

British Politics and Government

Spring, 2021

GOV 366G (WB)

The University of Texas at Austin

Instructor

Professor David L. Leal

Office Hours: T & TH 3:00 - 4:30 PM

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Class Information

Class Location: Zoom

Class Hours: 5:00 - 6:30 PM

Unique Number: 38760

Course Description

This course examines key aspects of British politics and government. While no longer as powerful as during its days of empire, Britain is a longstanding ally of the United States and remains an important global power. To understand the course of US, European, Atlantic, and global politics requires an understanding of the UK. We begin with an overview of modern British political history, including the ideas, actors, laws, structures, and events that set the stage for contemporary politics. We then examine the major political institutions, including Parliament, parties, Prime Ministers, Civil Service, media, and judiciary. The next section covers elections and public opinion, including campaigns, candidates, constituencies, rules, voters, and recent contests. Lastly, we discuss emerging developments, including Brexit, social policies, and the possible political futures of the nation. Throughout the class, we will ask about the nature of democracy and freedom in the UK, make comparisons with US politics and government, and discuss the relationship of Britain with the US and the world in a post-empire era.

Required Reading

Tony Wright. 2020. *British Politics: A Very Short Introduction*, 3rd edition. Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780198827320

Philip Norton. 2010. *The British Polity*, 5th edition. Routledge. ISBN 9780321216663

Richard Heffernan, Colin Hay, Meg Russell, and Philip Cowley (Eds.) 2016. *Developments in British Politics*, 10th edition. Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 9781137494740

David Denver, Christopher Carman, and Robert Johns. 2012. *Elections and Voters in Britain*, 3rd Edition. Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 9780230241619

Additional readings available online and in a course pack (available for purchase at Jenn's).

Assignments

Student understanding of the readings and topics will be assessed in a variety of ways, as discussed below.

Course Grade

Exams: There will be three exams. They will take place online in a format to be determined.

Exam #1 (20% of course grade): Identification and essay questions; covers 1st third of class.

Exam #2 (20% of course grade): Identification and essay questions; covers 2nd third of class.

Exam #3 (20% of course grade): Identification and essay questions; covers last third of class and possibly includes cumulative questions.

Book Review (25% of course grade): The choice of book is open, but it must address some aspect of British politics or policy. Guidelines on how to write the review will be discussed in class and emailed via Canvas. Instructor must approve your choice of book no later than Thursday, April 8. Reviews are due on Thursday, May 6, our last class day.

Reflection Essays (15%): At the end of each topic, students will write a one to two page essay that reflects on the readings and discussion. This could include, for example, what they found to be the most interesting or unexpected.

The class does not have a “final exam” during the final exam period at the end of the semester.

Class Attendance

Attendance is not required but strongly recommended. Also, students are asked (but not required) to turn on their camera in Zoom in order to facilitate discussion.

Grading: This class will use pluses and minuses for all exams, the book review, reflection essays, and the final course grade.

93-100%	A	(4)	73-76%	C	(2)
90-92%	A-	(3.67)	70-72%	C-	(1.67)
87-89%	B+	(3.33)	67-69%	D+	(1.33)
83-86%	B	(3)	63-66%	D	(1)
80-82%	B-	(2.67)	60-62%	D-	(.67)
77-79%	C+	(2.33)	Below 60%	F	(0)

Policies

By taking this class, you agree to all of the following policies:

* This is an online class, one of the three class options at UT this semester: online, hybrid, and in-person. Our class will therefore meet via Zoom.

* It is also a “synchronous” class, which means the online lectures will take place during our assigned days and times. These Zoom lectures will be recorded and available at our class Canvas site, and the PowerPoint slides used in those lectures will also be posted to Canvas.

* Because of the unique circumstances of the Spring semester, all aspects of this course are subject to change depending on the public health context of Austin, the state of Texas, and the nation. Directives from UT, the UT System, and the State of Texas may therefore require changes that are large, small, and anything in-between.

* Make-up exams and late papers will only be allowed on a case-by-case basis. Please check with the instructor before an exam or the paper due date to discuss your situation and see what is allowable.

* Grades of “Incomplete” are generally not assigned, but please discuss your situation with the instructor if you believe an Incomplete may be necessary.

* Students who require special provisions for exams or class because of a disability should notify the professor before the need arises. Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259, <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>

* Accommodations for religious holidays. By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

* Important announcements will be made in class and via the class Canvas email list. It is the responsibility of students to make sure that the University knows their correct email address.

* The Canvas class email list can only be used for class purposes. Do not use it for any commercial or business activities, for example.

* Students who miss class should obtain notes from a classmate.

* Assignments are due at the start of the specified class.

* Any complaints about grades must be initiated by your written or emailed explanation of why the decisions behind the assignment of your grade should be revisited. You will have one week after an exam or paper has been handed back to submit this written explanation. After that

period, all grades will be considered final and any discussion that we might have will be restricted to how you can do better on the next exam or paper.

