that can only be produced by the man himself. Following his Grammy Award winning album *Because Of You* this new collection is predicted to be another success. Then again, with such slick vocals and extraordinary talent Ne-Yo never fails to deliver!

We need more reviews.
Do you want review a film, a band, book or concert? Then get in touch.



Why are New Religious Movements so popular among the youth, and is it dangerous to join one?

By Fewien Berhan

Does the growth of New Religious Movement's mean that traditional religions are in decline? Or in other words, is it the 'fault' of traditional religions that people convert to new religious movements? If so, what makes NRMs so persuasive, and following the earlier assumption what might it be that traditional religions are lacking?

In my opinion NRMs do not have a stronger explanation power than traditional religions as metaphysical questions are treated similarly, it finally all comes down to whether you believe it.

I'd like to say NRM's are popular because of their soft skills. If NRMs do not offer more convincing explanations than traditional religions their popularity might be related to the different ways of life.

Contrary to the general sweeping claim that societies especially in Western more affluent economies are becoming more and more secular, the growth of NRMs indicates that this is not the case. All societies feel the need to have a certain amount of spirituality in their lives. Spirituality does not, however, need to be manifested in, and through, a significant architectural building only. New Religious Movements often offer a different, unconventional approach to spiritually to bind their members. A membership of a NRM, is comparable to an 'all-inclusive' excursion. The weeks are filled with events, and discussion groups, connect-groups, cinema-days, weekend tickers, etc. Compared to this program, the practice of traditional religions seems less interactive and certainly less entertaining. This conservatism might be due to the fact that traditional institutions with a proven longevity do not need to establish themselves anymore. Maybe traditional religions in their early times offered respective services and entertainment too, which fostered and created a collective identity and which as time passed by became loose. Thus, maybe it is just a matter of time, until the enthusiastic marketing approach that binds 'spiritual shoppers' to NRMs finally also ends in ancient ceremonial Sunday mess routines.

As media coverage usually involves the scandalous fundamentalists, NRMs are proportionally over-presented in the news, which blurred my image about NRMs in general. After having heard many of these negative stories about NRMs, seen 'Jesus Camp' and many more other negative image portraying media coverage's of New Religious Movements, I finally went to visit one of London's 'Super-Churches' to satisfy my curiosity and in order to find out myself. To my disappointment, there was nothing to 'find out' about.



Instead I found a 'normal', well-organised, super mass with loud music, spotlights, collective prayers, and a very youthful pastor with a headset and a strong Australian accent, who seemed to be more of an approachable life coach than a preacher. The mass was almost three hours long. There were little brakes between the speeches of the pastor, and after each of the stories of his even more youthful comedian assistant preacher, who simply narrated ironic anecdotes of his life in a stand-up comedy manner. It was a very life affirming celebration and a 'do it yourself' approach to spirituality. I loved it.

INFORM suggest the following guideline, or code of conduct for friends of converts:



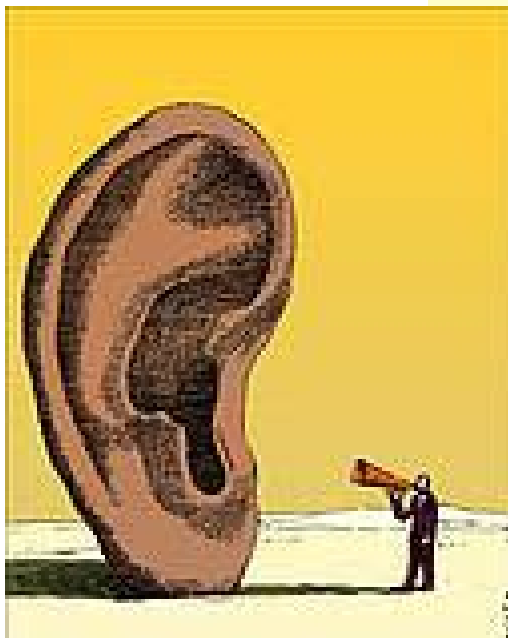
1) Get as much unbiased, up-to date information as possible about the particular NRM.

2) Keep in touch! It is important that the convert has contact to the wider society and thus access to standpoints from which to assess the world-views and values presented by the NRM.

