CPO 4123

Government & Politics of Great Britain

Spring 2024

Instructor: Jonathan Knuckey

Welcome to British Politics!

Britain is arguably the world's oldest parliamentary democracy and no other country -- with perhaps the possible exception of the United States -- has had a greater influence on world politics than Britain. This makes the study of British politics important for you as an undergraduate majoring in political science or international and global studies.

Our course will introduce you to the main political institutions and actors in Britain today and the political behaviour of the British people. The overarching framework will be consideration of Britain as a changing liberal democracy and an examination will be made of what Britain shares and what differentiates it from other developed democracies such as the United States and other European nations.

In our survey of the government and politics of Britain we will often encounter what are apparently confusing set of political institutions that combine historical continuity and change to modernity. Britain is heralded as a modern, free and democratic country, yet the head of state is a hereditary monarch, and there is an established church under the protection of the monarch. There is a bicameral legislature, yet one chamber is not elected. There are liberties under common law and it is only recently that human rights were codified and become an integral part of British law. There is a constitution but it is not written in a single document. Elections are free and corruption is virtually non-existent, and the electorate take a lively interest in political matters, as befits a developed democracy. This is especially true right now with a general election expected sometime this year -- the fourth election since 2015 that will likely see the fifth Prime Minister in that time period!

Our class is divided in to four broad sections:

- **The first part of the course will focus on the context of British politics,** which will provide you with the historical background and trends in Britain since World War II up to the present of a post-Brexit Britain and a perceived instability to recent politics. We will also reflect on life in contemporary British society in all of its diversity along with the role that the mass media plays in British politics.

- **The second part of the course sets out the changing constitution within which British politics operates as well as examining the key institutions** -- Parliament, the Prime Minister, the Civil Service, the law and the monarchy. We will also focus on the various tiers of government with a focus on local government as well as the devolved assemblies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We will conclude this section of the course with an exploration of Britain's relationship with Europe before, during and after membership of the European Union.

- **The third part of the course will focus on how politics is organized and carried out** with an examination of voting behaviour, elections and electoral systems. It will also examine the nature of political parties and ideology and how people participate -- or don't participate -- in politics.

- **We will conclude our study of British politics by taking stock of the state of current British politics** as well as some speculation on where British politics might be heading. More generally we will evaluate the condition of democracy in Britain.

Overall by the end of the semester this you will be able to:

- Understand how British political institutions are structured.
- Analyze pressing domestic and international political issues in British politics.
- Evaluate whether or not British politics is undergoing systemic change.
- Be familiar with current affairs as they relate to British politics.
- Have sufficient background knowledge to undertake independent research -- such as a Honors Undergraduate Thesis -- on a topic on British politics.

I look forward to the class and hope you find it enjoyable and informative. I look forward to learning a lot from you too!

About Me and How to Contact Me.

I joined UCF in 1999. I received my BA in Political Theory and Institutions from the **University of Liverpool,** my MA in U.S. History and Politics from the **University of Keele** and my Ph.D. in Political Science from the **University of New Orleans**.

My main areas of research and teaching are southern politics, voting behavior, campaigns and elections, political parties, race and politics, gender and politics and comparative politics.

Outside of my day job I am a huge football (soccer!) fan and an avid supporter of **Liverpool** and, of course, **Orlando City F.C.**

Office: Political Science department, Howard Phillips Hall 302L

Office hours: Tuesday, 12.00 noon to 3pm; Wednesday, 3.00-4.30pm. I am also happy to meet outside of these times if it conflicts with your schedule. If you want to use Zoom to meet, use the following Zoom link: **https://ucf.zoom.us/j/6720872288**

I really encourage you to use office hours to not only ask anything about the course material, but also any potential research ideas you might have or if you just want to talk about future educational, career plans or even politics in general!

Email: Use email in Webcourses for all course-related questions. If you write me Monday through Friday I should get back to you within 24 hours.

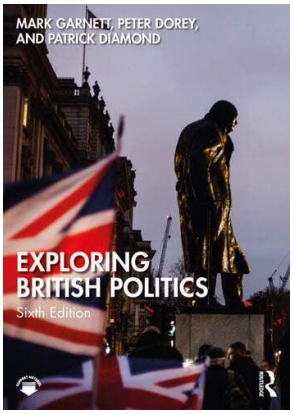
Do allow adequate time for a reply to a question about an assignment. If you send a question a few hours before an assignment is due or an exam, I may not see it in time to provide an adequate answer.

