

**POLITICAL SCIENCE 4324**  
**BRITISH POLITICS**  
**SPRING 2009**

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Although “continuity and change” is probably the most overworked descriptive phrase in political science, it has never fit better than when applied to contemporary Britain. For four decades after World War II, the British polity was characterized by remarkable stability. The constitutional consensus was overwhelmingly accepted; political decision making was concentrated in a strong central government; two major political parties divided the electorate between them; these two parties shared more ideas than they fought over; both the managed economy and the welfare state enjoyed almost universal acceptance among the political elite; the “special relationship” with the United States was the cornerstone of foreign policy, and the maintenance of great power status was an agreed on objective. Furthermore, the afterglow of standing alone during the Blitz solidified the social fabric.

Piece by piece, however, every aspect of the post-war political system came apart. A whole new public philosophy now guides both parties; the constitution has been overhauled; both the country’s place in Europe and the “special relationship” have been questioned as never before; and vast cutbacks in military capability have been made. Nevertheless, there remain important continuities in contemporary British political life.

Our task in this course is to give due weight to both the continuities and the changes. We will begin by laying the groundwork, surveying the society and economy, the political culture, and the constitution. Then, we will concentrate on how political institutions operate and how elections are run. A look at foreign policy, Europe, religious issues, social welfare policy, and criminal justice will follow, allowing us to see how the contemporary state operates in major areas of public policy. Finally, we will probe what the future might hold for the British polity.

Texts:

Bruce Norton, *Politics in Britain*  
Peter Riddell, *Hug Them Close*

Requirements:

We will have two exams and a final. In addition, there is a paper requirement. The exams will count 100 points each and the paper 50. The grading scale is A=90%, B+=87%; B=80%; C+=77%; C = 70%; and D= 60%. The tentative dates for the two exams are February 13 and March 27.

Graduate students need to see me to discuss additional assignments.

Attendance policy:

According to University policy, a student who misses more than 25% of the classes in a course must receive an F.

Topical outline and reading assignments:

January 12 & 14	Society and economy
Norton, pp. 28-44	
January 16 & 21	Political culture
Norton, pp. 45-51 and chap. 1.	
January 19	Martin Luther King birthday
January 23-26	The constitution
Norton, chap. 3.	
January 28-February 4	Parliament
Norton, chap. 8	
Meg Russell, "Is the House of Lords Already Reformed?" <i>Political Quarterly</i> , July-September 2003, 311-21.	
February 6-11	The prime minister and cabinet
Norton, chap. 9	
Richard Hefferman, "Why the Prime Minister cannot be a President: Comparing Institutional Imperatives in Britain and America," <i>Parliamentary Affairs</i> , January 2005, 53-70.	
February 13	Exam No. 1

February 16-20	Civil service and bureaucracy
Norton, chap. 10.	
February 23-27	The judiciary
Norton, chap. 12.	
March 2 & 4	Devolution
Norton, pp. 300-310.	
March 6, 16, & 18	Political parties
Norton, chaps. 4 & 5.	
Philip Lynch and Robert Garner, "The Changing Party System," <i>Parliamentary Affairs</i> , June 2005, 533-554.	
March 9-13	Spring break
<b>Have a good time, but PLEASE drive carefully.</b>	
March 20-25	Elections
Norton, chap. 7.	
March 27	Exam No. 2
March 30-April 3	Foreign policy
Riddell, entire.	
April 6 & 8	Britain and Europe
Norton, chap. 13.	
Note: Paper due April 8	
April 10-13	Easter holidays
<b>Ditto from above.</b>	
April 15 and 17	Religious issues
April 20-22	Social welfare policies

Derek Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., chap. 10.

April 24-27

Criminal justice policies

Laurence Lustgarten, "National Security, Terrorism and Constitutional Balance," *Political Quarterly*, January-March 2004, 4-16.

April 29

The future of British politics

May 1

Review/Slippage

Final exam as scheduled.

Makeup policy:

I will administer a makeup exam without penalty for an excused absence. Generally, these are an illness which requires a physician's treatment, death of a family member or friend, and official University business. In other cases, I will give makeup exams; however, I eliminate all choices and extract a five per cent penalty.

Special assistance:

Any student who has a disability, whether or not it qualifies under the Americans with Disabilities Act, should feel free to talk with me. I will work with the appropriate University officials to set up whatever accommodations we can.