Description
This course provides an introduction to the British political system. To that end, it examines:
- the historical evolution of the system.
- issues and trends in current British politics.
- concepts that are important for an analysis and understanding of the system.

Set Text
Jones, Bill and Norton, Philip (eds), Politics UK, 8th ed. (Routledge, 2014)

Recommended background reading
The following texts provide useful background material, especially for those unfamiliar with British politics.

Political institutions:
Hefernam, R., et. al., Developments in British Politics, Nine (Macmillan, 2011)

History:
Childs. D. Britain Since 1945: A Political History, 5th ed. (Routledge, 2001)
**Lecture topics**

### Week

1. Introduction to the course and an overview of the British political system - The British Constitution: unwritten and organic

2. Historical evolution, 1945-79: from welfare state to Thatcherism

3. Historical evolution, 1979 – 2010: ‘new right’ to ‘new Labour’ to Coalition; Case study – devolution, independence referenda and the transformation of the constitution

4. Political parties and elections in Britain – is coalition viable?

5. Legislature: Parliament – House of Commons and House of Lords

6. The Executive: Prime Minister, Cabinet and the Government

7. Civil service and judiciary – how political are they?

8. Pressure groups and interest groups – civil society: trade unions, business, ngos

9. Business and the economy

10. The European Union – is Britain the ‘awkward partner’?

11. British Foreign Policy – former empire still in ‘search of a role’?

12. Britain and the US – is it a ‘special relationship’?

13. Revision/Exam

**Note on method:**

The course is built around lectures, seminars and tutorials. Lectures will identify crucial concepts, details and issues relating to the topic. Seminars will be presented and led by one of the members of the course and will usually be on a particular aspect of the lecture topic or an issue emerging from the lecture topic. Tutorials will be used clarify material in lectures and texts, and to expand on the themes developed in the course in order to form a deeper understanding and analysis of the current British political scene.

The aim of the course is that participants should become conversant in the subject by developing the skill to think about and analyse politics generally and British politics more specifically. Three crucial ways to develop these abilities are 1) regular reading across a variety of sources to obtain the knowledge that will constitute the foundation on which to build your understanding; 2) frequent contributions to class discussion to test your ideas and understanding and, perhaps, refine them in light of subsequent challenges; 3) research that will take you deeper into a specific aspect of the subject and require you to organise the presentation of the knowledge you have gained.
**Assessment**

The components of assessment, with their relative weighting in parenthesis, are listed below.

- **Participation** (20%) – based on attendance and constructive contribution to the work of seminars and tutorials.

- **Oral Presentation** (10%) – each participant will take part in an oral presentation, or a debate. Topics will be chosen from a list of suggested topics (see Appendix 1), or in consultation with the lecturer, should you wish to fashion your own topic.

- **Essay** (25%) – approximately 1500-2000 words in length with appropriate citations and bibliography.

- **Final Examination** (45%) – students will be expected to write on two questions drawn from a list canvassing almost all of the topics covered in the course. You are advised that you should not choose a question covering substantially the same topic as your essay.

Final grades will be letter grades, but marks will be made in line with the British system of percentages. A conversion table is set out below.

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<th>Class</th>
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Note on academic integrity:
The University of Maryland has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation and plagiarism – in short all forms of academic dishonesty. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity, or the Student Honor Council, please visit [http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html](http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html).

The University of Maryland is one of a small number of universities with a student-administered Honors Code and an Honors Pledge, available on the web at
http://www.jpo.umd.edu/aca/honorpledge.html. The code prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents, and forging signatures. The University Senate encourages instructors to ask students to write the following signed statement on each examination or assignment:

*I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment* (or ‘examination’ in the case of exams).

It is suggested that you attach a signed sheet containing the above statement, in handwritten form, to your assignment when you submit it.

**Reading**

As indicated above, participants are expected to be conversant in the subject. Rarely will the specific content of a particular source be the focus of class discussion. The set text and recommended texts will provide you with a basic background on most topics. A separate reading list will be provided to enable you to read more extensively about topics. But reading and research should also be taken from a variety of other sources. There are a number of academic journals containing relevant articles, such as *Political Studies*, *Parliamentary Affairs*, *Political Quarterly*, *International Affairs* and *The British Journal of Political Science*. Particularly useful for an introduction to aspects of British politics are *Political Insight* and *Politics Review*.

