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## Hansard Scholars Programme - Course Outline

# Inside Westminster: Politics, Policy & Participation

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| Course Leader: | Dr Simon Kaye     |
| Email Address: | sk@simontkaye.com |

This course examines the context, procedures and politics of British parliamentary democracy, providing an overview of the British political system and allowing engagement with current themes and issues in domestic British politics. This course will also provide the cross-cultural and professional context for the internship and help Scholars to devise and develop strategies for using their internship experience and acquired skills for career-building.

Classes are on Mondays at 11am-12.30pm and 3-4.30pm.

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### Structure

This course will mainly be delivered in two 1.5-hour sessions every Monday.

**Part 1** of the course will be taught on Monday mornings, and will generally consist of an hour-long lecture on a substantive topic in British politics, followed or preceded by a participatory discussion/seminar period.

**Part 2** of the course will take place on Monday afternoons. These sessions will generally consist of a shorter lecture on some aspect of political professions and careers, followed by an hour-long workshop or participatory seminar emphasising the development of skills and exploration of internship experiences.

Both sessions are followed by a half-hour period which Scholars are encouraged to treat as an 'office hour'.

## **Learning Outcomes**

Classes and workshops are compulsory. It is expected that you will come to classes prepared to discuss the topic of the week and therefore you are required to undertake preparatory reading every week to keep up with the course and to contribute effectively.

Scholars should gain:

- knowledge of British political institutions
- an insight into Parliamentary practice and procedure
- an awareness of the interaction between Parliament and other institutions and bodies in both Britain and Europe
- familiarity with theoretical approaches to the study of British politics
- an appreciation of current debates and controversies in British politics
- a capacity for detailed analysis of trends and changes in the British political landscape
- an ability to contextualise the practical experience of working in British politics, learn from it, relate it to the analytical capacities developed in the rest of the course, and further enhance the pursuit of career objectives.

## **Office Hours**

The final 30 minutes of class time is reserved for 'office hours'. The course leader will be available to see groups or individual scholars, answer questions and offer guidance or assistance. This is an opportunity to ask in-depth questions, get advice on how to approach assignments, or simply to explore in more detail points which have come up for discussion in class. This office hour will likely take place in the same room as the rest of the class. It may also be possible to arrange a meeting with the course leader at a different time.

## **Assessment**

This course is assessed by three items of written coursework and an exam. The final grades for Part 1 and Part 2 will be averaged together for a final course grade.

- One 2,500-word essay on a substantive academic debate in British politics, due June 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- A series of three 'blog post' style commentaries based on reflections on current affairs or particular experiences in the internship, due July 17<sup>th</sup>.
- A 2,000-word self-reflective essay based on the internship, also due July 17<sup>th</sup>.
- A two-hour essay exam, which will be held on July 13<sup>th</sup>.

## **Part 1 Assessment**

The essay will comprise 25% of the overall grade for Part 1 of this course, and 75% of the grade for Part 1 will be determined by the final examination in which two essay questions must be answered.

## **Essay**

Each scholar is required to write one assessed essay. Essay titles are listed below. All essays must answer **one** of these questions. It is important to bear in mind that the essay must address the specific question asked and not generally *around* the topic. Essays that fail to answer the actual question asked are likely to be penalised. If in doubt please contact me before beginning to write your essay.

Essays should be 2,500 words in length, double-spaced in a legible font and must include a bibliography and list of references (see Academic Guidelines for details of referencing). Electronic copies of your essay (Microsoft Word document or PDF **only**) should be submitted via email to the Programme Manager. See Academic Guidelines for details about naming your file.

Please choose one of the following questions:

1. Is there a crisis in British democracy?
2. Which (if any) constitutional reform is most urgent for the UK, and why?
3. What is the most important trend in voting in UK general elections, and what are its causes and implications?
4. Should members of the House of Lords be elected, or remain unelected? Why?
5. How did the Conservative Party win the 2015 general election?
6. "The 'first past the post' electoral system for Westminster elections is in urgent need of reform." To what extent do you agree with this statement?
7. How 'professionalised' is British politics, and is this desirable?

