



**Boston University** International Programs  
London

**Boston University British Programmes**  
**British Political Institutions**  
**CAS PO 360 (Core Course)**  
**Summer 2009**

**Instructor Information**

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B. Day and Time	Wednesdays and Thursdays, 1:15-5:15pm
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G. Office hours	By appointment

**Course Overview**

This course will introduce you to the main political institutions and actors in Britain today. It will focus upon the historical and cultural context of British politics and detailed consideration will be given to competing political ideas and ideologies, divergent conceptual methods drawn from the social sciences and popular perceptions of British politics. The overarching framework will be consideration of Britain as a changing liberal democracy and an examination will be made of what Britain shares and what differentiates it from other liberal democracies such as the U.S.A. and other European Union states. Some of the latter are unitary (as is the U.K.) others are federal.

Britain is arguably the world's oldest parliamentary democracy. It has an apparently confusing set of political institutions that combine historical continuity and change to modernity. Britain is heralded as a modern, free and democratic country, yet the head of state is a hereditary monarch, and there is an established church under the protection of the monarch. There is a bicameral legislature, yet one chamber is not elected. There are *liberties* under common law and it is only recently that human rights were codified and become an integral part of British law. There is a constitution but it is not written in a single document. Elections are free and corruption is virtually non-existent, and the electorate take a lively interest in political matters, as befits a free popular democracy. Nevertheless, there is no separation of powers, rather the reverse, in fact, and the electoral system has created a distorted political system, dominated by a Party that won just 35% of the vote on a turnout of 61% of those eligible to vote, but which has a majority of 66 seats in the House of Commons. As you may discover while you are here, there is also a culture of pervasive secrecy in public life, despite the fact that the Government is in favour of the citizen's *right to know*.

At the social and cultural level mainland Britain is a strongly homogeneous and consensual polity. Religion, race, language, ethnicity, nationality all figure in society, but have not so far translated into major political cleavages. Social class is still more significant as it has been for more than a century.

Since 1973 Britain has been a member of the European Union and this has had a profound effect on British politics. It is an issue that cuts right across traditional divisions, and, at times, has come close to destroying the basic two party political system in the U.K. More recently, Scotland and Wales gained the right to govern themselves with regard to devolved matters. All these factors have contributed to causing the 'British' to question exactly who they are and what is their place in the modern world.

In June 2007, after ten years as Prime Minister, Tony Blair was replaced by Gordon Brown, who promised to govern in a different manner to that of his predecessor. He has, in fact, had a torrid time over the last seventeen months. The Conservative and Liberal Democrat leaders are also new to their posts since the last general election, and for the first time in a decade, the Conservatives are widely seen to be the favourites to win the next general election, which is likely to take place in 2010. Add to that the fact that London has a new and controversial, Conservative Mayor as it gears up for the next Olympics and you can see why it is an interesting time to be in London!

The course aims to give you a thorough, if basic, knowledge of political Britain, preparing you for your internship placements, and hopefully giving you an enjoyable experience at the same time!

The main **teaching method** will be by lecture but the classes will be interactive and you will be expected to participate fully.

### **Required Reading**

Please purchase and read:

I. Budge, I. Crewe, D. McKay, K. Newton, P. Dunleavy, The New British Politics (latest edition)  
Developments in British Politics, Number 8

Additional readings may be posted on the course webpage:

<http://www.bu-london.co.uk/academic/po360> (you must be logged in to view materials).

### **Additional Reading**

*(all in the BU library)*

Bill Coxall, Lynton Robins and Robert Leach	Contemporary British Politics
H. Barnett	Britain Unwrapped
Bill Jones	Politics UK (5th Edition)
S. Ludlam	New Labour in Government
D. Leonard	Elections in Britain
D. Kavanagh	The Powers Behind the Prime Minister
D. Kavanagh et al	British Politics
R. Eccleshall	Biographical Dictionary of British prime Ministers
T. Enright	The British Political Process: An Introduction
V. Bogdanor	Devolution in the United Kingdom
J. Barry-Jones	The Road to a National Assembly for Wales
J. Morrison	Reforming Britain
P. Joyce	Law, Order and the Judiciary
L. Pye	British Politics: Ideas and Concepts
A. Heywood	Politics
A. Vincent	Modern Political Ideologies
P. Norton	The Constitution in Flux
P. Hennessy	The Hidden Wiring
	The Prime Minister: The Office and its Holders Since 1945
	The Secret State
M. Moran	British Politics and Society
M. Moran	Politics and Governance in the UK
C. Pilkington	Issues in British Politics
D. Butler et al	The British General Election of 1997