- * This syllabus is subject to change or adjustment by the instructor. Consistent class attendance is the best way to ensure that no important announcements are missed.
- * During class discussions, be respectful at all times.
- * Cell phones cannot be used in class.
- * Computers can only be used in class for academic purposes. They should not be used for email, social networking, etc.
- * Students must be prepared to show their UT identification card during exams.
- * Passing the class (a D grade or better) requires at minimum a grade of D- or better on at least two of the three exams.

Honor Code

“The core values of the University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.”

Scholastic Dishonesty

*“‘Scholastic dishonesty’ includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, misrepresenting facts, and any act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student (such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor), or the attempt to commit such an act.” Section 11-802 (b), *Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities*. If you have any questions about what constitutes scholastic dishonesty, you should consult with me and the following website: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/>

* Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty: “Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced.”

Emergency Evacuation Policy

* Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.

* Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.

* Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.

* In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors.

* Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

* Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: <http://emergency.utexas.edu/>

* Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050,
<http://operations.utexas.edu/units/csas/bcal.php>

Safety and Class Participation/Masks

“We will all need to make some adjustments in order to benefit from in-person classroom interactions in a safe and healthy manner. Our best protections against spreading COVID-19 on campus are masks (defined as cloth face coverings) and staying home if you are showing symptoms. Therefore, for the benefit of everyone, this means that all students are required to follow these important rules.

- Every student must wear a cloth face-covering properly in class and in all campus buildings at all times.
- Students are encouraged to participate in documented daily symptom screening. This means that each class day in which on-campus activities occur, students must upload certification from the symptom tracking app and confirm that they completed their symptom screening for that day to Canvas. Students should not upload the results of that screening, just the certificate that they completed it. If the symptom tracking app recommends that the student isolate rather than coming to class, then students must not return to class until cleared by a medical professional.
- Information regarding [safety protocols with and without symptoms](#) can be found [here](#).

If a student is not wearing a cloth face-covering properly in the classroom (or any UT building), that student must leave the classroom (and building). If the student refuses to wear a cloth face covering, class will be dismissed for the remainder of the period, and the student will be subject to disciplinary action as set forth in the university’s Institutional Rules/General Conduct 11-404(a)(3). Students who have a condition that precludes the wearing of a cloth face covering must follow the procedures for [obtaining an accommodation](#) working with [Services for Students with Disabilities](#).”

Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited

“No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University’s Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.”

Class Recordings

“Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.”

COVID Caveats

“To help keep everyone at UT and in our community safe, it is critical that students (and faculty and staff) report COVID-19 symptoms and testing, regardless of test results, to the HealthPoint Occupational Health Program (OHP) as soon as possible. Please see this [link](#) to understand what needs to be reported. In addition, to help understand what to do if a fellow student in the class (or the instructor or TA) tests positive for COVID, see this [University Health Services link](#).”

Course Schedule

Week 1	Tuesday, January 19 Thursday, January 21
Political Culture and Traditions	

Richard Heffernan et al., Chapter 1: “What’s British About British Politics?”

Tony Wright, Chapter 1: “The Britishness of British Politics”

Philip Norton, Chapter 1: “The Contemporary Landscape”

Philip Norton, Chapter 2: “The Political Culture”

Week 2	Tuesday, January 26 Thursday, January 28
The British Constitution and Political History	

Norton, Chapter 3: “Past and Present: Historical Perspectives and Legacies”

Norton, Chapter 4: “The Uncodified Constitution”

Wright, Chapter 2: “The Constitution, Old and New”

Historical Background

* David Thomson. 1950. *England in the Nineteenth Century (1815-1914)*

“Economic and Social Reform” (pp. 77-87)

“The Age of Palmerston” (pp. 119-136)

* Christopher Harvie: “Roads to Freedom” (pp. 491-499 in *The Oxford History of Britain*)

* H.C.G. Matthew: “Free Trade” (pp. 518-529 in *The Oxford History of Britain*)

Week 3	Tuesday, February 2 Thursday, February 4
Parliament: House of Commons and House of Lords	

Norton, Chapter 12: “Parliament: Commons and Lords”

Heffernan et al., Chapter 6: “Parliament: A Significant Constraint on Government”

House of Lords Reform

* Peter Dorey and Alexandra Kelso. 2011. *House of Lords Reform Since 1911*.
“Introduction” (pp. 1-9)

* Iain McLean, Arthur Spirling, and Meg Russell. 2003. “None of the Above: The UK House of Commons Votes on Reforming the House of Lords, February 2003.” *Political Quarterly*.

Week 4 (Part I)	Tuesday, February 9
The Prime Minister, the Cabinet, and the Government	

Norton, Chapter 8: “The Executive: Government at the Center”

Wright, Chapter 4: “Governing: The Strong Centre?”

Wright, Chapter 6: “Accounting: Parliament and Politicians”

Week 4 (Part II)	Thursday, February 11
The Monarchy	

Norton, Chapter 13: “The Monarchy: Above the Fray?”

Historical Background

* Thomson: “The Monarchy” (pp. 169-174)

* Edward Shils and Michael Young. 1955. “The Meaning of the Coronation” (pp. 63-64)

Week 5	Tuesday, February 16 Thursday, February 18
Political Parties: More than Two	

Tony Wright, Chapter 5: “Representing: Voters and Parties”

Norton, Chapter 6: “Political Parties: More or Less than a Two-Party System?”

