

STV13XX – British Politics

Course content

This course offers analysis and discussion of the actors, institutions and selected policy areas of contemporary politics in the UK. Students are given an overview of features that are characteristic of British politics, perceived within a broader comparative perspective. Context is added through lectures devoted to three specific periods – those of ‘Thatcherism’ (1980s), New Labour (1997-2010) and Conservative hegemony in the era of Brexit (2010s). Particular attention is devoted to theories and concepts from political science, such as the Westminster model, the majoritarian electoral system and the union state.

Supplementing the lectures, additional activities are offered underway, including film screenings related to topics from the course. The convenor will also organise a voluntary study trip to London.

Learning outcome

Knowledge

Having completed this course, students will:

- Know the basic features of the main political institutions in the UK.
- Have insight in the history and current outlook of Britain’s main political parties.
- Have knowledge of the British electoral system and its consequences for political representation.
- Identify the characteristics of Britain as a ‘union state’.
- Know the key aspects of Britain’s relationship to Europe and the European Union
- Have a general understanding of British foreign policy, its history and current debates.

Skills

Having completed this course, students will be able to:

- Apply concepts and theory to understand the working of British politics.
- Identify what makes the electoral system in Britain different from proportional representation.
- Critically reflect upon the institutions that uphold the British union, including their democratic legitimacy.
- Discuss the background and consequences of the Brexit referendum in 2016.
- Compare institutions and political actors in Britain to those of other countries.
- Discuss key aspects and controversies related to British foreign policy.

Competence

Having completed this course, students will:

- Be able to apply and assess key theories and concepts to analyse a political system.
- Be aware of different interpretations of political actors and events.
- Be critical thinkers and producers of academic texts.

Teaching

10 Lectures

Compulsory activities

- Write a short paper (1,000-2,000) on a specified topic related to the first six lectures.
- Comment on other students' papers.

Examination

4-hour written exam.

Language of examination

The examination text is given in English, and you submit your response in English.

Evaluation

Lecture plan

1 (34)	What are we looking at when we say we study British politics?	Blick (2021) ch. 1 & 12; Jones (2021) ch. 2-3 (68p)
2 (35)	Political parties	Blick (2021) ch. 6; Clarke et al. (2021) ch. 5.; Ford and Goodwin 2014a (88p)
3 (36)	Electoral system	Blick (2021) ch. 7-8; Lijphart (1999); Denver & Garnett (2014) (95p)
4 (37)	Parliamentarism	Blick (2021) ch. 4; Clarke et al. (2021) ch. 19; Bogdanor 2009 (74p)
5 (38)	The executive	Blick (2021) ch. 2-3; Burch & Holliday (2004) (71p)
6 (39)	Thatcherism and New Labour	Evans (2018) ch. 2-3 (Seldon (2007) ch. 1 & 27; Albertson & Stepney (2020) (88p)
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7 (41)	Realignment: the 2010s in British politics	Fox (2010); Hayton & McEnhill (2015); Smith (2018); Ford & Goodwin 2014b; Cutts et al. (2020) (73p)
8 (42)	Devolution and the union	Blick (2021) ch. 11-12; Agnew (2017); Lynch (2009) (91p)
9 (43)	Britain and Europe	Smith (2005); Daddow (2012); Usherwood (2018); Clarke et al. (2021) ch. 7 (62p)
10 (44)	Britain and the world	Blick (2021) ch. 13; Clarke et al. (2021) ch. 28; Strachan (2021); Turner (2019) (73p)

Syllabus

Books

- Blick, Andrew (2021) *UK Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (237p)
- ch. 1: Introduction: tradition and change, pp. 3-16.
 - ch. 2: The Cabinet and the prime minister, pp. 19-44.
 - ch. 3: The UK government, pp. 45-68.
 - ch. 4: Parliament, pp. 69-94.
 - ch. 6: The party system, pp. 121-144.
 - ch. 7: Elections and voting, pp. 145-170.
 - ch. 8: Referendums, pp. 171-192.
 - ch. 11: Devolution and local government, pp. 249-274.
 - ch. 12: The nations and the union, pp. 275-302.
 - ch. 13: The UK and the outside world, pp. 303-329.

