



Study abroad.

SYLLABUS

Fall Session Only

MODERN BRITAIN

Instructor: Dr Andreas Staab

Contact Hrs: 40

Language of Instruction: English

LONDON, ENGLAND (NCSA)

Contact

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Please use email for initial questions, crisis management, etc. Meetings can be arranged where necessary. Please use subject line 'AHA'.

Course Description

The course provides an intensive introduction to the principal institutions, parties and ideologies in British politics. It will also focus on prominent issues in British political debates. The emphasis will be contemporary but extensive use will be made of historical explanations.

Aims and Objectives

The course introduces competing analytical and political interpretations, drawing in particular on the fields of comparative politics and public policy. The course aims to evaluate key institutional developments and place them in the context of analytical debates and is therefore interested in conceptual debates, for example, 'How can we explain party competition in Britain?' or 'Are British elections based on class-voting?' The course aims to cover the ground that a British undergraduate might travel in his or her first year at university. We also aim to use the location of London as Britain's political capital, by organising some excursions (such as the London Assembly).

Learning Outcome

Students who undertake this course and participate fully can expect to gain a thorough knowledge of the country's political process. The key to this course is to conceptualise the United Kingdom as a political system and its relationship to other aspects of Britain's national life, society and history.

Pre-requisites

This course does **not** require an existing familiarity of the UK's political system. Its success however depends on **your ongoing** interest in exploring British politics during your stay in London.

Rules and Procedures

Attendance at the two weekly sessions is obligatory. The seminars combine introductory lectures, presentations, discussions and group work. Presentations should be short and sharp, providing an introduction to the key themes which open the seminar for further discussion. In some seminars, students are asked to perform debates. Presenters should aim to make controversial (but reasoned)

contributions, questioning the other presenter's point of view. Shared preparation will enhance the quality (and enjoyment) of the debates. In general, you are expected to prepare and contribute to ALL seminar sessions. The objective of the seminar is to develop curiosity in the subject, to exchange information and to explore approaches and debates.

Assessment

There will be additional information in a class handout.

The assessment is divided into three parts.

1. An exam at the end of the course constitutes 50 per cent of the overall mark. Students will be given a set of around seven questions, out of which they have to answer two. The exam will last for two hours and no course material (notes, books etc.) will be permitted.
2. A mid-term exam which will have two sections
 - Section One: a pop quiz which will test the knowledge of the subject with a set of general questions that can be answered briefly
 - Section Two: students will be given a choice of four questions out of which you have to answer one. There is a strict space limit of **1000 words**.
3. Presentation(s) and class participation: 25 per cent

Essential Reading

Budge, Crewe, McKay and Newton (2007). *The New British Politics*, London, Pearson Longman. 3rd Edition.

Jones, B, Kavanagh, D, Moran, M, Norton, P (2004) *Politics UK* – fifth edition, Longman (utilise in particular the book's website, www.booksites.net/jones)

Further Reading

- Dearlove, J and Saunders, P (2000) *Introduction to British Politics*, Polity, Cambridge.
- Dunleavy, P, Gamble, A; Holliday, I and Peele, G (2006) *Developments in British Politics 8*, London, Palgrave. Check out the updates on the www.palgrave.com/politics/dunleavy website)
- Dunleavy, P, Gamble, A; Heffernan, R, I and Peele, G (2003) *Developments in British Politics 7*, London, Palgrave
- Seldon, A (ed. 2001) *The Blair effect*, London, Little, Brown and Co.

The different books do very different things, and students may find it useful to consult different sources and share books. Dearlove and Saunders provide a sociological introduction, paying particular attention to controversies about the British state. Dunleavy et al. offer a slightly more advanced introduction to British politics than Jones et al. The latter book is ideal for a basic coverage of the key issues, but can become rather boring at times. Its website is excellent. The Seldon book offers the best assessment of the first period in office of the Blair government, but is directed primarily at the British 'political pundit'. In general, please note that political change in the last years has been significant and thus makes older editions and books slightly dated when it comes to institutional matters.

Internet

- www.bbc.co.uk (for news coverage)
- www.guardianunlimited.co.uk (the Guardian)
- www.ft.com (the Financial Times)
- www.independent.co.uk (the Independent)
- www.telegraph.co.uk (the Telegraph)
- www.thetimes.co.uk (the Times)
- www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk (the main paper for Northern Ireland)
- www.irishnews.com (the Nationalist paper for Northern Ireland)
- www.ireland.com (the Irish Times)
- <http://www.ukonline.gov.uk/> (the official British government website).
- <http://www.ukpol.co.uk/> (British politics web-site)

Study Visit

During the semester, the course aims to integrate study visits, many of which are dependent on our class schedule and are therefore subject to confirmation. However, we intend to visit

- The House of Commons and its committees
- Question Time with the London Mayor
- Attend a trial at the High Court
- We will also try to attend public lectures at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). These lectures usually take place in the evenings (6.30 – 8.00). At the time of writing this syllabus, the precise schedule of LSE events had not been published. We will however, agree in class, which lectures this course ought to attend.

