



Course and Examination Fact Sheet: Spring Semester 2025

8,604: Geschichte/History: Understanding Brexit - The UK, Europe, and the Rise of Populism, 1945-2025

ECTS credits: 3

Overview examination/s

(binding regulations see below)

decentral - Written work, Digital, Individual work individual grade (60%)

Examination time: Term time

decentral - Presentation, Analog, Group work group grade (40%)

Examination time: Term time

Attached courses

Timetable -- Language -- Lecturer

[8,604,1.00 Geschichte/History: Understanding Brexit - The UK, Europe, and the Rise of Populism, 1945-2025](#) -- English -- [Toye Richard John](#)

Course information

Course prerequisites

None

Learning objectives

This module will give students a historical understanding of the economic, political, and cultural background of Brexit, in global context. By the end of the course, students will have a firm grasp of the reasons for Brexit and an appreciation of the arguments for and against.

Course content

This course gives a long-term perspective on the causes and consequences of Brexit – the United Kingdom’s decision to leave the European Union – in the context of the rise of global populism. It starts in 1945, exploring the origins of Britain’s contested decision to join the EEC (later EU) in 1973, the extent to which the country successfully ‘Europeanised’ during the period of its membership, and the reasons for deepening Euroscepticism from the 1990s. The 2016 Brexit Referendum and its economic and political consequences will be examined in relation to developments elsewhere, such as the rise of Modi, Trump, and Bolsonaro.

It might seem that Britain’s involvement in Europe was always doomed, and that the origins of her Euroscepticism lay in nostalgia for the Empire that had been lost. On this basis, it would appear that some form of post-colonial sickness lay at the root things. This idea is that Britain had failed to “decolonize itself”, that is to say that it had not shaken off its old mentality and thus experienced continued delusions of grandeur has a good deal of merit. The rhetoric of the Leave campaign depicted a Britain whose leaders, at some point, had lost confidence in themselves and had turned their backs on the nation’s glorious history. Britons’ ‘kith and kin’ in the former white settler colonies had been abandoned. The country, in this analysis, had thus surrendered its true world role in favour of involvement with an essentially parochial, statist European bureaucracy; but Brexit would liberate it to fulfil its true, astonishing potential. There were more than a few resonances here of the late Nineteenth Century concept of an Anglo-Saxon ‘Greater British’ polity. But although this type of thinking was a real factor in the referendum debate it was not necessarily the most important or determining one. Brexit was not foreordained by a form of post-imperial path-dependency. Rather, it was contingent on a particular sequence of political and economic events that developed post-1997, and more precisely a series of political choices by the 2010-16 governments of David Cameron. Other outcomes were possible, although, after 2013, they became increasingly unlikely.



During the course, students will be encouraged to consider the following questions:

- To what extent was Brexit the result of a "revolt against globalization"? Was it truly an anti-elitist rebellion of 'left-behind Britons', a battle between the privileged and the dispossessed?
- Were perceptions that political debate had become particularly debased accurate? In other words, was it true that people voted Leave because they had been lied to and therefore didn't understand what they were doing? And was this allegedly endemic political lying demonstrably worse than in previous historical periods?
- Was the vote 'structurally lost' for Remain before it started, or were specific campaigning decisions at fault?
- To what degree was the Leave vote the product of a genuine democratic deficit (or other problems) within the EU?
- How important was the immigration issue, and why did it play out in the way that it did? To what extent was hostility to migrants based on cultural grievances as opposed to economic ones?
- What can we learn from a 'Four Nations' approach (i.e. consideration of the relationships between England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland) and to what extent was the referendum result the product of the 'break-up of Britain'?
- If Leave voters thought that they were opting to 'take back control' or to 'take back our country', what did they mean by this?

The course will show how Brexit related to longstanding themes and ideas in British economic and political history and will allow students many opportunities for interactive participation and debate.

Course structure and indications of the learning and teaching design

This **block course** will tackle the following themes:

1. Britain, Empire, and Europe 1945-73
2. UK membership of the EEC/EC/EU 1973-2021
3. Conservative and Labour Euroscepticism
4. 'Left Behind'? The sociology of Brexit
5. The Rise of the United Kingdom Independence Party
6. The 2016 Referendum campaign
7. 'Get Brexit Done': the 2019 general election
8. Brexit in the perspective of global Populism
9. After Brexit: what next?

The course will be taught through a combination of lectures, group discussion of readings, and small-group exercises. Here are some examples of exercises that may be used during the course:

1. Exercise: Students will be briefed as participants in a 2016 Referendum debate and will work in groups to develop the strongest case for their allocated side.
2. Exercise: Working in groups, students will locate a document of their own choosing which illustrates an aspect of the UK's relationship with the EU. This could be, for example, a speech, a cartoon, a short film, or a newspaper article. They will briefly present it to the class, explaining why it is significant and highlighting any difficulties of interpretation.

Contextual Studies are considered part of **Contact Learning**; thus, taking part properly implies **regular attendance**. It is the students' own responsibility to ensure that there is **no timetable clash** between the courses they have chosen. A detailed course outline and all relevant documents will be made available on **StudyNet**. Only the current timetable as published on **Courses** does apply.

Course literature

Anon. "British Attitudes to the EEC 1960-63." *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 1966: 49-61.

Assheuer, Thomas. The Players Resign: an interview with Jurgen Habermas. 12 July 2016. <http://www.zeit.de/kultur/2016-07/juergen-habermas-brexit-eu-crisis-english/komplettansicht> (accessed August 15, 2016).

Curtice, John. "A Question of Culture or Economics? Public Attitudes to the European Union in Britain." *Political Quarterly*, 2016: 210-218.