D. Butler &	
D. Kavanagh	The British General Election of 2005
D. Wring	Marketing the Labour Party
D. Rosenbaum	From Soapbox to Soundbite
A. Brown	Politics and Society in Scotland
B. Taylor	The Scottish Parliament
B. Coxall & L. Robins	Britain Since the War
J. Redwood	Stars and Strife
R. Rogers	How Parliament Works
M. O'Neil(ed)	Devolution and British Politics
J Tonge	Northern Ireland
A Geddes & J Tonge	Britain Decides
J McGary & D O'Leary	The Northern Ireland Conflict
S Weir	Unequal Citizens
J. Pinder	The European Union
A. Blair	Companion to the European Union
M. Keating	The Government of Scotland
Rowntree Trust	Power to the People

The above list is a sample, the most up-to-date, of an excellent collection of references on British politics. You will have no trouble finding out all you need to know. In addition, you are expected to purchase and read a "serious" British broadsheet newspaper such as *The Guardian*, *The Financial Times*, *the Independent*, *The Telegraph* or *The Times*. There are also excellent weekly publications such as *The Economist*, *New Statesman and Society* etc. The required texts provide very good academic analysis but you are required to be as up-to-date as possible with your political information. There are also very current affairs programs such as *Newsnight* on BBC 2, (no commercial breaks) and *Channel Four News*.

### **Assessment of the Course**

There will be an **end of course final examination of two hours** in which you are required to **answer two examination questions. There will also be an essay of 2500 words, to be handed in at the end of the course on an approved topic. In the third week there will be a class test.**

The examination will count for **50%** of the final grade, the paper **30%** and the test **10%**, and another **10%** will be allocated for participation and attendance.

Your grades will be based on the following criteria: the relevance of your answer to the topic chosen, clarity of expression and continuity, explicit evidence of having read the main information and arguments in the required and supplementary reading. In addition, extra credit will be given for the strategic use of up-to-date illustrative material from the press or other media consulted.

### **Grading**

Please refer to the Academic Handbook for detailed grading criteria, attendance requirements and policies on plagiarism:

<http://www.bu-london.co.uk/files/images/ACADEMICHANDBOOKSU09.pdf>.

**Attendance** will be used to moderate final grades and a register will be taken at each session. Absenteeism from class without adequate written justification will result in a diminution of final grade on a pro-rata basis. Conversely, excellent attendance will result in an upgrade of the classification where the final examination standard is borderline.

## **Schedule and Basic Reading**

Please note that precise sections, where relevant, are given below, but you are strongly encouraged to research each topic from the additional reading suggested, and the wider range of books available. Other reading will be suggested in class.

**Week beginning 18 May      Induction Lectures**

**Wednesday 27 May.      Understanding British Politics; The EU and Britain**  
**Reading**                      Budge Part 1, Chapters 11, 12 and 19; Dunleavy Chapters 1, 9 - 12

**Thursday 28 May.      Citizens rights and the Constitution (Prof. Sullivan)**  
**Reading**                      Budge, Chapter 4; Dunleavy pp 1-38

**Wednesday 3 June.      Parliament**  
**Reading**                      Budge Chapter 18; Dunleavy pp 18-38

**Thursday 4 June.      The Major Political Parties**  
**Reading**                      Budge Chapters 16 & 17; Dunleavy pp 119-135

**Wednesday 10 June.      Westminster Walk (details to be given in class)**

**Thursday 11 June.      The Executive: Prime Minister and Cabinet; the Civil Service**  
**Reading**                      Budge Chapter 15; Dunleavy pp 100-118

**\*\* Make-up Class Date: Friday 12 June.** Should any class dates need to be rescheduled, students are obligated to keep this date free to attend classes.

**Wednesday 17 June.      Elections and Voting Behaviour (Prof. Sullivan)**  
**Reading**                      Budge chapters 15; Dunleavy pp 119-135

**Thursday 18 June.      Devolution and local government**  
**Reading**                      Budge, Chapter 12

**Wednesday 24 June.      House of Lords Records visit (tbc)**  
**Reading**                      To be advised

**Thursday 25 June.      Final Examination:** Exam times and locations will be posted on the BU London website and in the Student Newsletter two weeks before exam dates.

**\*\* Please note: students will have their first Internship Tutorial meeting either after their Elective A exam on Tuesday 23 June or after their final Core lecture on Wednesday 24 June.**

I hope that you find this an interesting and challenging course.

Paul Cousins,  
May 2009