Heffernan et al., Chapter 4: “The Party System: Turbulent Multipartyism or Duopolistic Competition?”

Heffernan et al., Chapter 2: “Britain’s Experience of Coalition Government”

Week 6 (Part I)	Tuesday, February 23
** EXAM #1 **	During Class

Week 6 (Part II)	Thursday, February 25
Political Parties: Ideology and Representation	

Heffernan et al., Chapter 5: “Ideological Politics and the Party System”

Denver et al., Chapter 3: “Alignment and Dealignment”

Wright, Chapter 3: “Arguing: The Politics of Ideas”

Week 7	Tuesday, March 2 Thursday, March 4
The Media	

Norton, Chapter 15: “Communication and Feedback: The Mass Media”

Denver et al., Chapter 6: “Campaigning and the Mass Media”

Heffernan et al., Chapter 10: “Politics and the New Media”

Week 8 (Part I)	Tuesday, March 9
The Civil Service and the Political Class	

Heffernan et al., Chapter 9: “Developments in the Civil Service”

Heffernan et al., Chapter 7: “Political Recruitment and the Political Class”

Week 8 (Part II)	Thursday, March 11
Interest Groups	

Norton, Chapter 7: “Interest Groups: Insiders or Outsiders?”

** Spring Break, March 15-19 **	
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Week 9 (Part I)	Tuesday, March 23
The Judiciary	

Norton, Chapter 14: ‘Enforcement: The Courts and the Police’

Week 9 (Part II)	Thursday, March 25
** EXAM #2 **	During Class

Week 10	Tuesday, March 30 Thursday, April 1
Elections: Rules and Context	

Denver et al., Chapter 1: “Studying British Elections”

Norton, Chapter 5: “The Electoral System: Campaigns, Voting, and Voters”

Denver et al., Chapter 7: “Electoral Geography and Electoral Systems”

Reform Ideas

* Paul Whiteley, Harold Clarke, David Sanders, and Marianne Stewart. 2012. “Britain Says NO: Voting in the AV Ballot Referendum.” *Parliamentary Affairs*, v65: 301-322.

Week 11 (Part I)	Tuesday, April 6
Elections: Issues and Voter Choice	

Denver et al., Chapter 4: “Issues, Policies, and Performance”

Denver et al., Chapter 5: “Party Images and Party Leaders”

Week 11 (Part II)	Thursday, April 8
Elections: Recent Elections and Identities	

David Cutts, Matthew Goodwin, Oliver Heath, and Paula Surridge. 2020. “Brexit, the 2019 General Election and the Realignment of British Politics.” *The Political Quarterly*, v 91(1): 7-23.

Sara B. Hobolt, Thomas J. Leeper, and James Tilley. 2020. “Divided by the Vote: Affective Polarization in the Wake of the Brexit Referendum.” *British Journal of Political Science*.

Week 12	Tuesday, April 13 Thursday, April 15
Elections: Voter Participation	

Denver et al., Chapter 2: “Turnout: Why People Vote, or Don’t”

Heffernan et al., Chapter 8: “Political Participation”

Heffernan et al., Chapter 3: “Voting Behaviour and Electoral Outcomes”

Week 13	Tuesday, April 20 Tuesday, April 22
Regionalism and (Emerging?) Federalism	

Norton, Chapter 10: “The New Assemblies: Government Beyond the Center”

Norton, Chapter 11: “Local Government: Government Below the Center”

Heffernan et al., Chapter 13: “The United Kingdom after the Scottish Referendum”

Week 14	Tuesday, April 27 Thursday, May 29
Brexit and the EU	

Norton, Chapter 9: “The European Union: Government above the Center”

Heffernan et al., Chapter 14: “Britain Beyond the European Union?”

The Brexit Vote

* Harold D. Clarke, Matthew Goodwin, and Paul Whiteley. 2017. *Brexit: Why Britain Voted to Leave the European Union*.

Chapter 7, “Voting to Leave” (146-174)

Chris Prosser, Jon Mellon, and Jane Green. “What Mattered Most to You When Deciding How to Vote in the EU Referendum?”

<https://www.britishelectionstudy.com/bes-findings/what-mattered-most-to-you-when-deciding-how-to-vote-in-the-eu-referendum/#.XCuyJlxKiUk>

Kaufmann, Eric. 2016. “It’s Not the Economy, Stupid: Brexit as a Story of Personal Values”

<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/personal-values-brexit-vote/>

Week 15 (Part I)	Tuesday, May 4
The Welfare State and Social Policy	

Heffernan et al., Chapter 11: “Governing in Times of Austerity”

Heffernan et al., Chapter 12: “The Politics of Immigration”

Historical Background

* David Thomson: “The Demand for Social Security” (pp. 190-202)

* Kenneth Morgan. 2000. *Twentieth Century Britain: A Very Short Introduction* (pp. 6-10, 57-60)

* Kenneth Morgan. 2010. *The Oxford History of Britain*, “The Post-War World” (pp. 633-637)

Week 15 (Part II)	Thursday, May 6
** EXAM #3 **	During Class