Please don't use the comments box on assignments to message me. I receive no notification of messages sent here. So always use the email in Webcourses if you wish to follow up on any assignment.

A note on etiquette: You are what you email, which means your instructors will often shape their opinion of you according to the quality of the email messages you are sending. To that end, be sure to please keep the tone of your emails professional, sign your emails with your name and include an appropriate salutation (Hint: you can't go wrong with "Dear Dr. Knuckey").

Textbook

Garnett, Mark, Peter Dorey, and Patrick Diamond. 2016. *Exploring British Politics*. New York: Routledge. Sixth Edition.



Please purchase the **sixth edition** of this textbook as shown above. Much has changed in British politics -- even in the space of the past couple of years -- that will make prior editions of the book out of date.

You should have bought the book by the end of the first week of the semester. Note that you might be able to find copies of the textbook for less than price at the UCF bookstore. Ebook versions are fine to purchase.

Please keep up to date with assigned readings (see course schedule below). Exams will cover material from our textbook in addition to class lectures.

Exams

Three exams will be given during the semester, scheduled as follows:

- **First midterm exam:** *Monday, February 5th (regular class time)*
- **Second midterm exam:** *Monday, March 4th (regular class time)*
- **Final exam:** *Monday, April 29th (1.00pm-3.50pm)*

Midterm Exams Format

Both midterm exams are **non-cumulative** and will consist of:

- 20 multiple-choice questions with 4 choices per question (2 points per question = 40 points)
- 10 true/false questions (2 points per question = 20 points)
- 10 fill-in-the-blank questions (1 points per question = 10 points)
- Three short written answer questions -- each answer being around 300 words or a solid paragraph or two in length (10 points each = 30 points).
- You will have our normal class time of 80 minutes to complete each midterm exam.

Final Exam Format

Non-Cumulative Section (covers topics after second midterm exam)

- 20 multiple-choice questions with 4 choices per question (2 points per question = 40 points).
- 10 true/false questions (2 points per question = 20 points).
- 10 fill-in-the-blank questions (1 points per question = 10 points).

Comprehensive Section

- Two extended essay questions (50 points each = 100 points). Essay length will be around 500 words per question, so about 1,000 words total.

The essay questions will address continuity and change in British politics and the current state of democracy in Britain. It will afford you the opportunity to thoughtfully integrate themes covered throughout the semester. I will provide you with the exact essay questions prior to the exam so you will know how to study and prepare for it.

You will have 2 hours & 50 minutes to complete the final exam

Exam Policies

- All exams will be taken in our classroom.
- All exams are closed notes/books.
- Exam questions will come from both assigned readings and lectures; in other words, just about anything we discuss or read is fair game for testing.
- You must take each exam. Failure to take any exam will result in an automatic "F" for the overall grade.

Refer to "Exam Guidelines/Review" on "Modules" tab on the left for further details on each exam. Only the first exam guidelines/review will initially be shown.

British Politics Current Affairs Assignments

In addition to you understanding the history and political institutions of Britain and the political behavior of its citizens, I hope taking this course will stimulate an interest in keeping up to date with current affairs and political developments in Britain. As I noted above, it's a fascinating time to follow British politics in what will likely be an election year! To that end, there will be four assignments this semester that give you a chance to focus on what are making the headlines in British politics and the importance of those stories. Keeping up to date with political developments is an important goal in itself but is particularly relevant for a political scientist as the stories in the headlines can often be the starting place for undertaking original research yourself.

Details on the content and format of these assignments can be found **here.**

Due dates for these current affairs assignments can be found in the schedule below.

Student Conduct

All students are expected to adhere to the **UCF Golden Rule**, which includes conducting oneself in a professional manner both in the classroom and in written and verbal communication with me and to other students. Violations of the Golden Rule -- both academic and non-academic -- can result in a referral to the Office of Student Conduct.

Unauthorized Use of Class Materials

There are many fraudulent websites claiming to offer study aids to students but are actually cheat sites. They encourage students to upload course materials, such as test questions, individual assignments, and examples of graded material. Such materials are the intellectual property of instructors, the university, or publishers and may not be distributed without prior authorization.

