



---

## Hansard Scholars Programme

# Parliament & Politics Course Outline

**Course Leader:** Dr Simon Kaye

**Email Address:** [sk@simontkaye.com](mailto:sk@simontkaye.com)

---

This course examines the context, procedures and politics of British parliamentary democracy. Classes will be of a participatory nature and students are expected to prepare, read widely, and contribute fully to discussions and debates.

Turn to pages 2 and 3 for information about assessments.

Turn to pages 6-11 for reading advice and suggested readings organised by topic.

Turn to page 12 for a description of each week's theme and research questions.

## **Course Requirements & Learning Outcomes**

Classes are compulsory and attendance will be taken into account in assessment. It is expected that you will come to classes prepared to discuss the topic of the week and therefore you are required to undertake the two preparatory readings every week to keep up with the course and to contribute effectively. Class topics and related discussions are listed below.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Scholars should gain:

- knowledge of British political institutions and the evolution of the British constitution
- 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

### **Assessment**

Each scholar is required to write one assessed essay. Essay titles are listed in the course outline below. All essays must answer one of these questions directly. The essay will comprise 40% of the overall grade for this course, and 60% of the grade will be determined by the final examination in which two questions must be answered.

It is important to bear in mind that essays must address the specific question asked and not just provide a general discussion around the topic. Essays that fail to answer the actual question asked will be penalised. If in doubt please contact the course leader before beginning to write your essay.

Essays should be 2,000 words in length, double-spaced in a legible font and must include a bibliography and full citations (see Academic Guidelines for details of referencing).

Electronic copies of your essay should be submitted via email to the programme manager.

## **Essay Questions**

Please choose one of the following questions:

1. '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?
2. 'When a government has a large majority, it is effectively unaccountable to Parliament'. Discuss.
3. Do political parties wield too much power in the UK?
4. What is the most important contemporary trend in voting British politics, and what are its causes and implications?
5. Should members of the House of Lords be elected, or remain unelected? Why?
6. Is there a crisis in British democracy?
7. "The UK would do well to emulate the USA in terms of its political culture, institutions and practice." Discuss.
8. Which (if any) constitutional reform is most urgent for the UK, and why?
9. Where next for the Labour Party?
10. What is the best explanation for the rise of the presidential Prime Minister?

**Course Schedule** (see below for more details, including reading guidance)

1. Introducing British Politics	<p>What are the main features of the UK political system?</p> <p>What are the key trends in contemporary British politics?</p>
2. Political Parties in Britain	<p>What role is played by political parties in British democracy?</p> <p>Are political parties in decline, and, if so, why?</p>

3. Parliament I: The House of Commons	<p>Is the House of Commons 'fit for purpose'?</p> <p>How has the role of MPs changed, and how should it change in the future?</p>
4. Parliament II: The House of Lords	<p>Why has the House of Lords proven to be so resistant to reform?</p> <p>What are the advantages and disadvantages of an unelected second chamber?</p>
5. Cabinet and Premiership	<p>Are all Prime Ministers now effectively 'presidents'? Is this a good thing?</p> <p>How has coalition politics changed the role of the Prime Minister and Government?</p>
6. A Rapidly Changing Constitution	<p>What are the consequences of an unwritten constitution?</p> <p>How important are the constitutional changes that have taken place since 1997?</p>
7. Elections and Electoral Reform	<p>Is the 'first-past-the-post' system adequate for Britain today?</p> <p>How important is voting?</p>
8. Voters and Campaigns	<p>What are the patterns in British voting behaviour, and what are their causes?</p> <p>What are the attributes and beliefs of the average voter?</p>

9. Britain in the European Union	<p>Does Britain 'belong' in the EU?</p> <p>Why has the loss of sovereignty inherent in European integration presented more of a problem to the UK than other European states?</p>
10. Power in Britain	<p>Who wields most power in Britain?</p> <p>Should the British media be subject to more regulation?</p> <p>Can the Civil Service really be neutral?</p>
11. Devolution and Regional Nationalism	<p>What are the implications of the outcome of the Scottish independence referendum?</p> <p>What next for the UK as a unitary state?</p>
12. A Crisis in British Democracy?	<p>Is British democracy in crisis?</p>
13. Final Exam	<p><b>Two questions to be answered in two hours.</b></p>

## **Structure of Classes**

Each class will generally consist of a 1.5-hour lecture/seminar, with discussion opportunities and other activities integrated into the lecture itself. This structure is not rigid and will shift from week to week in order to best address each topic. During lectures, the convenor will explore the week's theme, introducing its main features and context and suggesting some preliminary approaches to its analysis. This content will include opportunities for seminar-style discussions and debates, making full use of the reading and preparation that scholars will have made in advance. Some sessions may involve the specific consideration of some key literature or material, some may play host to pre-prepared debates, and others will be opportunities for free-form discussion and reflection on the week's topic.

