



British Politics & Government

GL 399-02 Spring 2009

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This course will introduce you to the history, institutions, and politics of Great Britain. We will begin with an examination of the major events in British politics since the Second World War. We will then move on to review the major governing ideas, institutions, actors, and electoral processes of the British political system. Finally, we will look at Britain's role in the wider world and the key challenges facing the country in the early 21st century. By the end of the course you should have a much greater appreciation of the similarities and differences between Britain and the United States and (hopefully) a sense of what Americans might be able to learn from the British experience.

READINGS: The majority of the reading for this course will come from the following texts:

- (1) Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*
- (2) Bruce Norton, *Politics in Britain*
- (3) Terrence Casey, ed., *The Blair Legacy: Politics, Policy, Governance, and Foreign Affairs*

You are also expected to keep abreast of current events in the UK. The course website has a list of various news links that will assist you in this task, especially the BBC, *The Times*, *The Guardian*, and *The Economist*. You are expected to read these DAILY and come to class prepared to discuss current events.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Your grade will be based on the following:

(A) Two Take-Home Exams (30% each; 60% total). You will be required to write two take-home essay exams. These will include broad questions that require you to demonstrate your knowledge of the subject matter and show that you can critically and intelligently analyze key issues in British politics. Appropriate accommodation on the due date for the second exam will be granted for graduating seniors.

(B) Research Paper (30%). Topic and Bibliography due on Monday, March 23; Research paper due on Monday, May 4th. You will be required to write a 10-15-page research paper on an important

political topic related to the history, governance, or politics of the United Kingdom. More detailed instructions will be handed out separately.

(C) Attendance and Participation (10%). You are *expected* to come to each class prepared (i.e., having done the assigned reading) and ready to actively participate in the discussion. Participation points are *not an automatic bonus* for showing up. If you do not do the reading or never speak up, even if you attend class every day, you will get a zero for participation

COURSE POLICIES: The following policies apply unless otherwise stated.

Academic Misconduct: All cases of academic misconduct, including plagiarism (taking another's words or ideas and presenting them as your own) or cheating (making use of assistance on an assignment beyond that authorized by the professor) will be punished appropriately. Penalties for academic misconduct are at the discretion of the professor and can range from the loss of all credit on an assignment to a formal hearing before the Institute's Rules and Discipline Committee. It is incumbent upon you to know what constitutes academic misconduct and make sure to avoid it. If you are in any way unsure about what constitutes a violation, please ask me. *Claiming ignorance after the fact is not a valid excuse. Think rationally; the risks outweigh the gains*

Late Assignments: Extensions for exams or assignments will only be given if you have a *legitimate excuse and you contact me in advance*. All late assignments will receive a letter grade reduction for each day (including weekend days) that they are late. You can reach me via e-mail, voicemail, or by dropping a note in either my campus or HSS mailbox. Short of being in a coma, you should be able to reach me if there is a problem. I am very accommodating to those who alert me to a problem in advance; I will be far less friendly if you approach me after the fact.

Ideological Perspectives: I have no intention of trying to indoctrinate you with my beliefs. The issues we will be exploring are often contentious and there are not right or wrong answers per se. That being said, there are good and bad arguments. You may hold any opinion you wish, but *your arguments must be logically sound and supported by the available evidence*.

Overall, I can only facilitate the learning process; I cannot force knowledge into your heads. All of you are adults and fully capable of being responsible students and active learners. That means that if you do not understand something *you* need to take the initiative to find out the answer -- raise your hand, talk to me after class, come to my office. I cannot read minds, so it is up to you to try to seek clarity when it is lacking.

Topics and Readings

PART I -- THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT: BRITAIN SINCE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Week 1 (March 9-13)

MT – The Development of Britain and the British
Bruce Norton, *Politics in Britain*, Chapter 1

RF – Building a 'New Jerusalem': The Postwar Attlee Government
Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*, Part 1 (pp. 1-112)

Week 2 (March 16-20)

MT – Change and Consensus: The Conservative Fifties
Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*, Part 2 (pp. 113-228)

RF – Modernization and Failure: Wilson, Heath, and Callaghan
Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*, Part 3 (pp. 229-378)

Week 3 (March 23-27)

MT – Britain's Capitalist Revolution: The Thatcher-Major Years
Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*, Part 4 (pp. 379-474)
RESEARCH PAPER TOPIC AND BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE (MONDAY, MARCH 23)

RF – Forging a 'Third Way': Blair, Brown, and 'New Labour'
Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain*, Part 5 (pp. 475-602)

PART II – GOVERNING IDEAS

Week 4 (March 30-April 3)

MT – The British Constitution
Bruce Norton, *Politics in Britain*, Chapter 3
James Alt, 'The Constitutional Revolution of Tony Blair,' Chapter 15 in Terrence Casey, ed., *The Blair Legacy*

RF – Political Culture
Bruce Norton, *Politics in Britain*, Chapter 2
Nick Randall and James Sloam, 'New Labour, the Third Way, and Social Democracy: An Ideological Assessment,' Chapter 6 in Terrence Casey, ed., *The Blair Legacy*

Week 5 (April 6-10)

NOTE: Professor Casey will be attending the (British) Political Studies Association Conference this week.

