BRITISH POLITICS
Political Science 4060

Prof Wm Clark
213 Stubbs Hall
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Tu & Th 12:00 – 1:20
26 Hatcher Hall

Course Description

This offering is an upper-level course focusing on contemporary British domestic politics and government. Its aim is to provide for the student a thorough introduction to the major institutions and processes of the British political system. In addition, the major theoretical and ideological debates of British politics will be confronted. Special attention will be paid to the extraordinary changes that have been implemented in British politics since 1997 and how these changes challenge the very notion of Britishness in politics and society. By course end, the student should have a much more sophisticated understanding of the nature of British politics, its political development, past successes and failures, and challenges for the future.

Course Requirements

First, each student is expected to attend each and every class session. Attendance will be monitored. Second, it is imperative that students keep pace with the reading assignments. Come to class having already read the assigned materials for that day. Third, each student must sit for two examinations. The first examination is scheduled for the class session on Thursday, March 7. The second examination is set for the final examination period on Monday, May 6 between 3:00-5:00. The examinations are non-cumulative and are each weighted at 40 percent of the course grade. Finally, each student is required to write a 10-page analytical research paper on one of the themes listed at the end of this syllabus. This paper is weighted at the remaining 20 percent of the course grade.

Texts

Each of these texts is required for the course:

Robert Hazell, ed. Constitutional Futures Revisited: Britain’s Constitution to 2020 (Palgrave, 2010).

Additional materials will be placed on the course Moodle site.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic &amp; Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tu</strong> Jan 15</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course</td>
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| **Th** Jan 17 – **Tu** Jan 22 | The Context of British Politics  
Norton, chapter 1 |
| **Th** Jan 24 – **Tu** Jan 29 | The British Constitution  
Norton, chapter 4 + Hazell, chapter 1 |
| **Th** Jan 31 – **Th** Feb 14 | The British Parliament  
Norton, chapter 12 + Hazell, chapter 16 |
| **Tu** Feb 19 – **Tu** Feb 26 | The Cabinet & Whitehall  
Norton, chapter 8 + Hazell, chapter 8 |
| **Th** Feb 28 – **Tu** Mar 5 | The Monarchy  
Norton, chapter 13 + Hazell, chapter 9 |
| **Th** Mar 7 | Midterm Examination |
| **Tu** Mar 11 – **Tu** Mar 19 | Elections & Voting Behavior  
Norton, chapter 5 + Hazell, chapter 14 |
| **Th** Mar 21 – **Th** Mar 28 | Political Parties in the UK  
Norton, chapter 6 + Hazell, chapter 15 |
| F Mar 29 – S April 7 | Spring Break – no class |
| S April 7 | |
| **Tu** Apr 9 – **Th** Apr 18 | Devolution & Regional Politics  
Norton, chapter 10 + Hazell, chapters 2, 5, 4 |
| **Tu** Apr 23 | Local Politics  
Norton, chapter 11 |
| **Th** Apr 25 | The Impact of EU Membership  
Norton, chapter 9 |
| **Tu** Apr 30 – **Th** May 2 | The Future of Britishness & the Westminster Model  
Norton, chapter 16 + Hazell, chapters 6, 17 |
| **Th** May 2 | Research Papers Due |
| **M** May 6 | Finals Examination (3:00 – 5:00) |
Paper Assignment

Each student must write a formal analytical research paper that addresses one of the themes below. The paper is to be ten (10) double-spaced typed pages, using an 11- or 12-point font and with normal margins. All source material used in the preparation of the paper must be cited. Citations (use footnotes or endnotes only) must include the author, title, source/publisher, and page number where the information was found. Only professional, published, vetted academic sources may be used. Do not use either of the course textbooks as sources for the paper. The paper will be scrutinized and evaluated on the basis of content, style, grammar, syntax, punctuation, citation, and sources (i.e., on the basis of professional standards). The instructor will not review and/or comment on draft versions of the paper. No material submitted to satisfy the requirements of another course may be included in the paper. The paper must be submitted both in hard copy and electronically via e-mail to the instructor. It is due on or before the final class session of the course on May 2, 2013.

Pick one of the following themes:

(1) Who has had a greater impact on contemporary British politics: Margaret Thatcher or Tony Blair? Explain.

(2) What explains the fact that Winston Churchill, Britain’s heroic Prime Minister during World War II, was turned out of office in 1945 in favor of the Labour Party and Clement Attlee?

(3) How does the old Labour Party differ from “New Labour”?

(4) Were the tactics of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) justified?

(5) There are only four former Prime Ministers honored with life-sized statues in the House of Commons anteroom: Winston Churchill, Clement Attlee, David Lloyd George, and Margaret Thatcher. Which one does not belong? Explain.

(6) Why has Britain refused to adopt the Euro? Has this been a wise or unwise decision?

(7) Should Britain adopt proportional representation for the House of Commons? Why or why not?

(8) Why did a coalition government emerge from the election results of May 2010, but did not emerge from the election results of February 1974?

(9) How and why did Margaret Thatcher lose her job as Prime Minister?

(10) What is the report card on London’s mayor, the eccentric Boris Johnson?

(11) When was the last successful “vote of no confidence” in British politics, and around what controversy did it resolve? Explain.

(12) The English writer Malcolm Bradbury once defined “Britishness” as “not quite being American” but “not European” either. Is Britain and “Britishness” more American, or more European?

(13) Why are parliamentary by-elections so important in British politics?
(14) What should be done about the House of Lords? What are the consequences of Lords reform for the operation of British politics?

(15) How are British party leaders selected? How have the processes used by the parties changed over time?

(16) What is a proper solution to the so-called West Lothian question?

(17) What did Walter Bagehot mean by the phrase “the efficient secret of the English Constitution” and why is it a key to British politics?

(18) Has Britain ever really been a true two-party system?

(19) Does Duverger’s Law apply to the British political party system?

(20) Is Scotland guilty of being the Yoko Ono of the United Kingdom?

(21) Is the Conservative Party a British party or an English party, and why does the answer matter?

(22) Is New Labour’s “Third Way” actually nothing more than its acceptance of Thatcherism?

(23) Why was the Labour Party’s 1983 election manifesto called “the longest suicide note in history”?

(24) Why are the Scots more nationalistic than the Welsh?

(25) Is parliamentary sovereignty – the keystone of British politics – still operational?
Useful Websites

Prime Minister’s office:  www.number-10.gov.uk
PMQs video:  http://www.number10.gov.uk/news-type/prime-ministers-questions/
British Cabinet:  www.cabinet-office.gov.uk
British Parliament:  www.parliament.uk
British Monarchy:  www.royal.gov.uk
Conservative Party:  www.conservative-party.org.uk
Labour Party:  www.labour.org.uk
Liberal Democratic Party:  www.libdems.org.uk
Scottish Nationalist Party:  www.snp.org.uk
Scottish Parliament:  http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/
Welsh Nationalist Party:  www.plaid-cymru.wales.com
Welsh Parliament:  http://www.assemblywales.org/
Sinn Fein:  www.sinnfein.ie
Ulster Unionist Party:  www.uup.org
The Social Democratic and Labour Party:  www.sdlp.ie
The Democratic Unionist Party:  www.dup.ork.uk
Northern Irish Assembly (Stormont):  http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/
Greater London Authority:  http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor-assembly/gla
British Elections Results since 1945:  http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/area/uk/ukttable.htm
British Media Links:  http://www.wrx.zen.co.uk/britnews.htm
Total Politics:  www.totalpolitics.com
Guido Fawkes’ Blog:  http://order-order.com/
Super Links Page:  http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk.htm