## **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 session. It may also be possible to arrange a meeting with the course leader at a different time.

## **Reading Guidance and Resources**

### **Subject Specific Reading:**

Scholars on this course are required to read topically in advance of every session, either by drawing upon the lists presented below or researching for additional material to raise during sessions. This is to give you an overview of the subject of the week and to inform and motivate your contributions to discussions in class, as well as develop an independent, research-centric attitude overall. Use the lists below to help find academic and other readings to inform your engagement with each topic, and contact the course leader if you're looking for something more specific.

In addition to this, Scholars should supplement their specific readings by engaging daily with contemporary political discourse, commentary and news media in the UK.

## Textbooks

This is not a textbook-orientated course, but the best textbooks currently available are of a high standard and may be a good starting-point for your reading on any given subject. I recommend:

- Heffernan, R., P. Cowley & C. Hay (eds.) (2011), *Developments in British Politics 9 (DBP)* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan). ISBN: 0230221742
- Jones, B. & P. Norton (eds.) (2010, 8th edition), *Politics UK (PUK)* (Edinburgh: Pearson Education). ISBN: 1447921402

## Introducing British Politics and Political Parties

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

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

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](#)

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

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

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

## Parliament: Commons and Lords

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

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

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

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

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

Kelso, A. 'Changing Parliamentary Landscapes'. In *Developments in British Politics 9*, Chapter 4, pp. 51-69.

P Norton (2005) *Parliament in British Politics*, Basingstoke, Macmillan.

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.

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

## **Cabinet and Premiership**

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

Hennessey, P. (2000) *The Prime Minister: The Office and its Holders Since 1945*, London: Penguin

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

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

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

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

## **Elections, Campaigns and Voters**

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

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.

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.

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



Farrell, D. (2002), *Do Political Campaigns Matter?*, London, Routledge.

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

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

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

Somin, Ilya (2013) *Democracy and Political Ignorance*. Redwood: Stanford University Press

'The Leveson Report': *An Inquiry into the Culture, Practices and Ethics of the Press*, vol. 3, pp. 1117-1149, [Link](#). (Note that this is a very large PDF file, and may take a little while to access. Also note that there is a lot to read in this extract, so feel free to skim and dip through after reading the introductory section. [This guide](#), by the Guardian newspaper, may also be helpful.)

## The Constitution and Devolution

King, A. (2009) *The British Constitution*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Bogdanor, V. (2011) *The Coalition and the Constitution*. (Oxford: Hart). Flinders, M. (2005) Majoritarian Democracy in Britain: New Labour and the Constitution'. *West European Politics* 28(1): 61-93.

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

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

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

Gamble, A. (2006). 'The Constitutional Revolution in the United Kingdom'. *Publius*, 36, 1. Curtice, J. and B. Syed (2009) Has Devolution Worked? The Verdict from Policy Makers and the Public. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), Chapters 1, 2 & 8.

Scully, R. & R. Wyn Jones (2011) 'Territorial Politics in Post-Devolution Britain'. In *Developments in British Politics* 9, Chapter 7, pp. 113-129.

Bogdanor, V. (2001) *Devolution in the United Kingdom*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Chapters 1, 7 and 8.

Bohrer, R. & G.S. Kruts (2005) 'The Devolved Party System of the United Kingdom: Sub-National Variations from the National Model'. *Party Politics* 11(6): 654-73.

## Britain in the EU and World Politics

Henderson, Sir N. (1979) *Letter to The Rt. Hon. David Owen, MP* ('Britain's Decline; its causes and consequences'), reproduced in The Economist online archive, [Link](#).

