

POLI 4077 British Politics

Spring 2020, T Th 10:30-11:50
Classroom 15 Atkinson Hall
Instructor Dr. Leonard Ray
Office Hours by appointment
Office 208 C Stubbs Hall
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Course Description

This course is an introduction to the politics of Britain. The course will cover the politics and society of the UK with an emphasis on the institutions of government. A particular focus of the course will be the peculiar “unwritten” nature of the UK constitution. Students will debate aspects of the UK constitutional system, and conclude the course by suggesting their own versions of a written constitution for the UK.

About the instructor:

Dr. Ray is an associate professor of political science with a specialization in comparative politics. Much of his research has focused on political parties and public opinion, and his teaching interests include British, French, and Israeli politics.

Course Readings:

The following textbook is required: *Politics UK* by Bill Jones, Philip Norton, and Oliver Daddow. Routledge; 9 edition (April 23, 2018) ISBN-13: 978-1138685086

This is a new edition of one of the oldest textbooks on British politics. A typical government textbook, it focuses on the development of the state, demography, electoral and party politics, and government institutions. This book is written for students in the UK, and is aimed at the UK equivalent of an AP/freshman American Government course in the US. As such, it is an interesting example of how the British see themselves, as well as a comprehensive textbook in its own right.

Other brief required readings will be posted on Moodle.

I recommend *The New British Constitution* by Vernon Bogdanor, Hart Publishing (June 8, 2009) ISBN-13: 978-1841136714. His analysis of the state of the UK constitution is useful in light of the spate of recent reforms.

Requirements:

- (20%) Mid Term Exam
- (20%) Final Exam (May 6, 3-5 PM)
- (20%) Group project and presentation on a new constitution for Britain
- (20%) Class Participation/discussion questions
- (20%) Participation in an in-class Debate:

Mid Term and Final exams will be in class exams with short answer and identification questions.

The group project and presentation on a new constitution for Britain is due on the last day of class. Groups of students will write up a brief constitution for the UK, and offer a defense of their constitutional handiwork. In addition to a written component, each group will give a brief (10 minute) presentation of their project to the class on April 30.

Class participation is expected, and attendance will be required. In order to encourage students to reflect on the readings before class, I will post a set of discussion questions on moodle each week. Students will submit a sentence or two in response to each question before the beginning of the class period for which the readings are assigned.

Each student will participate in one in-class **Debate**. Depending on student interest in each topic, you may need to team up with another student who is taking the same position on an issue. Debates will cover the following topics:

1. Proportional representation
2. Federalism/Scottish Independence/ Irish Unity
3. The future of the Monarchy
4. The House of Lords
5. Judicial Review

Class Schedule:

Jan 16 Introduction to Course and the UK

Jan 21 Birth of Constitutional Monarchy

Read for **Jan 23** to be posted on Moodle

An Agreement of the People (English Civil War)

Putney Debates (English Civil War)

Glorious Revolution and English Bill of Rights (Glorious Revolution)

Peoples Charter (Age of Reform)

Jan 28. Context for current UK Politics

Read for Jan 28, Chapters 1, 2, 3

Jan 30. Brexit swallows UK politics

Read for Jan 30, Chapter 7

Feb 04. Ideology and Parties

Read for Feb 4, Chapters 4, 5, 6

Feb 06 Ideology and parties ctd.

Feb 11. Parties and Elections

Read for Feb 11, Chapters 8, 10, 12

Feb. 13. DEBATE: Proportional Representation

Feb 18. Interest Groups/ Devolution

Read for Feb 18, Chapters 11, 13

Feb 20. DEBATE: Federalism or Separation?

Feb 25 (Mardi Gras Holiday)

Feb. 27 Mid Term exam

March 10 Constitutional reform

Read for March 10, Chapter 14

March 12 The Monarchy

Read for March 12, Chapter 15

March 17 The House of Commons

Read for March 17, Chapter 16

March 19 DEBATE: The future of the Monarchy

March 24 26 Spring Break

March 31 Commons and Lords

Read for March 31, Chapters 17 18

April 2 DEBATE: Reform of the House of Lords

April 7-9 The Executive Branch

Read for April 7, Chapters 19, 20

April 14 The judiciary

Read for April 14, Chapter 22

April 16 DEBATE: Judicial review?

April 21-23 Policy in the UK

Read for April 21, Chapters 23, 24, 25

April 28 UK, Europe, and the world (reprise)

Read for April 28, Chapters 26, 27 28

April 30 (Presentations of constitutions 5x10 min)