MT – Video of various Episodes of *Yes, Minister*

RF – No class

TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DUE (FRIDAY, APRIL 10 AT THE START OF CLASS)

SPRING BREAK (April 13-17)

PART III – POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Week 6 (April 20-24)

MT – Parliament: Commons and Lords

Bruce Norton, *Politics in Britain*, Chapter 8 and Chapter 5, pp. 99-114

Mark Stuart, 'The Role of Parliament under Blair,' Chapter 12 in Terrence Casey, ed. *The Blair Legacy*

RF – Executive: Prime Minister and Cabinet

Bruce Norton, *Politics in Britain*, Chapter 8

Mark Bennister, 'Tony Blair as Prime Minister,' Chapter 12 in Terrence Casey, ed., *The Blair Legacy*

Matt Beech, 'A Puzzle of Ideas and Policy: Gordon Brown as Prime Minister,' *Policy Studies*, Vol. 30, Num. 1 (2009), pp. 5-16. [Handout]

Week 7 (Apr. 27-May 1)

MT – Devolved Governments: Scotland and Wales

Bruce Norton, *Politics in Britain*, Chapter 11, pp. 300-309

Jonathan Bradbury, 'The Blair Government, Devolution, and Regionalism in the United Kingdom,' Chapter 13 in Terrence Casey, ed., *The Blair Legacy*

RF – Devolved Government: Northern Ireland

Jonathan Tonge, 'Northern Ireland' in Jones et al., *Politics UK*, 6th Edition [Handout]

John Coakley, 'Has the Northern Ireland Problem Been Solved?' *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 19, Num. 3 (July 2008), pp. 98-112. [Handout]

PART IV – POLITICAL INTERESTS AND PROCESSES

Week 8 (May 4-8)

MT – Political Parties

Bruce Norton, *Politics in Britain*, Chapter 4

Florence Faucher-King, 'The Party is Over: The "Modernization" of the British Labour Party,' Chapter 2 in Terrence Casey, ed., *The Blair Legacy*

Tim Bale, 'The Conservatives" Trounced, Transfixed – and Transformed,' Chapter 3 in Terrence Casey, ed., *The Blair Legacy*

Andrew Russell and David Cutts, 'The Liberal Democrats after Blair,' Chapter 4 in Terrence Casey, ed., *The Blair Legacy*

RESEARCH PAPER DUE (MONDAY, MAY 4)

RF – Campaigns and Elections

Bruce Norton, *Politics in Britain*, Chapter 7

David Denver and Justin Fisher, 'Blair's Electoral Record,' Chapter 1 in Terrence Casey, ed., *The Blair Legacy*

PART V – BRITAIN BETWEEN EUROPE AND AMERICA

Week 9 (May 11-15)

MT – Britain and the European Union

Bruce Norton, *Politics in Britain*, Chapter 13

Scott James and Kai Opperman, 'Blair and the European Union,' Chapter 20 in Terrence Casey, ed., *The Blair Legacy*

RF – Britain and the United States

John Dumbrell, 'US-UK Relations: Structure, Agency, and the Special Relationship,' Chapter 19 in Terrence Casey, ed., *The Blair Legacy*

PART VI – KEY ISSUES IN BRITISH POLITICS

Week 10 (Feb 12-16)

MT – Reviving the Economy

Terrence Casey and Alistair Howard 'New Labour and the British Model of Capitalism,' Chapter 9 in Terrence Casey, ed., *The Blair Legacy*

Simon Lee, 'The Rock of Stability? The Political Economy of the Brown Government,' *Policy Studies*, Vol. 30, Num. 1 (2009), pp. 17-32. [Handout]

RF – The Renewal of Public Services

Simon Griffiths, 'The Public Services under Gordon Brown – Similar Reforms, Less Money,' *Policy Studies*, Vol. 30, Num. 1 (2009), pp. 53-67. [Handout]

TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM – DUE DATE TBA