Cameron, D. (2013) *EU Speech at Bloomberg* – Video. January 24<sup>th</sup> 2013. [Link](#)

Thatcher, M. (1988) *Speech to the College of Europe* ('The Bruges Speech'). [Link](#)

Wall, S. *A Stranger in Europe. Britain and the EU from Thatcher to Blair*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

George, S. (1998) *An Awkward Partner: Britain in the European Community*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Chapters 1, 7-9

Usherwood, S. (2002) 'Opposition to the European Union in the UK: The Dilemma of Public Opinion and Party Management', *Government and Opposition* 37(2): 211-230

Dumbrell, J. (2006) *A Special Relationship: Anglo-American Relations from the Cold War to Iraq* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), Introduction and Conclusion

### **Daily Newspapers:**

Students enrolled on this course should aim to 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).

### **Weekly and Monthly Magazines:**

The UK edition of *The Economist* provides some excellent discussion 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 most significant 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'.

### **Audio:**

British politics is well served by radio and podcasts. True aficionados will be sure to listen to about an hour of Radio 4's *Today Programme* every morning: very often, the interviews conducted here will set the agenda for the rest of the day. Key moments from this programme are available as podcasts, as are Radio 4's *The Week in Westminster* and *Westminster Hour*, which both cater to an 'in-crowd' of politicians and political activists. *The Spectator* has a regular short podcast called *The View From 22* which is usually worth listening to. *Polling Matters* is an independently produced podcast dealing with polling news and political analysis.

## Television:

Agenda-setting political TV programmes include *The Andrew Marr Show* and *The Sunday Politics*, both broadcast on Sundays on the BBC. Daily parliamentary proceedings are televised by the BBC's dedicated *Parliament* channel. Strong news analysis is provided on week nights by *Newsnight* (BBC again). Prime Minister's Questions is a weekly staple for news media, and is covered live by *Daily Politics* at midday on Wednesday, and followed by discussion and analysis. All of these programmes are freely available online via the BBC's 'iplayer' site and app: [www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer](http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer)

## Web 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 very good. You can subscribe to receive these by email or find them online:

- The Times Morning Briefing - [Link](#)
- The Telegraph Morning Briefing - [Link](#)
- The Coffee House Blog's 'Evening Blend' - [Link](#)
- The Guardian Morning Briefing - [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, for example:

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

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

Political Betting. [Link](#)

Democratic Audit UK. [Link](#)

UKPollingReport. [Link](#)

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

Manchester University Policy Blogs. [Link](#)

## **TOPIC OUTLINES**

### **Week One: Introducing British Politics**

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 raise a host of questions, with the aim of considering answers to them in the coming weeks: Where does British political power truly lie, and is it in decline? Are we in the middle of a crisis of political legitimacy? Why is UK politics changing, and what are the effects of these changes? Is there a tension between the need for reform and the political stability that the British parliament is famous for?

*What are the main features of the UK political system?*

*What are the key trends in contemporary British politics?*

### **Week Two: Political Parties in Britain**

This class will trace the development and contemporary dilemmas of Britain's main political parties – The Labour Party and The Conservative Party – in addition to discussing some parties that lie further from the electoral mainstream, such as the United Kingdom Independence Party, the Liberal Democrats, and the Green Party, as well as the regional nationalist parties. Over time, the UK electorate has been split between increasing numbers of political parties: we will consider whether the UK is properly a no-party, two-party, or multiparty system. What are the causes for these changes? We will discuss several possible explanations and analytical frameworks, as well as the changing role, ideology and functions of political parties in general.

*What role is played by political parties in British democracy?*

*Are political parties in decline, and, if so, why?*

*How desirable is party politics in the British political system?*

### **Week Three: The House of Commons**

The House of Commons has many purposes, as do the Members of Parliament who work there. This class sets out the responsibilities and business of the House of Commons, and the way it has changed over time. In addition, the activities and efficacy of MPs will be questioned. Are they best understood as trustees, or representatives? Can we predict MPs' behaviour on partisan or 'Electoral Connection' lines? In evaluating the nature and desirability of representative politics in general, we will also consider in what circumstances members of a ruling party rebel against their leader, if ever, and the role and influence of the Opposition.

*Is the House of Commons 'fit for purpose'?*

*How has the role of MPs changed, and how should it change in the future?*

### **Week Four: The House of Lords**

The House of Lords stands out as an anomaly in a modern advanced democracy. Today the chamber is still entirely unelected, while prior to 1997 it played host to a large body of hereditary peers. This class will chart the duties and changing composition of the Britain's second chamber. This will allow us to 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.