The part I felt least comfortable with were the breaks, in which everyone is supposed to get up and sing and dance to pop-rockish Jesus songs performed by the student rock-band. These were so much of a highlight in the ceremony that the pastor asked those who were shying away from the celebration to please offer their seats to those who wanted to sing and dance. And to the amusement of the majority, he raised the point that there was enough space at the back of the hall for these passive Christians. Honestly, I felt dismissed. Which, as I am only human, made me much more critical of the entire mass. If only he would not have said so. One of the lasting images I carried from my visit was exactly this- the Pastor's remarks about 'passive Christians'.

All in all, despite my 'personal' misunderstanding with the pastor, due to my very sensitive nature and disregards for open bullying, I can truly say that NRM are sometimes an inspirational improvement to the individual and to the community. After this experience, though being well aware that there are of course other aspects to a religion than a mass, I think I can confidently say that some NRMs are truly for the better.

There are, however, also NRM's that do not show good behaviour and are prone to abuse their members.



3) *Listen! Do not tell the convert how wrong or sinister, dangerous or evil the movement is or how mistaken and brainwashed they are for joining the NRM.*

4) *Show respect for the convert's right to choose. If not, you are likely to push them into a defensive position that will not be open to alternatives anymore.*

Be safe

A new religious movement is a recent movement of faith or any ethical, spiritual or philosophical origin, which is not part of an established church or religious body. New religious movements vary in their concepts of the individual, the community, family, gender, leadership etc. This is the reason why it is so difficult to establish a comprehensive set of criteria that would classify new religious movements.



There are NRM, which do not practice good behaviour and are dangerous for its members. If you are unsure about the practices of a NRM contact INFORM, the Information Network Focus On Religious Movements.

INFORM provides a platform to those parties interested in NRMs and works towards unravelling false claims, but also towards raising attention about inappropriate behaviour of movements, not however about particular behaviours of its members.

The general public, so INFORM suggests, acquires its vision about NRMs either through the media- which often appears to be more interested in meeting the alleged demand of scandalous headlines amongst its readers, than in providing accurate information- or from the descriptions and experience made by (ex-) members of a NRM. In both cases the information received is very likely to be biased and blurred. One of the most common mistakes, when judging a religious movement is, to draw from inappropriate or illegal actions committed by members of the movement and apply these to the entire movement per se.

In the early 1960 New Religious Movements became very present in the West and ever since their members and opponents have grown in numbers. So-called early cult-watching-groups employed various ways to stop and defame NRMs in the public, and lobbied the government to “do something about the new cults”. Rendering their existence illegal and thereby outlawing and prosecuting their members are practises still applied in many societies around the globe.

INFORM tries to serve the public with reliable information about NRMs and tries to ensure that the individual can respond to a NRM in a 'conscious and informed manner'. INFORM does not, to the very disappointment of many Anti-Cult Groups, pass judgements about NRMs or asks individuals to engage or not to engage with a NRM. The decision of whether to join a particular Movement remains with the individual itself.

The motto is that INFORM only answers questions in a hypothetical format, without passing judgement e.g. “If you believe that polygamy is bad, then the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints indulges in bad practices.” INFORM still engages proactively in that it sends out posters etc. to institutions of higher education and alerts students about the possible difficulties they may face when joining a NRM.



INFORM has therefore been threatened from both sides- NRM members and opponents -with legal action if they did not withdraw statements made about a NRM. The practices of INFORM, however, are not only relevant to spiritual individuals seeking answers to questions which they felt, traditional religions could not provide. INFORM also gives insights about NRM to the police, the government, scholars, human rights activists, and various others eager to obtain non-biased information about New Religious Movements.

5) Be there! A convert is more likely to leave a movement if they do not feel that they will lose face by doing so.

INFORM provides reliable information and collects data from all sources, including “(...)the Movements themselves, their opponents, former members, families of members, the media and international networks of experts and specialists, which includes scholars, professionals such as lawyers, doctors, counsellors, clergy, other CWG’s- and anyone else who might be able to help.” The collection derives from books, videos, articles, and various other sources from over 3,000 different groups.



6) If you have good grounds for believing there is actual or potential danger to a member of a new and/ or alternative or spiritual religious movement and/ or criminal activity, it is advisable to go to the appropriate authorities such as the police, social services or local British Embassy.

As NRM are still developing, this database is also constantly updated and always allows transparency by highlighting where a particular piece of information or material originates.