## **Exam**

The final exam for this course, based on the content in Part 1, requires that you answer two out of four essay-style questions in two hours. Further guidance will be provided during the course. The exam will be held on Monday, July 13<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am.

## **Part 2 Assessment**

The blog post commentaries will comprise 50% of the grade for Part 2 and the 2,000 self-reflective essay will comprise the other 50% of the grade for Part 2.

## **Blog Portfolio**

A series of three 300-500 word blog-style commentaries on different themes relating to internship experiences, contemporary issues in British politics, current political affairs,

big political questions, analysis of a particular event, and/or revealing comparisons between UK and US political contexts. Topics can be discussed with me in advance and there will be a session on political blogs and blog writing near the start of the course.

Scholars are strongly advised to write these pieces throughout their time on the programme, rather than attempting to write them all at the end.

Electronic copies of your portfolio should be submitted via email to the Programme Manager, Thimios Tzallas

### **Self-reflective Essay**

This piece of work is an opportunity to reflect upon and concretise the things that have been learnt over the course of your political internships, bridging the academic and practical sides of your time as a Hansard Scholar. The self-reflective essay will be overseen by Dr Elizabeth Monaghan ([E.Monaghan@hull.ac.uk](mailto:E.Monaghan@hull.ac.uk)), who will provide further guidance and advice at the opening Academic Expectations Session.

## **Reading Advice**

### **Weekly Reading**

Fully engaging with the 'essential' readings for each week's topic is crucial for contributing to class and successfully completing the course. You will find a full list of essential and additional readings in this outline – see below. Further reading is

provided for more in-depth coverage of the subject, for example for use in writing essays and exam answers. All readings are widely available via the LSE library, and many will also be available electronically – see the links after each reading for details and log in with your LSE username and password.

### **Textbooks:**

Good general background on contemporary politics and policy in Britain can be found in the following textbooks/guides and it is recommended that you try to read one of them early in the course:

Heffernan, R., P. Cowley & C. Hay (eds.) (2011). *Developments in British Politics 9*.

(Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan). [Link](#)

Dunleavy, P., R. Heffernan, P. Cowley & C. Hay (eds.) (2006) *Developments in British Politics 8*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan). [Link](#)

Jones, B. & P. Norton (eds.), (2010, 7<sup>th</sup> edition) *Politics UK*. (Edinburgh: Pearson Education). The LSE library only has the 6<sup>th</sup> (2006) edition. [Link](#)

M. Flinders, A. Gamble, C. Hay & M. Kenny (eds.) (2009) *The Oxford Handbook of British Politics*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press). [Link](#)

Norton, P. *Parliament in British Politics*. (Palgrave Macmillan; Basingstoke, 2013, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). [Link](#)

### **Newspapers and Magazines**

You should read one ‘serious’ newspaper every day: *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Independent* and *The Guardian* all analyse at least some political events in depth, the free *Evening Standard* has some decent political coverage, and the *Financial Times* tackles political topics in detail. *The House* is the in-house journal of Parliament, some of which is available online at [www.housemag.co.uk](http://www.housemag.co.uk). The UK edition of *The Economist* provides some good coverage of British politics, but is not comprehensive. For more in-depth journalism, look for the UK’s political ‘weeklies’, such as the *New Statesman*, a weekly magazine of the centre-left, or *The Spectator*, its counterpart on the right. *The Week* offers very accessible digested coverage of all news stories. *Private Eye* is published fortnightly, and includes lots of political coverage, satire and in-depth investigative reporting. Finally there are the monthly magazines: *Prospect* is broadly centrist, while *Standpoint* is more right-wing. *Total Politics* is very much for insiders of the ‘Westminster bubble’.