Chapters and articles in compendium

- Bogdanor, Vernon (2009) *The New British Constitution*. Oxford: Hart Publishing. (20p). Ch. 1: A peculiar constitution, pp. 3-22. (20p)
- Clarke, Michael et al. (2021). *Politics UK*. 10th edition. London: Routledge. (94p)
- ch. 5: Political ideas: the major parties (Bill Jones), pp. 106-133.
 - ch. 7: From Euroscepticism to Brexit (Bill Jones), pp. 156-173.
 - ch. 19: The House of Lords (Philip Norton), pp. 450-477.
 - ch. 28: British foreign and defence policy (Michael Clarke), pp. 680-701.
- Denver, David & Mark Garnett (2014) *British General Elections Since 1964*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Ch. 8: Conclusion: Diversity, dealignment, and disillusion, pp. 181-208. (28p)
- Evans, Eric (2018) *Thatcher and Thatcherism*. London: Routledge. (34p)
- ch. 2: Election and depression, pp. 16-27.
 - ch. 3: Thatcher triumphant, pp. 28-50.
- Jones, Bill (2021) *British Politics: The Basics*. 2nd edition. London: Routledge. (26p)
- ch. 2: The evolution of Britain's political system, pp. 21-34.
 - ch. 3: Introductory overview of the British political system, pp. 35-46.
- Lijphart, Arend (1999) *Patterns of Democracy. Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. London: Yale University Press. Ch. 2: The Westminster model of democracy, pp. 9-30. (22p)

Articles available online:

- Agnew, John (2017) "To many Scotlands? Place, the SNP, and the future of nationalist mobilization", *Scottish Geographical Journal* 134, 1-2: 5-23. (19p)
- Albertson, Kevin & Paul Stepney (2020) "1979 and all that: a 40-year reassessment of Margaret Thatcher's legacy on her own terms», *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 44, 2: 319-342. (24p)

- Burch, Martin & Ian Holliday (2004) "The Blair government and the core executive", *Government & Opposition* 39, 1: 1-21. (21p)
- Cutts, David et al. (2020) "Brexit, the 2019 General Election and the Realignment of British Politics», *The Political Quarterly* 91, 1: 7-23. (17p)
- Daddow, Oliver (2012) "Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair and the Eurosceptic tradition in Britain", *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 15, 2: 210-227. (18p)
- Ford, Robert & Matthew Goodwin (2014a) *Revolt on the Right. Explaining Support for the Radical Right in Britain*. London: Routledge. Ch. 3: Origins: a long time coming. (37p).
- Ford, Robert & Matthew Goodwin (2014b) "Understanding UKIP: Identity, social change and the left behind", *The Political Quarterly* 85, 3: 277-284. (7p)
- Fox, Ruth (2010) "Five days in May: a new political order emerges", *Parliamentary Affairs* 63, 4: 607-622. (16p)
- Hayton, Richard & Libby McEnhill (2015) "Cameron's Conservative Party, social liberalism and social justice", *British Politics* 10: 131-147. (17p)
- Lynch, Philip (2009) "From social democracy back to no ideology? The Scottish National Party and ideological change in a multi-level electoral setting", *Regional & Federal Studies* 19, 4-5: 619-637. (19p)
- Smith, Julie (2018) "Gambling on Europe: David Cameron and the 2016 referendum», *British Politics* 13: 1-16. (16p)
- Smith, Julie (2005) "A missed opportunity? New Labour's European policy 1997-2005", *International Affairs* 81, 4: 703-721. (19p)
- Strachan, Hew (2021) "Global Britain in a competitive age : strategy of the Integrated Review", *Journal of the British Academy* 9: 161-177. (17p)
- Turner, Oliver (2019) "Global Britain and the narrative of Empire" *The Political Quarterly* 90, 4: 727-734 (8p)
- Usherwood, Simon (2018) "The third era of British Euroscepticism: Brexit as a paradigm shift», *The Political Quarterly* 89, 4: 553-559. (7p)

Total: 783 pages.