

Contemporary British Politics

Spring 2007

Tutor: Dr Martin D. Brown (e-mail: martin.d.brown@btinternet.com)

Course Times: Thursday: 13:45-16:30

Course Outline:

This course is designed to provide students with thorough understanding of British political system and processes, as well as the ideas and issues that have shaped contemporary British politics. The Monarchy, the Parliament, political parties, the Prime Minister, political ideology, political culture, and foreign policy are the main topics discussed in this course. Throughout the course, comparisons with American politics and society will be made as a point of reference to provide the student with a framework for understanding British politics.

Class sessions will include lectures and discussions and students are required to actively participate and contribute to these discussions. The required weekly reading will be presented by students in a seminar fashion. There will be two 'mini-exams' throughout the semester. Exams are in essay format and questions will draw on the required readings and the lectures. Students are also required to submit two research papers, one about 800 words and the second about 1500-2000 words, with footnotes/endnotes (or MLA referencing) and bibliography.

Whilst students are expected to learn the fundamentals of British politics, this course is not about "memorising" factual details. Rather, they should approach this class from an "analytical" perspective. Students are also expected to keep up with current affairs in Britain by reading publications such as: the *Economist*, and daily British newspapers such as the *Independent*, the *Guardian*, *The Times*, and the *Daily Telegraph* (all available in the common student area). Students will also benefit from various news program on British TV such as: *Newsnight* (BBC2, 10:30pm); *Channel Four News* (C4, 7:00pm), *BBC1 news* at 6:00 and 10:00pm. On the radio the best is the Today program (6:45-9:00am on *BBC Radio 4*: 93.5 FM)

Learning outcomes:

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

- have a thorough understanding of the system of government and the political process in Britain
- acquire a good grasp of the key political/historical/ideological developments in post WWII Britain
- become familiar with current issues/debates in contemporary British politics

Americans with Disabilities Act:

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodation will be provided to students with documented disabilities on a case by case basis. Students must register with the Office of Academic Support Services and provide appropriate documentation to the college before any academic adjustment will be provided.

Course assessment:

- Short Essay: %20 Typed, 800-1000 words.
- Long Essay: %40 Typed, 1500-2000 words
- Two mini-exams: %10
- Final examination: %30
- ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY.
- **Students will be dropped automatically from the class after two absences.**

Assignments:

1) Short essay, 800-1000 words: Title, “What is the British political system actually designed to do?” Minimum of three sources all of which must be books – no website materials allowed.

Due Date: **22 February 2007**

2) Long essay: chose from list at the end of this syllabus, 1500-2000 words
Minimum of six sources four of which must be books – limited website materials allowed.

Due Date: **12 April 2007**

3) Mini-exams: two short quizzes will be given during the term – one in the first half and one in the second. They will be twenty minutes long, require short answers to questions based on the reading and issues raised in class. An average will be taken of all four to calculate the final mark.

4) Final exam: A final formal examination one and half hours long with essay form answers and a selection of questions to choose from.

CORE TEXTBOOK:

Ian Budge, Ivor Crewe, David McKay, Ken Newton, *The New British Politics* (3rd Edition). Longman: 2004. (Or most recent edition available). All references in course outline taken from 3rd edition, do double check chapter numbers when doing the reading.

All students are required to buy a copy of this book by the second class of the semester. Further materials in the form of handouts will be provided by the instructor throughout the term.