Students who engage in such activity are in violation of academic conduct standards and may face penalties.

Group Chats

Group chats -- via GroupMe, Whats App, etc. -- are increasingly common and can be used positively for collaboration and connection with your peers. That is a positive thing. However, they can also be used for nefarious purposes such as sharing answers and other forms of cheating.

Recently I've unfortunately had to deal with instances where students are reporting other students for sharing information via the class group chat. **Any students on a group chat where cheating is occurring will all be included in any disciplinary action that results from content shared on the chat.** This includes, but is not limited to

How can this be avoided, you ask? Well it's pretty easy to avoid: Do your own work, don't cut corners and **ask me** if you think you need help.

A Note About Artificial Intelligence (AI)

While the ever-changing (and exciting!) new developments with AI will find their place in our workforces and personal lives, in the realm of education and learning, this kind of technology does not belong. This is because the use of AI robs us all of the opportunity to learn from our experiences and from each other, to play with our creative freedoms, to problem-solve, and to contribute our ideas in authentic ways that will prepare you for a competitive workplace.

In a nutshell, **college is a place for critical thinking and learning.** AI simply cannot do that thinking learning for us. Therefore, any AI-generated or inspired by AI submissions are not permitted and will be treated as academic misconduct.

Attendance

This is fairly straightforward: arrive on time and stay for the 80 minute duration of our class. Some points on attendance:

- I will pass the attendance roll at the beginning of class and this will be the official record of your attendance. On the very rare occasion you are late to class, please enter the classroom as quietly and with as minimal disruption as possible and make sure you sign the class roll at the end. Any student who is more than 15 minutes late to class can still come to class but will not be counted present for the attendance bonus (see below).

- If you must leave class for any reason and are unable to return it is courteous to let me know why -- without going into specific details -- as soon as is feasible. If you leave class and don't return without notifying me then you will not be counted present for the attendance bonus (see below).

- Constant tardiness will quickly get my attention and a written warning. I reserve the right to reduce an overall grade by one letter grade and not apply the exceptional attendance bonus (see below) when tardiness continues to be evident after this warning,

- **Attendance Bonus.** This will be the only extra credit grading opportunity. If you have no more than **two absences** during the semester you will be eligible for **3 points** added to your overall grade.

Start of Semester Meetings with Students

I would like to meet with each of you for a brief chat via Zoom during the first two weeks of the semester. Please make your appointment by going to **Calendar** in **Webcourses**, select our course (CPO 4123) and then click on **Find Appointments.**

Hopefully these meetings will give you a chance to ask me any questions you may have about the course. Likewise it will help me put names to faces.

Grades

My philosophy of grading is decidedly against what is generally known as "competitive grading" or "grading on the curve." You are not competing against fellow students for grades in this class. You are competing against yourself at all times, hopefully pushing yourself to excel against my objective standards of what students should reasonably get out of this class.

Average mastery of those standards is the baseline for earning an "average" grade of C. Do above-average work, you earn a B. Do excellent work, you earn an A…. and so on. In any case, please understand that the points you earn toward a final grade will not be jerked around up or down to fit some predetermined grade curve.

Your final grade will be weighted as follows:

- First midterm exam: 25%
- Second midterm exam: 25%
- Final Exam: 30%
- British politics current affairs assignments: 20%

Grade boundaries are as follows:

A, 90%+

B+, 86-89.9%

B, 80-85.9%

C+, 76-79.9%

C, 70-75.9%

D, 60-69.9%

F, 59% and below.

You will be able to access your grades in Webcourses. Please make sure that grades entered here are correct. While every effort is made to ensure grades are correct, from time-to-time errors can occur (incorrectly add/subtract, miss points, and even fail to understand what a student wrote).

A time limit of **1 week** is imposed on all change of grade requests after the grade has posted for a completed piece or work. This is sufficient time to identify any errors. After that, prior grades will not be reviewed. This is to bring the course grade to completion and to minimize "end of semester" opportunism.

When grades fall exactly on the borderline of letter grades (89.9%, 85.9%, etc., etc.), I'll take the overall performance of a student throughout the semester into account when deciding whether to round up, i.e., has all work been submitted throughout the semester, and has there been an attempt to answer all questions on a quiz or assignment.