### **Web-Based Sources and Social Media**

Up-to-date information on political developments is often best found via the internet. Several newspapers and blogs now provide daily bulletins or summaries, some of which are now so good as to be almost indispensable. You can subscribe to receive these by email or find them online:

- The Telegraph Morning Briefing - [Link](#)
- The Coffee House Blog’s ‘Evening Blend’ - [Link](#)
- John Rentoul’s Daily Catch-Up - [Link](#)

There are a number of obvious websites to consult, not least those produced by the various Government departments and commissions (accessible via [www.direct.gov.uk/](http://www.direct.gov.uk/)), political parties, trades unions, NGOs and pressure groups. A fairly comprehensive portal to these various sites is provided by [www.keele.ac.uk/depts/por/ukbase.htm](http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/por/ukbase.htm). A similar wealth of varied political resources on everything from international relations to ideology can be found at <http://www.politicsresources.net/>. A gateway to British think-tanks and their work – is available via the Guardian website at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/page/2007/dec/20/1>. A (very) comprehensive collection of party election manifestos is available at <http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/man.htm>.

There is a range of excellent blogs that discuss the most up-to-date developments in British politics. The best ones are the following:

The Constitution Unit at UCL. [Link](#)

British Politics and Policy (LSE). [Link](#)

Political Betting. [Link](#)

European Policy and Politics (LSE). [Link](#)

Democratic Audit UK. [Link](#)

UKPollingReport. [Link](#)

Open Democracy – the ‘Our Kingdom’ section. [Link](#)

Manchester University Policy Blogs. [Link](#)

Ballots and Bullets (Nottingham University). [Link](#)

Please also note that the British political class is *extremely* active on twitter. Ask your course leader if you’d like to subscribe to his list of political tweeters.

## Course Outline and Weekly Readings

### Session One – Introducing British Politics & Political Parties

The course starts by touching upon some of the main features, themes and issues of British politics, using the example of the United States as a source of comparison. This will serve as a general introduction to parliament and politics, while also suggesting important contemporary trends and themes for the rest of the course. We will also trace

the political positions and contemporary dilemmas faced by the UK's political parties, their changing relationship with the electorate, and the enormous power they wield in Westminster.

### **Essential Reading**

British Political Party election manifestos, 2010: [Conservative](#), [Labour](#), [Liberal Democrat](#)

Party election manifestos, 2015: [Conservative](#), [Labour](#), [Liberal Democrat](#)

### **Additional Reading**

Bromley, C.; Curtice, J.; Seyd, B. (2004): 'Is Britain Facing a Crisis of Democracy?' *CREST* and *The Constitution Unit* report, [Link](#)

Giovannini, A.; Willett, J. (2014): 'The Uneven Path of English Devolution: Will the Dog Finally Bark?' *Political Insight*, *Political Studies Association*, 11/06/14, [Link](#)

Baxter, M. (2013): 'Mid-Term precedents: can the Conservatives win?' *Electoral Calculus* blog, [Link](#)

Child, A. (2012) 'There's Every Reason to Argue that it's Time to Abolish the Monarchy. Britain Can Do So Much Better'. *LSE British Politics and Policy Blog*, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2012, [Link](#)

O'Hagan, A. (2013) 'Maggie'. *New York Review of Books* 60(9), May 23<sup>rd</sup>. [Link](#)

Raban, J. (2010) 'Britain: A False Dawn?'. *New York Review of Books* 57(12), July 15<sup>th</sup>. [Link](#)

## **Session Two – Politics and the Internet**

*This session is designed to prepare scholars for writing the assessed blog-style commentaries that will contribute to their final grade.* It also provides an opportunity to examine the use (and abuse) of 'new media' by the British political establishment, the necessity of new attempts to engage with an increasingly cynical and disinterested general public, and the 'democratisation' of media power in the contemporary era, as

well as whether these changes have an impact on the legitimacy and quality of the wider political debate.

This session's workshop will revolve around reducing complex ideas and information to simple, succinct political messages or brief and meaningful analyses.