Bibliography:

Selected Journals

Parliamentary Affairs

Social Studies Review

Talking Politics

Political Review

Contemporary Record

Western European Politics

Public Administration

Political Quarterly

Political Studies

Selected Bibliography

British Politics; General:

Dunleavy. P, Gamble. A, Holiday. I, Peele. G (eds.) (2000) *Developments in British Politics 6*. Education Ltd. (4th Edition)

Jones B., Kavanagh D., Moran M., Norton P. (eds.) (2000) *Politics UK*. (London: Pearson)

Jones, B. & Robins, L. (eds.) (1992) *Two Decades in British Politics*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press)

Jones, B. & Robin, L. (2000) *Debates in British Politics Today*, (Manchester University Press)

Moran, M. (1989) *Politics and Society in Britain*, 2nd Edition. (London: Macmillan)

Pyper, R. & Robins, L. (eds.) (1995) *Governing the UK in the 1990's*. (London: Macmillan)

Jones, Gray, Kavanagh, Moran, Norton & Seldon (eds) (1998) *Politics UK*, Prentice Hall

Parliament and Parliamentary System in Britain:

Adonis, A. (1993) *Parliament Today*, 2nd Edition. (Manchester: Manchester University Press)

Garrett, J. (1992) *Westminster. Does Parliament Work?* (London: Gollancz)

Lijphart A. (ed.) *Parliamentary versus Presidential Government*. 1992. (Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rush, M. (ed.) (1990) *Parliament and Pressure Politics*. (Oxford: Clarendon)

Ryle, M. & Richard, P. (ed.) (1988) *The Commons under Scrutiny*. (London: Routledge)

Shell, D. (1992b) *The House of Lords*, 2nd Edition. (London: Harvester)

The State and the Economy:

Hutton, Will *The State We're In*. 1995. (London: Jonathan Cape).

Gamble, Andrew *Britain in Decline*. 1989. (London: Macmillan).

Rubinstein, W. *Capitalism, Culture and Decline in Britain 1750-1990*. 1993. (Routledge).

Flour, R. & McClosky, D. (ed.) (1981) *The Economic History of Britain Since 1700*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

Curwen, P. (ed) (1992) *Understanding the UK Economy*. (London: Macmillan)

Digby, A. (1989) *British Welfare Policy*. (London: Faber & Faber)

Kavanagh, D. (1990) *Thatcherism and British Politics*, 2nd Edition. (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Riddell, P. (1991) *The Thatcher Era*. (Oxford: Blackwell)

Culture, History, Society:

Almond, G. and Verba, S. *The Civic Culture Revisited*. 1980. (Little Brown).

Bassnett, S. (ed) (1997) *Studying British Cultures*. Routledge,.

Beer, S.H. *Britain against Itself*. 1982. (London: Faber)

Blackstone, T., Parekh B., Sanders, P. *Race Relations in Britain*,.

British Social Attitudes, published annually by Gower

Greenleaf, W. H. *The British Political Tradition* (3 Vols.) 1983 and 1987. (London: Longman).

Halsey, A.H. (1995) *Change in British Society*, OUP,

Marquand, D. (1987) *The Unprincipled Society*. (London: Fontana)

Marsh, David (ed.) (1992) *Implementing Thatcherite Policies*. (Milton Keynes: Open University Press)

Morgan, K. (1990) *The People's Peace: British History 1945-1989*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

The British Constitution:

- Brazier, R. *Constitutional Practice*. 1988. (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Brazier, R. (1991) *Constitutional Reform*. (Oxford: Clarendon).
- De Smith, S. & Brazier, R. (eds.) (1990) *Constitutional and Administrative Law*, 6th Edition. (Harmondsworth: Penguin).
- Hazell, Robert (ed.) (1999) *Constitutional Futures: A History of the Next Ten Years*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Holm, R. & Elliot, M. (eds.) (1988) *1688-1988. Time for a New Constitution*.
- Johnson, N. *In Search of the Constitution*. 1980. (London: Methuen).
- Jowell, J. & Oliver, D. (eds.) (1994) *The Changing Constitution*, 2nd Edition. (Oxford: Clarendon)
- Norton, Philip *The Constitution in Flux*. 1982. (Blackwell).