The suspicions and sometimes dangerous practice of NRM’s, discussed above, leads to the questions of whether, and if to what extent, the state should intervene into the business of New Religious Movements. This question, however, is not addressed by INFORM. The practice of state interference into a religion is against the law in many countries. As the term religion has not been defined by international law, INFORM cannot answer if a particular movement is a religion or not, which remains

one, if not the most, important detail for so many policy issues, as it can have real consequences for the religion and also for its members.

INFORM is not an 'advice agency', however if requested INFORM will get you in touch with qualified, experienced counsellors.
INFORM, London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE
Telephone: 020 7955 7654, e-mail: inform@lse.ac.uk

Listings

September:

Unspeakable: The Artist as Witness to the Holocaust

5 September – 31 August

This exhibition will explore how artists have responded to the Holocaust from the 1940s to the present day. Featured artists will include Leslie Cole, Doris Zinkeisen, Paul Ryan, and Darren Almond and survivor artists Roman Halter, Edith Birkin and Alicia Melamed Adams. Imperial War Museum, Admission free



Environmental Photographer of the Year Exhibition

Until 10th October

Photographs dealing with some of the most important issues of our time will be on display at the Mile End Arts Pavilion. All winning and highly commended entries are being displayed in the exhibition.

Zen Calligraphy and Painting by Yamaoka Tesshu

Until 14 December

This display marks the 120th anniversary of the death of the Japanese statesman and master swordsman Yamaoka Tesshū. It features twenty-two magnificent hanging scrolls from the collection of the late Professor Terayama Tanchū, founder of the Society for the Way of the Zen Brush (Hitsuzenkai). The display includes works by Tesshū, his eminent contemporaries Takahashi Deishū (1835-1903) and Katsu Kaishū (1823-1899), as well as the late Professor Terayama Tanchū himself. Room 45, Toshiba Gallery of Japanese Art, V&A (Kensington) Free admission

Zen Calligraphy and painting by Yamaoka Tesshu (British Museum Website)



Eid in the Square

11th October

Trafalgar Square hosts Eid ul-Fitr - the end of Ramadan - with celebrations taking place that bring Londoners together to celebrate this important date in the Muslim calendar. The event will include entertainment, an exhibition and bazaar. Trafalgar Square, WC2

October:

Black History Month

For more information visit www.blackhistorymonthuk.co.uk

London Film Festival

15th - 30th October

Previews of British and international films, plus interviews with film-makers and other events.

Olympics Victory Parade

Thursday 16th October

A parade through the streets of London to celebrate the successes of British athletes in the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Beijing.

Diwali on the Square

19th October

London's highest profile celebration of lights, Diwali on the Square, brings all the colour and celebration of the traditional Hindu, Sikh and Jain event to the centre of the city. The festival includes performances of Indian dance music, song, and theatre.

Trafalgar Square, WC2
www.diwaliinlondon.com

Between Tibet and India: cultural diversity in the eastern Himalayas

23 October – 19 April

Room 91 British Museum, Admission Free

The exhibition features rarely-seen objects from the Museum's collection, as well as contemporary materials, the textiles are especially note-worthy. Other items include painting and clay offerings from the Monpa, and objects connect to the Murung Festival including an audio recording of a ritual text from the Apatani.



Detail of a lion from Babylon's Processional Way; On loan from the musée du Louvre, Paris.

© Photo RMN / Franck Raux

Taking Liberties: the struggle for Britain's freedoms and rights

31 October – 1 March

The British Library's forthcoming exhibition 'Taking Liberties: the struggle for Britain's freedoms and rights' uncovers the roots of British democracy over a period of more than 900 years.
British Library

November:

Two young Monpa boys, Dirang Dzong, May 1956. By Verrier Elwin, from the archive at the British Museum © Elwin family (British Museum Website)



BFM International Film Festival

7th -17th November

ICA, BFI Southbank, British Museum and venues in Newham
(bfmmedia.com)

Utsavam -Music from India

Until 2nd November

Join us for a series of performances that explore the instruments and traditions shown
Horniman Museum

Jewish Film Festival

8th -20th November

To find out more visit
ukjewishfilmfestival.org.uk
Odeon Swiss Cottage



Babylon

13th November – 15th March

Babylon was the greatest city of ancient Iraq, and its name and image have endured throughout history with amazing vigour. This fascinating exhibition will explore both the archaeology of the city at its height during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 BC), and the wealth of later art and legend that Babylon has engendered.
British Museum

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