Scholars may wish to consult some of the most prominent blogs on British politics:

Guido Fawkes: <http://www.order-order.com/>

Left Foot Forward: <http://www.leftfootforward.org/>

LabourList: <http://labourlist.org/>

Conservative Home: <http://www.conservativehome.blogs.com/>

Spectator Coffee House: <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/coffeehouse/>

Political Scrapbook: <http://politicalscrapbook.net/>

Liberal Conspiracy: <http://liberalconspiracy.org/>

Political Betting: <http://www.politicalbetting.com/>

Iain Dale: <http://www.iaindale.com/>

Labour Uncut: <http://labour-uncut.co.uk/>

Archbishop Cranmer: <http://www.archbishop-cranmer.blogspot.co.uk/>

Lib Dem Voice: <http://www.libdemvoice.org/>

Paul Waugh: <http://www.politicshome.com/uk/waughroom.html>

The Staggers: <http://www.newstatesman.com//the-staggers>

Anna Racoon: <http://www.annaraccoon.com/>

Crash Bang Wallace: <http://crashbangwallace.com/>

## **Session Three – Parliament: Commons and Lords**

The House of Commons has many purposes, as do the Members of Parliament who work there. This session sets out the responsibilities and business of the House of Commons, and the way it has changed over time. Are MPs best understood as trustees, or representatives? The House of Lords, meanwhile, stands out as an anomaly in a modern advanced democracy. Today the chamber is still entirely appointed, while prior



to 1997 it played host to a large body of hereditary peers. We will consider whether a fully or partially-elected House would be better able to fulfil the expectations of a modern parliamentary legislature, or whether such a reform would be a recipe for constitutional crisis.

### **Essential Reading**

King, A. 'A Useful Parliament?' for *Reform* think-tank. [Link](#)

Extract from Edmund Burke's speech to the electors of Bristol, 1774: [Link](#)

King, A. (2009) *The British Constitution*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Chapter 12. [Link](#)

### **Additional Reading**

Dorey, P. and Kelso, A. (2011) *House of Lords Reform Since 1911: Must the Lords Go?*, Basingstoke: Palgrave. [Link](#)

Russell, M. (2013) *The Contemporary House of Lords. Westminster Bicameralism Revisited*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Chapters 5, 6 & 8. [Link](#)

Kelso, A. 'Changing Parliamentary Landscapes'. In *Developments in British Politics 9*, Chapter 4, pp. 51-69. [Link](#)

P Norton (2005) *Parliament in British Politics*, Basingstoke, Macmillan. [Link](#)

Brazier A. & R. Fox (2010) 'Enhancing the Backbench MP's Role As a Legislator: The Case for Urgent Reform of Private Members Bills', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 63(1): 201-211. [Link](#)

S. Kalitowski (2009) 'Parliament for the People? Public Knowledge, Interest and Perceptions of the Westminster Parliament', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 62, Issue 2, 350-363. [Link](#)

## **Session Four – The Political Career**

This session will involve the exploration of various types of political career, with an emphasis on the UK context and the analysis of the role of political representatives in the previous session. Who does an MP truly serve? How do they get selected and elected? What is the nature and role of the unelected politician? What can explain the rise of the 'career politician', and is this a desirable development?

In the seminar, Scholars will be called upon to examine a particular politician, consider the differences between political careers in the UK and the USA and debate the assets and skills required in various types of political career.

Optional readings include:

Allen, P., (2012) *Career Politicians*, LSE Politics and Policy. [Link](#)

Cottrell, S., (2010) *Skills for Success: Personal Development and Employability*, second edition, Basingstoke, Palgrave. [Link](#)

Greene, J. O., & Burleson, B. R., (2003) *Handbook of Communication and Social Interaction Skills*, Mahwah, NJ, L Erlbaum Associates. [Link](#)

Greer, S. (2011) *So You Want to be a Politician*, London, Biteback Publishing

Gunn, S. (2011) *So You Want to be a Political Journalist* London, Biteback Publishing