The Prime Minister and the Cabinet:

- Foley, M (2000) *The British Presidency*. (Manchester University Press)
- James, Simon (1992) *British Cabinet Government*. (London: Routledge)
- King, Anthony (1985) *The British Prime Minister*. (London: Macmillan)
- Plowden, W. (ed.) (1987) *Advising the Rulers*. (Oxford: Blackwell).
- Young, Hugo (1990) *One of Us*. (London: Pan/Macmillan).
- Rhodes, R.A.W. & Dunleavy, P. (eds.) (1995) *Prime Minister, Cabinet, and Core Executive*. (London: Macmillan)
- Thomas, G. (1998) *Prime Minister and Cabinet Today*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

Political Ideology/Parties:

- Brivati, B. & Heffeman, R. (Ed.) (2000) *The Labour Party: A Centenary Study*. (St. Martins)
- Coates, D. & Lawler P. (Eds.) (2000) *New Labour in Power*. (Manchester University Press)
- Eccleshall, R. (1986) *British Liberalism*. (London: Longman)
- Evans, B. (2000) *Thatcherism and British Politics*. (Sutton)
- Foote, G. (1986) *The Labour Party's Political Thought*. (London: Croom Hill).

- Greenleaf, W.H. (1983) *The British Political Tradition*. (London: Methuen).
- Leach, R. (1991) *British Political Ideologies*. (London: Philip Allan).
- Nisbet, R. (1986) *Conservatism*. (Milton Keynes: Open University Press).
- Norton, P. (Ed.) (1996) *The Conservative Party*. (Harvester)
- Wright, A. (1983) *British Socialism*. (London: Longman)
- Garner, R. & Kelly, R. (eds.) (1993) *British Political Parties Today*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press)
- Seldon, A. (ed.) (1990) *UK Political Parties Since 1945*. (London: Phillip Allan).
- Stevenson, J. (1993) *Third Party Politics Since 1945*. (Oxford: Blackwell)
- Taylor, Gerald. R (ed.) (1999) *The Impact of New Labour*. (London: Macmillan)
- Webb, P. (2000) *The Modern British Party System*. (Sage)

The European Union

- Baker, D. & Seawright, D. (1998) *Britain For and Against Europe*. (Clarendon)
- Elliott, L. (et al) (2002) *In or Out: Labour and the Euro*. (Fabian Society)
- Geddes, A. (1998) *Britain and the European Union*. (Baseline)
- George, S. (1998) *An Awkward Partner*. (OUP)
- George, S. & Bache, I (2001) *Politics in the European Union*. (OUP)
- McCormick, J. (1999) *Understanding the European Union*. (Macmillan)
- Nugent, N. (1999) *The Government and Politics of the European Union*. (Macmillan)
- Robins, L. & Jones, B. (2000) *Debates in British Politics Today*. (Manchester University Press)
- Spybey, Tony, (ed) (1997) *Britain in Europe*. Routledge
- Young, H (1998) *This Blessed Plot*. (Macmillan)

COURSE OUTLINE:

This *Outline* should be viewed as a guide to the weekly meetings, although some *changes* may occur through specific interests brought up by students.

Week 1: *Introduction to the course, and some general observations about British politics.*

Week 2: *Basic Features of British Democracy and its historical development*

Required reading: Text; Chapters 1 & 2

Week 3: *Survey of the political geography of Westminster and its environs*

Meet at Embankment Tube station (river side exit) at 14:30 (Bring umbrellas and stout walking shoes.)

Week 4: *Politics and Economy in Britain*

Required reading: Text; Chapters 3 & 24

Week 5: *The British Constitution and attempts at reform*

Required reading: Text; Chapter 4

Week 6: *Political ideology in Britain: The British Political Parties*

Required reading: Text; Chapters 16 & 17

Week 7: *The British Parliament; Commons and the Lords.*

Required reading: Text; Chapter 18

Week 8: **Mid-semester Break: No Classes (8 March 2007)**

Week 9: *The mechanics of Government*

Required reading: Text; Chapters 5, 6

Week 10: *Britain and the European Union*

Required reading: Text Chapters 8 & 9

Week 11: *British Foreign Policy*

Required reading: Text Chapter 22

Week 12: *Visit to the Imperial War Museum, (TBA)*

Week 13: *Britain and Northern Ireland*

Required reading: Text Chapter 10

Week 14: *New politics?*

Required reading: Text Chapters 27 & 28

Week 15: Final thoughts, review.