All participants must read the British quality press on a regular basis. The daily ‘broadsheet’ newspapers are: *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and *The Financial Times*. As every British paper has its own political flavour, you should sample a range of these papers along the course of the term. In addition, *The Economist* newspaper (a weekly magazine) is an excellent source. Other publications such as *The New Statesman*, *The Spectator* and *Prospect* contain relevant political essays.

Broadcast programmes are also an important source. BBC Radio 4 and World Service are the two best radio sources for extensive news coverage and special programmes devoted to particular political issues. The best televised news programmes are Newsnight (10:30pm, BBC2) and 7 o’clock news (Channel 4).

The internet is also a good for access to sources, especially official sources. Government agencies and political parties have websites from which you can obtain documents and press releases. Newspapers and news agencies such as Reuters and the BBC all have sites from which a wealth of information can be obtained.
BRITISH POLITICS

Reading List

Useful readings for each of the sections of the course are set out below. Relevant chapters from the set text, Politics UK, 7th ed. (2010) and 8th ed (2014), are also listed. This list is selective and does not provide a comprehensive set of sources for each topic. It can be used as a guide for source material when preparing essays and presentations, but you will want to read wider to gain a greater depth of understanding. You should therefore familiarise yourself with a wider range of sources, including some internet sources, when preparing essays, oral presentations and the final exam.

In addition to the set text two other texts are listed below that provide a good general background to the British political system and make a good starting place for those with limited or no previous knowledge of the British political system.

Patrick Dunleavy, et. al., Developments in British Politics 7 (Palgrave, 2003).

David Childs, Britain since 1945: A Political History, 5th ed. (Routledge, 2001).

Overview of the British Political System: The Constitution

Jones and Norton (eds), Politics UK, 8th ed., chs. 3 & 13
Jones, et. al., Politics UK (2010), 7th ed., chs. 1, 13 & 14
Garnett and Lynch, Exploring British Politics (2012), chs. 1,2 & 6
Dearlove, J. and Saunders, P. Introduction to British Politics, 2nd ed. (Polity, 2000)
Dunleavy, P., et. al. (eds) Developments in British Politics 7, ch. 17
Kavanagh, D. British Politics (2006), chs. 1, 2, 5 & 10
Robins, L. and Jones. B. Debates in British Politics Today (Manchester University Press, 2000)
Dunleavy, et. al. (eds) (2006), Developments in British Politics 8, ch. 7
Heferman, R., et. al. (eds), Developments in British Politics, Nine, ch. 2

Historical Evolution: 1945-1979

Jones, et. al., 'The legacy of Empire’, pp. 54-6

Garnett and Lynch, ch. 3
Kavanagh, ch. 6

Childs, D. Britain since 1945: A Political History, 5th ed. (Routledge, 2001)

Clarke, P. Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-1990 (Penguin, 1997)

Gamble, A. Britain in Decline, 3rd ed. (Macmillan, 1990)


Marsh, D. et. al. Postwar British Politics in Perspective (Polity, 1999)

Sked, A. and Cook, C. Post-war Britain: A Political History (Penguin, 1996)


**Historical evolution: 1979-2012**

Heferman, et. al. (eds), chs. 1, 2, 9 & 11


Kavanagh, chs. 7 & 32

Dunleavy, et. al. (eds), ch. 16.


Dorey, P. The Major Premiership (St.Martins Press, 1999)

Evans, B. Thatcherism and British Politics (Sutton, 2000)


Thatcher, M. The Downing Street Years (Harper Collins, 1993)

Young, H. One of Us: a Life of Margaret Thatcher (Pan, 1993)

**Devolution (wk 3 mk II)**

Hefermann, et. al. (eds), chs. 7-8

Jones and Norton, (eds), ch. 12
Garnett and Lynch, ch.12

Cairney, P., The Scottish Independence Referendum: What are the Implications of a No Vote?”, Political Quarterly 86.2(April-June 2015), pp. 186-191