Hartung, P. J., & Subich, L. M., (2011) *Developing self in work and career: concepts, cases and contexts*, Washington DC, American Psychological Association. [Link](#)

Moore, S., (2010) *The ultimate study skills handbook*, Maidenhead, Open University Press. [Link](#)

Yarnell, J., (2008) *Strategic career management: developing your talent*, Oxford, Heinemann. [Link](#)

## **Session Five – Cabinet and Premiership**

The British Prime Minister and their Cabinet is traditionally one of the most powerful executives in any democracy in the world, often granted unchecked powers without necessarily even achieving a popular majority in an election. Yet not all governments are equally powerful. Prime Ministers such as Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair have been compared to independently elected executives and presidents in terms of the

importance of their personal leadership styles. We will consider if this is an accurate assessment and what the state of the Executive is today. The relationship between premier and cabinet will be scrutinised, particularly the core concept of 'collective responsibility', and the challenges of coalition government.

### **Essential Reading**

Dowding, K. (2013) 'The Prime Ministerialisation of the British Prime Minister', *Parliamentary Affairs* 66(3): 617-635. [Link](#)

### **Additional Reading**

Hennessy, P. (2000) 'The Prime Minister: The Office and its Holders', Introduction and conclusion.

Richards, D. (2011) 'Changing Patterns of Executive Governance'. In *Developments in British Politics* 9, Chapter 3, pp. 29-50. [Link](#)

Bennister, M. & R. Heffernan (2012) 'Cameron as Prime Minister: The Intra-Executive Politics of Britain's Coalition Government', *Parliamentary Affairs* 65(4): 778-801. [Link](#)

Bevir, M & R.A.W. Rhodes (2006) 'Prime Ministers, Presidentialism and Westminster Smokescreens', *Political Studies* 54 (4): 671-690. [Link](#)

Heffernan R. (2005) 'Exploring (and Explaining) the British Prime Minister', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 7(4): 605-620. [Link](#)

Hobolt, S.B & J.A. Karp (2010) 'Voters and Coalition Governments', *Electoral Studies* 29(3): 299-307. [Link](#)

## **Session Six – CV Workshop**

In this session Scholars will have an opportunity to identify their own key skills and abilities, share best practice for CVs, resumes, covering letters and personal statements in a variety of professional sectors, and gain a sense of the differences between CV expectations in different professions and countries. The content of this session will be tailored to the specific career interests of Scholars themselves, and will also involve a

workshop where they are able to comment upon and improve each other's CVs and the CVs of established professionals and politicians.

**Preparation:**

In preparation for this session, please review the CVs of a selection of MPs and parliamentary candidates [on this website](#). Find a strong example and a weak example, and be prepared to explain your choices.

## **Session Seven – Elections and Voters**

In this session we will discuss the major trends and motivations in voting behaviour in UK elections, such as the influence of social class and the rise of partisan 'dealignment'. The importance of Britain's electoral system will also be a major theme. Britain is an electoral system laboratory with several different types of electoral systems in operation at different elections (eg Westminster, local government, devolved

Assemblies, London Mayor, European Parliament). We will become acquainted with the two main types of electoral systems: majoritarian and proportional. The trade-offs between these systems will be considered in the British context as will the challenges in choosing a 'best' electoral system. Finally we will look at recent efforts to reform the Westminster electoral system and consider why they so often fail.

### **Essential Reading**

Blau, A. (2004) 'A Quadruple Whammy for First-Past-the-Post'. *Electoral Studies* 23: 431-453. [Link](#)

### **Additional Reading**

Denver, D. (2011) 'Elections and Voting'. In *Developments in British Politics* 9, Chapter 5, pp. 70-90. [Link](#)

Curtice, J. (2010) 'So What Went Wrong with the Electoral System? The 2010 Election Result and the Debate about Electoral Reform', *Parliamentary Affairs* 63(4): 623-638. [Link](#)

Hix, S., R. Johnston & I. McLean (2010) *Choosing an Electoral System. A Research Report Prepared for the British Academy*. (London: The British Academy). [Link](#)