Course schedule

Class 1 The Constitution of the United Kingdom

Topic: introduction to the course material and ways through which to examine the British political system.

Reading: Budge et al, chs. 1 and 4

Class 2 The Westminster Model I - The Core Executive

Topic: The key principles of cabinet government

Reading:

Budge et al, chs. 5 and 6.

Jones et al, chs. 19-20

Class 3 Visit to the High Court

Class 4 The Westminster Model II – Parliament and Party Systems

Presentation: ‘The Prime Minister is powerless’

Topic: Placing parliament in the context of modern politics & the traditional party system under challenge

Reading: Budge et al, chs.16-18.

Class 5 Workshop Session

This session relates to the topic ‘**The Westminster Model II – Parliament & Party System**’ Students will be given a specific task and have to submit a report of their findings which will be part of the overall grading process. (see Assessment Guidelines).

Mid Term Hand Out - exact date of hand out will be announced in class

Class 6 Social policies

Topic: Public policies under Labour – Conservative policies under a different label?

Reading:

Budge et al, chs. 24-25.

Jones, et al, chs. 26, 27.

Class 7 Economic policies

Presentation: ‘We are all Thatcherites now.’ Does this apply to economic policy under Labour?

Reading:

Budge et al, chs. 24-25.

Jones, et al, chs. 26, 27

Mid Term Due – exact due date will be announced in class

Mid term Break
Reading Week

Class 8 Electoral Systems and Electoral Behaviour

Topic: Elections in the 21st century: Do our votes still count?

Reading:

Budge et al, ch 15, Jones et al, chs. 8, 9.

Class 9 Constitutional Change: Devolution in Wales and Scotland

Topic: Devolution – is Blair breaking up the UK?

Reading:

Budge et al, chs. 11 and 12.

Jones, et al, chs. 14 and 15

www.scotland.gov.uk

www.wales.gov.uk

Class 10 Visit to the House of Commons: Meet at Parliament Square

Class 11 The Northern Ireland Problem

Presentation All of Ireland should be governed by the Irish

Topic: Attempting the regulation of ethno-national conflict in Northern Ireland.

Reading:

Budge et al, ch.10

Jones et al, ch.30

Look at these websites:

www.northernireland.gov.uk

www.cain.ulst.ac.uk

Class 12 & 13 Britain and European Integration

Topic: Why has Britain been such an awkward partner in Europe?

Reading:

Budge et al, Chs. 8-9

Jones et. al, Ch.31

Class 14 Mayor's Question Time: meet at City Hall

Class 15 The Euro *Topic:* Should Britain adopt the EU's single currency?

Reading:

Budge et al, Chs. 8-9.

Jones et al, Ch.31

Class 16 Final Exam (Exact times to be announced).

Assessment Guidelines

1. PRESENTATIONS, CLASS PARTICIPATION, WORKSHOP: 25 PER CENT
2. MIDTERM TAKE-HOME EXAM: 25 PER CENT
3. FINAL TAKE-HOME EXAM: 50 PER CENT

1. PRESENTATIONS, CLASS PARTICIPATION, AND WORKSHOP

Over the course of the semester, you are required to give one presentation per term. Presentations should be **no longer than 25 minutes** and should provide the seminar group with a discussion base.

Hence, presentations ought to cover key factual points, but should also give some 'food for thought'. You can choose from three topics:

- Westminster Model
- Social and economic policies
- Northern Ireland
- In addition, there will be a workshop session, at the end of which you are required to submit a written report. This session will concentrate on issues related to 'Parliament and Party System'.

2. MIDTERM TAKE-HOME EXAM

The exam will consist of two sections:

Section One: a pop quiz which will test your knowledge on the topics covered so far.

Section Two: you will be given a choice of four questions out of which you have to answer one. There is a strict space limit on the length of your essay: **1000 words**.

3. FINAL TAKE HOME EXAM

You will be given a set of questions (around 7), out of which you have to answer two. The questions will be related to those topics that we have dealt with after the mid-term break.

4. GRADING SYSTEM

You can achieve a combined maximum of 25 points for your presentation(s) and class participation. A further maximum of 25 points is given out for the mid-term exam, with a final 50 points maximum for the final take-home exam. The total number of your points will translate into the following grade:

A: 94 - 100 points

A minus: 88 - 93 points

B plus: 81 - 87 points

B: 76 - 80 points

B minus: 70 - 75 points

C plus: 65 - 69 points

C: 60 - 64 points

C minus: 55--59 points

D: 50-54 points

F: 0 – 49 points