Dunleavy, et. al. (eds), ch. 8


Trench, A., “Devolution in the Round”, Political Insight 5.3(Dec. 2014), pp.4-7

**Political Parties and Elections**

Heferman, et. al. (eds), chs. 5-6

Jones and Norton (eds), chs. 5-7, 11, ‘How Well Has Coalition Worked?’ & ‘Epilogue’

Jones, et. al., chs. 4, 5, 7, 11 & Appendix

Garnett and Lynch, chs. 14-19

Kavanagh, chs. 18 & 20

Dunleavy, et. al. (eds), chs. 4 & 5


Hay, C. The Political Economy of New Labour (Manchester University Press, 1999)

Heffernan, R. New Labour and Thatcherism (Palgrave, 2001)

Jeffreys, K. The Labour Party since 1945 (Palgrave, 1993)


Shaw, E. The Labour Party since 1945 (Blackwell, 1996)

Legislature: House of Lords and House of Commons

Heferman, et. al. (eds), ch. 4

Jones and Norton (eds), chs. 15-16

Jones, et. al., chs. 15, 16 & ‘The great parliamentary expenses crisis’, pp. 246-48

Garnett and Lynch, ch. 8

Kavanagh, chs. 19 & 22

Dunleavy, et. al. (eds), ch. 3.

Bogdanor, V. Devolution in the UK (OUP, 2001)

Butler, Governing Without a Majority (Collins, 1983)


Riddell, P. Parliament under Pressure (Gollancz, 1998)


The Executive: Prime Minister, Cabinet and Government


Heferman, et. al. (eds), ch. 3

Jones and Norton (eds), ch. 18

Jones, et. al., chs. 17, & ‘Managing the Cabinet’s big beasts’, pp. 379-382

Garnett and Lynch, ch. 7

Kavanagh, chs. 11-13

Dunleavy, et. al. (eds), chs. 1 & 2

Hennessy, P. Cabinet (Blackwell, 1986)

Hennessy, P. Whitehall (Fontana, 1990)

James, S. British Cabinet Government (Routledge, 1998)

Rhodes, R. and Dunleavy, P. (eds) Prime Minister, Cabinet and Core Executive (Macmillan, 1995)

Robins, L. and Jones, B. Debates in British Politics Today (Manchester University Press, 2000)

**Civil Service and Judiciary**

Jones and Norton (eds), ch. 19 & 21


Garnett and Lynch, ch. 9

Kavanagh, chs. 12-14 & 24

Dunleavy, et. al. (eds), ch. 7.

Budge, et. al. The New British Politics, 2nd ed. (Longman, 2001)


Griffith, J.A.G. The Politics of the British Judiciary (Fontana, 1991)

Hennessy, P. Whitehall (Fontana, 1990)

Theakston, K. The Civil Service since 1945 (Blackwell, 1995)

**Pressure Groups, Interest Groups, Trade Unions**

Heferman, et. al. (eds), ch. 10

Jones and Norton (eds), ch. 10

Jones, et. al., chs. 10 & 26

Garnett and Lynch, ch. 19

Kavanagh, chs. 21-23 & 25

Dunleavy, et. al. (eds), ch. 6

Baggot, R. Pressure Groups Today (Manchester University Press, 1995)

Grant, W., “The Role of Pressure Groups”, Political Insight 5.2(Sept. 2014), pp. 12-15

Grant, W. Pressure Groups and British Politics (Macmillan, 2000)
McIlroy, J. *Trade Unions in Britain Today* (Manchester University Press, 1995)


Roberts, D. (ed) *British Politics in Focus* (Causeway, 1997)

**Business and Economy**

Hefermann, et. al. (eds), ch. 13

Jones and Norton (eds), chs. 3 & 25

Jones, et. al., chs. 21 & 24

Garnett and Lynch, ch. 4

Kavanagh, ch. 26 & 27

Dunleavy, et. al. (eds), ch. 14


Grant, W. *Economic Policy in Britain* (Palgrave, 2002)

Hutton, W. *The State We’re In* (Vintage, 1996)


Roberts, D. (ed) *British Politics in Focus* (Causeway, 1997)