Apart from the attendance bonus, ***there is no extra credit for this class.***

All work in this course will be graded by me, not a Graduate Teaching Assistant. If you have any questions about grades after receiving my feedback then please don't hesitate to touch base with me directly.

Grade grievance policies are outlined under the **UCF Golden Rule.**

Assignment Due Dates/Late Submission

Assignment due dates/time

There are a number of assignments given throughout the semester. Due dates can be found in the Course Schedule below.

All work will be due at midnight on the due date.

"After Hours" Submission Policy

Please note the following policy for late submission of work:

- Work submitted ***after midnight up to 9.00am the following day*** will be considered "late" but as it falls in the automatic grace period for submission of work will still receive full credit.
- Work submitted ***after 9.00am up to midnight the following da***y will be considered "late" and receive half credit.
- *No work will be accepted for credit after this.*

Remember that you will know what assignment is due, and what that assignment entails, well in advance of a due date. The single biggest source of missed points on assignments is starting

an assignment too late and not making enough time to complete the assignment. So pace yourself on all assignments.

Even with an after hours submission policy, some students occasionally still want longer to complete an assignment. Such extensions will not be granted, unless they genuinely are unexpected or extenuating circumstances beyond the control of the students. Basically, it is an extremely high bar!

Here are some *unacceptable* excuses for late-work, and it is by no means an exhaustive list:

- *"My computer is broken...."*
- *"My computer was stolen...."*
- *"My computer magically deleted my homework from the hard drive. I do not understand it myself...."*
- *"The internet is broken...."*
- *"I forgot to attach the assignment...."*
- *"I could not find the assignment...."*
- *"I did the quiz but forgot to submit it..."*
- *"I was on holiday..."*
- *"It was my birthday so I thought you would give me an extension..."*
- *"I didn't understand the assignment..."*
- *"I forgot what time zone I lived..."*

The above are all **actual excuses** I have received! Many, as you can see, are computer-related, which are the "dog ate my homework" excuses of the technology age and will not fly!

It's your responsibility to secure ample time at a computer, make backups of your work, check you did not submit a blank assignment, check you correctly submitted the right assignment and generally plan ahead and avoid procrastination—do whatever it takes!

Tip: The wise student will aim to complete an assignment the day before it is due, as that provides a cushion for anything that might come up that is unexpected.

Make-up Exams

Students who represent the university in an authorized event or activity (for example, student-athletes) and who are unable to take an exam on the scheduled day must provide me with original and verifiable documentation in advance to arrange a make-up exam.

Other extenuating circumstances that may result in you being unable to take an exam -- including but not limited to illness and needing to be out of town because of an emergency

involving an *immediate* family member -- will be considered as grounds to take a make-up exam, again necessitating original and verifiable documentation.

An exam cannot be taken prior to the regularly scheduled exam day.

Vacations and other non-emergency reasons for being out of town for missing an exam are **not** eligible reasons for a make-up exam being granted.

Religious Observance

You must notify me in advance if you intend to absent from class or are unable to submit an assignment for a religious observance.

Accessibility Statement

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Accessibility Services before requesting accommodations from the professor.

Deployed Active Duty Military Students

If you are a deployed active duty military student and feel that you may need a special accommodation due to that unique status, please contact me at the start of the semester to discuss your circumstances.

Title IX

Title IX prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual misconduct, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and retaliation. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources available to support the victim, including confidential resources and information concerning reporting options
at **https://letsbeclear.ucf.edu and http://cares.sdes.ucf.edu/.**

Campus Safety

Emergencies on campus are rare, but if one should arise during class, everyone needs to work together. Students should be aware of their surroundings and familiar with some basic safety and security concepts.

- In case of an emergency, dial 911 for assistance.
- Every UCF classroom contains an emergency procedure guide posted on a wall near the door. Students should make a note of the guide's physical location and review the online version at **https://centralflorida-prod.modolabs.net/student/safety/index.**
- Students should know the evacuation routes from each of their classrooms and have a plan for finding safety in case of an emergency.
- If there is a medical emergency during class, students may need to access a first-aid kit or AED (Automated External Defibrillator). To learn where those are located, see **https://ehs.ucf.edu/automated-external-defibrillator-aed-locations**.
- To stay informed about emergency situations, students can sign up to receive UCF text alerts by going to **https://www.getrave.com/login/ucf** and logging in. On the "My Account" tab, fill out the information, including e-mail address and cell phone number.
- Students with special needs related to emergency situations should speak with their instructors outside of class.
- To learn about how to manage an active-shooter situation on campus or elsewhere, consider viewing this video (**https://youtu.be/NIKYajEx4pk**).