Denver, David, and Mark Garnett. "A cat among the pigeons: the UK referendum on membership of the EU." *British Politics Review*, 2016: 4-7.

Goodwin, Matthew, and Oliver Heath. "Brexit and the left behind: a tale of two countries." *blogs.lse.ac.uk*. 2016. <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2016/07/22/brexit-and-the-left-behind-a-tale-of-two-countries/> (accessed Aug. 18, 2016).

Grob-Fitzgibbon, Benjamin. *Continental Drift: Britain and Europe from the End of Empire to the Rise of Euroscepticism*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2016.



- Hansen, Peo, and Stefan Jonsson. *Eurafrica: The Untold Story of European Integration and Colonialism*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.
- Harford, Tim. "Metropolitan myths that led to Brexit." FT.com. 20 July 2016. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/5608a798-4e03-11e6-8172-e39ecd3b86fc.html> (accessed Aug. 18, 2016).
- Dennis Henneböhl, 'Taking Back Control' of the Nation and Its History? Contemporary Fiction's Engagement with Nostalgia in Brexit Britain. Paderborn: Brill, 2023.
- Jackson, Daniel, Thorsen, Einar, and Wring, Dominic, ed. *EU Referendum Analysis 2016: Media, Voters and the Campaign*. Poole: The Centre for the Study of Journalism, Culture and Community, 2016.
- Kaiser, Wolfram. *Using Europe, Abusing the Europeans: Britain and European Integration, 1945-63*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996.
- Kaufmann, Eric. "Brexit Voters: NOT the Left Behind." *fabians.org.uk*. 24 June 2016. <http://www.fabians.org.uk/brexit-voters-not-the-left-behind/> (accessed Aug. 18, 2016).
- Rasmussen, Jorgen. "'What Kind of Vision is That?'" *British Public Attitudes towards the European Community during the Thatcher Era*. British Journal of Political Science, 1997: 111-118.
- Saunders, Robert. "Brexit and Empire: 'Global Britain' and the Myth of Imperial Nostalgia." *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 2020: 1140-1174
- Suckert, Lisa. "Economic nostalgia: the salience of economic identity for the Brexit campaign, *Socio-Economic Review*, 2023: 1721-1750
- Toye, Richard. "Words of Change: the Rhetoric of Commonwealth, Common Market and Cold War, 1961-3." In *The Wind of Change: Harold Macmillan and British Decolonization*, edited by L.J. Butler and Sarah Stockwell, 140-158. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Young, Hugo. *This Blessed Plot: Britain and Europe from Churchill to Blair*. New York: The Overlook Press, 1999.
- Young, John W. *Britain and European Unity, 1945-1992*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993.
- Young, John W. "Churchill's 'No' to Europe: The 'Rejection' of European Union by Churchill's Post-War Government, 1951-1952." *Historical Journal*, 1985: 923-937.

Websites

The Brexit Collection: 2016 referendum

<https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/collections/brexit/2016>

The Johnson Dossier - 200,000+ words that Boris Johnson said or posted publicly between 21 February 2016, the day he announced his pro-leave position on the EU referendum, and 22 June 2016, the day before the vote.

<https://johnsondossier.com/>

Additional course information

Richard Toye is Professor of Modern History at the University of Exeter. His many books include *Age of Hope: Labour, 1945, and the Birth of Modern Britain* (2023).

Examination information

Examination sub part/s

1. Examination sub part (1/2)

Examination modalities

Examination type	Written work
Responsible for organisation	decentral
Examination form	Written work
Examination mode	Digital
Time of examination	Term time
Examination execution	Asynchronous
Examination location	Off Campus
Grading type	Individual work individual grade
Weighting	60%
Duration	--

Examination languages



Question language: English

Answer language: English

Remark

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Examination-aid rule

Free aids provision

Basically, students are free to choose aids. Any restrictions are defined by the faculty members in charge of the examination under supplementary aids.

Supplementary aids

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2. Examination sub part (2/2)

Examination modalities

Examination type	Presentation
Responsible for organisation	decentral
Examination form	Oral examination
Examination mode	Analog
Time of examination	Term time
Examination execution	Asynchronous
Examination location	On Campus
Grading type	Group work group grade
Weighting	40%
Duration	--

Examination languages

Question language: English

Answer language: English

Remark

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Examination-aid rule

Free aids provision

Basically, students are free to choose aids. Any restrictions are defined by the faculty members in charge of the examination under supplementary aids.

Supplementary aids

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Examination content

1. Group-Presentations (40%, 20-25 min. with 5-10 min. Q&A).
2. Paper (60%, 12.000 characters including spaces).

Examination relevant literature

See Course-Literature, the complete list will be announced via StudyNet.



Please note

Please note that only this fact sheet and the examination schedule published at the time of bidding are binding and takes precedence over other information, such as information on StudyNet (Canvas), on lecturers' websites and information in lectures etc.

Any references and links to third-party content within the fact sheet are only of a supplementary, informative nature and lie outside the area of responsibility of the University of St.Gallen.

Documents and materials are only relevant for central examinations if they are available by the end of the lecture period (CW21) at the latest. In the case of centrally organised mid-term examinations, the documents and materials up to CW 13 (Monday, 25 March 2025) are relevant for testing.

Binding nature of the fact sheets:

- Course information as well as examination date (organised centrally/decentrally) and form of examination: from bidding start in CW 04 (Thursday, 23 January 2025);
- Examination information (supplementary aids, examination contents, examination literature) for decentralised examinations: in CW 12 (Monday, 17 March 2025);
- Examination information (supplementary aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised mid-term examinations: in CW 14 (Monday, 31 March 2025);
- Examination information (regulations on aids, examination contents, examination literature) for centrally organised examinations: two weeks before ending with de-registration period in CW 15 (Monday, 07 April 2025).