Robins, L. and Jones, B. *Debates in British Politics Today* (Manchester University Press, 2001)

Whiteley, Paul and Clarke, H., “The Economic and Electoral Consequences of Austerity Policies in Britain”, *Parliamentary Affairs* 68.1(Jan. 2015), pp. 4-24

**UK and the EU**

Hefermann, et. al. (eds), ch. 14

Jones and Norton (eds), ch. 27

Jones, et. al., ch. 27

Garnett and Lynch, ch. 13

Kavanagh, chs. 8 & 9

Dunleavy, et. al. (eds), ch. 9

Browne, A. The Euro: Should Britain Join? (Icon Books, 2001)

Elliott, L. et. al. In or Out: Labour and the Euro (Fabian Society, 2002)

Geddes, A. Britain and the European Union, 2nd ed. (Palgrave, 2013)

George, S. Britain and European Integration since 1945 (Blackwell, 1991)

George, S. An Awkward Partner (OUP, 1998)


Greenwood, S. Britain and European Cooperation since 1945 (Blackwell, 1992)


Oliver, Tim, “To Be or Not to Be in Europe: is that the Question?”, International Affairs 91.1(Jan. 2015): 77-91

**British Foreign Policy**

Heferman, et. al. (eds), ch. 15 & 16.

Jones and Norton (eds), chs. 2 & 26

Jones, et.al., chs. 2 & 25

Kavanagh, ch. 31

Barkawi, T. and Brighton, S., “Brown Britain: Post-colonial Politics and Grand Strategy”, International Affairs 89.2 (September 2013):1109-1123


Freedman, L. and Clark, M. Britain and the World (CUP, 1991)

Hadfield-Amkhan, A. British Foreign Policy, National Identity, and Neoclassical Realism (Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010)

Sanders, D. Losing an Empire, Finding a Role (Macmillan, 1990)

Williams, P. “Who’s Making UK Foreign Policy?”, International Affairs 80.5(October 2004):911-930

**Britain and the US**

Dunleavy, et. al. (eds), ch. 10

Dumbrell, J. A Special Relationship (Palgrave, 2000)


Dunne, T. “‘When the Shooting Starts’: Atlanticism in British Security Strategy”, International Affairs 80.5(October 2004):893-910

Gamble, A. Between Europe and America (Palgrave, 2003)


Niblett, R., “Choosing between America and Europe: A New Context for British Foreign Policy”, International Affairs 83.4(July 2007):627-641


Reynolds, D. Britannia Overruled (Longman, 2000)

Riddell, P. Hug Them Close (Politicos, 2003)


APPENDIX 1
SEMINARY/ESSAY TOPICS

1. British democracy compares poorly with that of the United States. Discuss.

2. Were welfare state policies the cause of Britain’s decline after the Second World War?

3. Margaret Thatcher made the right decisions in the wrong fashion. Discuss.

4. ‘Tony Blair converted the British political system to a presidential system.’ Discuss.

5. Is Parliament still supreme?

6. Does coalition government work better than one party government in the British political system? Evaluate the effectiveness of the Cameron government.

7. For the sake of democracy, Britain needs to reform the voting system.’ Discuss.

8. Do the activities of pressure and interest groups enhance democracy in Britain? Answer with reference to at least three pressure groups operating in the British political system.

9. Has the Constitutional Reform Act of 2005 created a stronger, more independent judicial branch in Britain?

10. To what extent does the Civil Service control government in Britain?

11. An independent Scotland? What factors are driving moves for Scottish independence and how decisive are those factors?

12. Are the problems in Northern Ireland due to the failure of policy in Westminster?

13. In what ways has the economic policy in Britain over the past three decades differed from that of its partners (especially France and Germany) in the European Union? Evaluate the relative success of the different models.

14. How ‘bad’ is the relationship between Britain and the EU?

15. Should Britain become part of the Eurozone?

16. Evaluate the US-UK ‘Special Relationship’ with reference to EITHER the British decision to support the US in Iraq; OR the conflict over the Falkland Islands; OR the conflict in Palestine; OR British policy toward the European Union.

17. ‘Britain’s foreign policy is misguided because it aims to maintain post-imperial Britain as a major world power.’ Discuss.