Disclaimer

I reserve the right to change, add or modify any part of the syllabus. Of course, advance notice will be given of any such changes.

Course Schedule

The Course schedule shows the topic and assigned reading for each day. It's wise to stay up to date on readings so as to avoid reading a lot the night before an exam!

All assignments including due dates are shown in **red font.** All assignment -- with the exception of the in-class assignment on January 8th -- will be due at midnight on the date shown.

Week 1

Monday, January 8th: Course Introduction; What is "British" About British Politics?

A brief assignment will be given in class that will be used to document student engagement in the course during the first week of class for financial aid purposes.

Wednesday, January 10th: What is "British" About British Politics?

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.1

Week 2

Monday, January 15th: No class in observance of the *Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday*

Wednesday, **January 17th:** Historical Context of British Politics - From War to Welfare

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.3 (up to p. 63)

Week 3

Monday, January 22nd: Historical Context of British Politics - From Thatcherism to "Brexit" and Crisis

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.3 (pp. 63-70)

Wednesday, **January 24th:** Life in Contemporary Britain - the Social & Economic Context, Part I

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.4 (pp. 71-89)

Sunday, January 28th: First Current Events Assignment due (midnight).

Week 4

Monday, January 29th: Life in Contemporary Britain - the Social & Economic Context, Part II

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.4 (pp. 89-98)

Wednesday, **January 31st:** Mass Media & Communication

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.5

Week 5

Monday, February 5th: *First Exam*

Refer to the first exam study guidelines (on the Modules tab) for details on format, topics and study tips.

The exam is closed book and will be taken in our classroom.

Wednesday, **February 7th:** The British Constitution

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.6

Week 6

Monday, February 12th: Parliament and the Legislative Process

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.8

Wednesday, February 14th: The Prime Minister & Cabinet

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.7 (pp. 164-186)

Sunday, February 18th: Second Current Events Assignment due (midnight).

Week 7

Monday, February 19th: Ministers, Departments and the Civil Service

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.7 (pp. 186-201)

Wednesday, **February 21st:** The Law, the State & the Judicial Process

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.9

Week 8

Monday, February 26th: The British Monarchy

Reading: TBA

Wednesday, **February 28th:** Local Government & Politics

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.11

Week 9

Monday, March 4th: Second *Exam*

Refer to the first exam study guidelines (on the Modules tab) for details on format, topics and study tips.

The exam is closed book and will be taken in our classroom.

Wednesday, **March 6th:** *No Class - I will be attending The Citadel Symposium on Sothern Politics in Charleston, SC. So, work on current events assignment due on Sunday.*

Sunday, March 10th: Third Current Events Assignment due (midnight).

Week 10

Monday, **March 11th:** Devolution & Nationalism in Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.12

Wednesday, March 13th: Britain & Europe

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.13

Spring Break

Week 11

Monday, March 25th: The UK Party System

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.14

Wednesday, March 27th: Party Organization

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.15

Week 12

Monday, April 1st: Ideology and Party Competition.

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.16

Wednesday, April 3rd: *No Class - I will be attending the Southern Sociological Society annual conference in New Orleans. So, work on current events assignment due on Sunday.*

Sunday, April 7th: Fourth Current Events Assignment due (midnight).

Week 13

Monday, April 8th: Elections and Electoral Systems

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.17

Wednesday, April 10th: Voting Behaviour

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.18

Week 14

Monday, April 15th: Political Participation Beyond Elections

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.19

Wednesday, April 17th: Governance, Democracy and the Future of British Politics

Reading*: Exploring British Politics,* ch.20

Week 15

Monday, April 22nd: Final Exam Review

Final Exam: Monday, April 29th (1.00pm-3.50pm).

Refer to the final exam study guidelines (on the Modules tab) for details on format, topics and study tips. I will also provide you with the two extended essay questions here too.

The exam is closed book and will be taken in our classroom.