Evans, G. and J. Tilley (2013) 'Ideological Convergence and the Decline of Class Voting in Britain'. In G. Evans & N. de Graf (eds.) *Political Choice Matters: Explaining the Strength of Class and Religious Cleavages in Cross-National Perspective*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Chapter 4. [Link](#)

Norris, P. (2001) 'The Twilight of Westminster? Electoral Reform and its Consequences', *Political Studies* 49(5): 877-900. [Link](#)

Whitely, P., H.D. Clark, D. Sanders & M. Stewart (2012) 'Britain Says No: Voting in the AV Ballot Referendum', *Parliamentary Affairs* 65(2): 301-322. [Link](#)

## **Session Eight – The Political Campaign**

Building upon the analysis of voters and voting systems included in the previous lecture, this session will revolve around a discussion of the conduct and structure of political campaigns and communications. It will make use of the recent 2015 general election campaign as a case study, as well as offering opportunities for comparative analysis with nation-wide political campaigns in the USA, with a presidential election in

prospect. Scholars will have an opportunity to assess the career importance and implications of this most partisan of political activities, and to learn career-enhancing lessons about framing effects from the analysis of political campaigns.

Scholars will then be asked to put these skills into practice with a collaborative political communication assignment, writing a policy letter to a notional constituent or a brief instance of political rhetoric for a notional candidate.

*Scholars will also have an opportunity to raise questions about the presentations they are giving in Session Ten.*

### **Recommended Reading**

Delaney, S. (2015), *The Golden Rules of Political Campaigning*, Guardian article. [Link](#)

Farrell, D. (2002), *Do Political Campaigns Matter?*, London, Routledge. [Link](#)

Druckman, J. (2001), "The Implications of Framing Effects for Citizen Competence", *Political Behavior*, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 225-256. [Link](#)

## **Session Nine – Constitution and Crisis**

This session revolves around an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the UK's uncodified constitution, the rapid phase of constitutional reforms currently underway in British politics, and the recent history of such reform efforts. It will use this discussion as a springboard to a crucial question for contemporary British politics – is this country's democracy in a state of crisis? – the answer to which must draw upon

all of the topics and themes discussed during the course, and beyond to questions of regional devolution, relations with the EU, and global and financial politics.

### **Essential Reading**

King, A. (2009) *The British Constitution*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Chapter 1. [Link](#)

### **Additional Reading**

Bogdanor, V. (2011) *The Coalition and the Constitution*. (Oxford: Hart). [Link](#)

Flinders, M. (2005) Majoritarian Democracy in Britain: New Labour and the Constitution'. *West European Politics* 28(1): 61-93. [Link](#)

Loughlin, M. *The British Constitution. A Very Short Introduction*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press). [Link](#)

Bogdanor, V. (2009) *The New British Constitution*. (Oxford: Hart), Chapters 1-2, pp. 3-49. [Link](#)

Dunleavy, P. (2006) 'The Westminster Model and the Distinctiveness of British Politics. In *Developments in British Politics* 8, Chapter X, pp. 315-341. [Link](#)

## **Session Ten – Inside Westminster**

In this final workshop, the Scholars will have an opportunity to put into practice much of what they have learned – both in the course and in their internships – as well as gaining crucially important experience in public speaking and presentation, which is useful in practically every career. Having spent a number of weeks working in Parliament, Scholars are now in a better position to consider some of its specific

features and characteristics, as well as offer a reflection on their own experience there. Each scholar will make a short presentation on a particular political issue or experience arising from their internship. They may make use of powerpoint slides if they wish. This provides an opportunity for the development of public speaking confidence and skills, which are both essential in the contemporary job market, and will pool the expertise and information gained by each Scholar over the course of their internships.

**Preparation:**

Scholars are encouraged to prepare for their presentations well in advance, and to discuss their chosen topic/theme with the course during their planning phase. They may also find it productive to base their reflective essays upon the content in their presentations, or *vice-versa*.