LONG ESSAY QUESTIONS
(1500-2000 words)

1. Where does power actually reside in the British system?
2. What are the implications for the UK of a 'future in Europe'?
3. Critically analyse the nature of the British economy and how it has been transformed/changed since the end of the Second World War.
4. Assess the root cause of the increasing gap between rich and poor in Britain since 1979.
5. Why has the Conservative Party found it so difficult to achieve electoral success in the last ten years?
6. Assess the significance of the welfare state in British politics today.
7. Would Britain be more democratic if it had a US-style written constitution?
8. Did Thatcher do more harm than good in Britain?
9. Is Blairism a continuation of Thatcherism?
10. What have been the defining features and objectives of British Foreign Policy since 1945, and how successful have successive British governments been in achieving them?
11. Have the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland now been solved?

Basic structures for written work

Remember the 5 Ps

Proper preparation prevents poor performance.

Always state the essay title clearly, do not paraphrase or change it.

Part One:

First paragraph: introduce the subject you are addressing – NOT the general topic – and how you understand it, give an overview of the different aspects that you are going to address ("First, this paper will look at..., second this paper will highlight the..., third it discusses..., and then finally..."). Explain in one sentence or two the reasons why you chose those aspects in order to answer the question. At the end of the first paragraph, you might want to state your answer to the essay question (After

looking at all the different aspects, this paper concludes that...[answer to the essay question]) The purpose of the first paragraph is:

- **To help explain how you understand the question or issue (including key terms, varying debates and approaches)**
- **To help the reader understand the structure of your written work**
- **To have a clear grasp of what aspects you are looking at and why**
- **To define key terms**
- **KEEP TEXT IN THE THIRD PERSON, keep to the past tense if appropriate**
- **avoid ‘I think’ or ‘I feel’ and spurious abbreviations - ‘etc’, ‘govt.’ or ‘b/t’**
- **On the first use of all names or abbreviations spell them out in full – European Union (EU), John F. Kennedy.**
- **Use 1980s and NOT 1980’s.**

Part Two:

Body of the Text: Discuss the different aspects you selected to address. Separate each aspect by using a new paragraph. Try to keep your paragraphs even and relatively short, avoid paragraphs that take up a whole page. Try to aim for two or three paragraphs per page. At the end of the discussion of each aspect, make an explicit link back to the essay question.

- **Make sure you separate your opinions from those of authors but always try to illustrate the various approaches of a variety of authors to that particular topic.**
- **Make sure you are answering the question through the use of analysis not just description. Although description is often necessary and useful only analytical approaches will gain the highest grades.**
- **Use an academic style of citation and stick to it. Never mix styles! Stick to the referencing system that’s used in your field – MLA, Chicago or APA – and make sure you use it consistently.**
- **Keep your writing clear and simple at all times.**
- **Guide the reader through your text let them know where you are going and where they are in your argument. You are NOT writing a murder mystery story.**

Part Three:

Last Paragraph: Weigh up the results of each paragraph or aspect at the end of your essay here you should make YOUR answer to the question crystal clear. The conclusion should include:

- **A summary of all the issues and aspects covered in the main text.**
- **Never introduce any new material**
- **An explanation of YOUR answer to the question – NOT the topic – this has to coincide with the preliminary answer given in the introduction.**
- **Make sure you have produced a rounded well argued piece that covers a variety of angles and contains analytical arguments of the matter in hand.**

- **It's structure and analysis that will get you the grade you want.**