*Why has the House of Lords proven to be so resistant to reform?*

*What are the advantages and disadvantages of an unelected second chamber?*

## **Week 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, or even structured in similar ways. 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 posed by minority and coalition government.

*Are all Prime Ministers now effectively 'presidents'? Is this a good thing?*

*How has coalition politics changed the role of the Prime Minister and Government?*

## **Week Six: A Rapidly Changing Constitution**

This week we will explore the extraordinarily rapid changes taking place in the UK's constitution, seeking out the causes and political motivations for both successful and unsuccessful reforms. More broadly, this will also be an opportunity to analyse the advantages and disadvantages of constitutional politics, and the particular attributes and challenges posed by an uncodified constitution in particular. Throughout we will follow important developments such as joining the European Community in 1973, Tony Blair's programme of constitutional reform from 1997 onwards, and more recent constitutional changes.

*What are the consequences of an unwritten constitution?*

*How important are the constitutional changes that have taken place since 1997?*

## **Session Seven – Elections and Electoral Reform**

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. Much of this discussion will take the form of a comprehensive critique and attempted defense of 'first past the post', the system used in the UK's general elections. Finally we will look at recent efforts to reform the Westminster electoral system and consider why they so often fail.

*What are the main criticisms of First Past the Post? Why not reform it?*

*What is the virtue of proportionality in electoral politics?*

## **Week Eight: Voters and Campaigns**

Building on the previous session, we will engage with difficult questions on the nature and desirability of citizen participation, and explore evidence relating to the knowledge, beliefs, ideas and ideology of UK voters. What is 'voting well', and how often does the average citizen achieve this? This will lead to a discussion of the strategies employed during political campaigns, using case-studies from recent British electoral history to explore framing effects and different approaches to political communication and messaging.

*Are UK voters capable of making political judgements?*

*How do political campaigns work, and how do they respond to the realities of voter ignorance and biases?*

## **Week Nine: Britain in the European Union**

Britain's decision to join the European Community had a profound effect upon sovereignty in Britain, delegating power away from a hitherto sovereign parliament. What is more, Britain's relationship with the European Union is often an ambivalent one, with strong support for a single market but less enthusiasm for political integration. This lecture will examine why Britain finds the loss of sovereignty more difficult than many other member states and what are the causes and roots of booming domestic Euroscepticism. It will also examine how much Britain really has an awkward relationship with the EU or if this is exaggerated.

*Does Britain belong in the EU?*

*Why has the loss of sovereignty inherent in European integration presented more of a problem to the UK than other European states?*

## **Week Ten: Power in Britain**

A significant sphere of political behaviour lies beyond parties, representatives and voters, in other 'estates' of influence, including civil society, media, and the civil service. Interest groups and social movements are an important form of political behaviour that takes place outside the electoral arena. So who really holds power in this country? We will discuss the notion of 'power' itself, in order to help us interpret and structure our analysis of UK politics more generally. We will also discuss the rapidly shifting relationship between politicians and media, in light of the recent Leveson Inquiry. Finally, the civil service is an often forgotten but fundamental part of the UK's political machine: we will consider its role and influence.

*Who is the most powerful person in Britain?*

*Should the British media be subject to more regulation?*

*Can the Civil Service really be neutral?*



## **Week Eleven: Devolution and Regional Nationalism**

The nature of Westminster's relationship with the British regions has become an extremely important theme in contemporary politics. This session will discuss the causes and impact of devolution for Scotland and Wales, and the rise of Scottish nationalism, with its drive for total independence, in particular. The motivations and consequences of decentralisation will also be considered – is devolution about accommodating distinct ethnic and regional identities, is it about accommodating diverse preferences and needs, or some combination of the two? We will conclude by considering the present state and future of the Union.

*What are the implications of the outcome of the Scottish independence referendum?*

*What next for the UK as a unitary state?*

## **Week Twelve: A Crisis in British Democracy?**

In our final class, we will revisit our core themes, and, in particular, ask: is the UK in the middle of a crisis of political legitimacy? We will consider the evidence – low electoral turnouts, low confidence in politics and politicians, the recent expenses scandal, declining support for the Westminster's main political parties – as well as some of the effects: general public disaffection, the increased likelihood of hung parliaments, and the rise of coalition politics. This session will also provide an opportunity to review the core themes of the course and discuss the upcoming exam.

*Is British democracy in crisis?*