

## **British Politics in the Era of Thatcher and Blair**

Don Share, University of Puget Sound

ILACA London Program, Spring 2007

Monday, 3:30-5:30 pm and Thursday, 1-2 pm.

### **How to Contact Me:**

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**Purpose of the Course:** The United Kingdom is often considered the birthplace of modern liberal democracy, but in many respects British politics remain atypical and unique. The main goal of the course is to gain an understanding of how British politics differs from the political system of the United States as well as Continental Europe.

**Organization of the Course:** The first half of the course introduces some of the most essential concepts of comparative politics (major terms, like the state, nation, and government, political attitudes, and political ideologies), as well as the key institutions in liberal democracies (legislative-executive systems, electoral systems, and political economic arrangements). We will illustrate those terms and concepts using British politics, and thereby gain an understanding of the basic workings of politics in the U.K. The second half of the course examines some fascinating aspects of and issues in British politics, including the challenge of ethnic diversity, Britain's relationship with Europe and the world, and the political legacies of Thatcher and Blair, arguably the two most important post-War prime ministers.

**Prerequisites:** There are no prerequisites for this course. The curriculum has been designed to give newcomers to political science a basic introduction to key terms and concepts in the first half of the course.

**Course Format:** This course will be taught as an upper-level seminar. Class sessions will be a combination of lectures (especially early in the semester), student presentations, discussion of readings, guest lectures, and occasional excursions and other activities as they become available.

**On-Site Activities:** A variety of excursions and guest speakers will be planned to take advantage of our stay in London. These will be announced as the semester begins.

**Note about Flexibility:** I expect to change the syllabus, add or subtract readings, modify topics, etc. in order to take advantage of opportunities for speakers or other relevant activities. This means a) you need to be flexible and b) you must check your e-mail daily, since I will use e-mail as the primary way to notify you of such changes.

**Textbooks and Readings:** There are two required textbooks for the course:

- Mark Garnett and Philip Lynch, *Modern British Politics*, Pearson Longman, 2007.
- Earl Reitan, *The Thatcher Revolution*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2003
- Newspapers: You must read the domestic political coverage of at least two of the following periodicals at least three times each week. You may purchase newsstand copies or read the papers on line: *The Guardian*, *The Financial Times*, *The Independent*, *The Times*, *The Telegraph*, *The Economist* (a weekly).

**Additional course web readings**, indicated with the 📖 symbol in the syllabus, are available at the University of Puget Sound Blackboard site: [www.blackboard.ups.edu](http://www.blackboard.ups.edu). All students will need to establish an account on that site (use the e-mail account that you will check regularly this semester), and then search for ILACA07 and click “enroll.” The password is **LONDON** (makes sure to use upper case). To view readings, you will need to use a computer equipped with Adobe Acrobat Reader, available free for download at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

**Course Requirements and Evaluation:** Your final grade will be based on your performance in the following areas:






1. **Open-note reading quizzes: 20% of your final grade.** There will be between five and fifteen of these short quizzes, given at the start of classes (it is safest to expect a quiz each class). Students may use their written or printed-out typed notes (but not the readings themselves) for the quizzes, and quizzes will only cover the content of the reading assigned for that day. Students may drop the two lowest scores, but there will be no makeup quizzes administered for missed classes or late arrival. These open-note quizzes reward you for showing up to class regularly, on time and prepared.
2. **Current Issue Presentation: 10% of your final grade.** Each student will give a brief presentation to class about some issue of importance in U.K. politics. Guidelines and presentation dates will be established early in the semester. All topics must be approved by the instructor. The presentations are designed to encourage discussion about current issues.
3. **Mid-term examination: 20% of your final grade.** There are no make-ups allowed unless there is written proof of a medical emergency, or prior-written permission of the instructor.
4. **Semester Journal Project and Final Essay: 20% of your final grade.** I want to encourage you to become regular observers of British political news during your semester here, since this is the best way for me you to learn about politics in the U.K. Your semester assignment will therefore consist of two parts, each worth 10 percent of your final grade (for a total of 20%):
  - **Journal Project:** All students will keep a UK politics journal (guidelines will be distributed) that will be handed in and graded three times during the semester. Students must make three entries per week.
  - **Final Essay:** A final paper (7-12 pages in length), based on course material and journal entries, will be due on the last Monday of the semester (May 7) (guidelines for this assignment will be distributed separately). Papers arriving late at the start of class on that day earn a one grade penalty and an additional one grade penalty for each subsequent day past the due date.
5. **Final Examination: 20% of your final grade.** This will be a comprehensive examination. There are no make-ups allowed unless there is written proof of a medical emergency, or prior-written permission of the instructor.
6. **Attendance, Participation, and Instructor Discretion: 10% of your final grade.** Consistent, punctual attendance and regular participation is expected of all students. I expect a personal or e-mail explanation for every absence. I also reserve the right to use this component to reward students who make a special effort to contribute to class and to their own learning, or to penalize students who detract from class and/or fail to perform up to their potential. Students who take special initiative to enhance the quality of class will be rewarded.

**Warning:** I will penalize students for late arrival, poor attendance, and inconsiderate behavior (including failure to turn off your cell phone before class, holding private conversations during class, etc).



## Schedule of Class Activities and Readings

(Given the need for flexibility please check your e-mail daily for notices regarding changes to the schedule, including assigned readings)

Date	Topic and Activities	Readings due for class
Thurs. Feb 8	We'll discuss all course requirements, sign up for presentation dates, and (time and technology permitting) we'll view a segment of Prime Minister's Questions from last week.	O'Neil, Fields, and Share, <i>Cases in Comparative Politics</i> , section on background and history in UK. ☞ (bring to class a page of typed or handwritten notes on the reading)
Monday Feb. 12	Key terms and concepts in comparative politics. You'll learn to carefully define some of the most essential terms and conceptual tools in comparative politics. We'll then apply these to the United Kingdom.	Garnett and Lynch, chapters 1, 2, 3 and 11 (pages 239-261 only). Bring a page of typed or written notes to class on <b>each</b> of these four chapters. Highlight or circle the key terms in each chapter.
Thurs. Feb. 15	In preparation for next Tuesday's outing, I'll provide a primer on political economic systems and an overview of UK's political economy. I'll talk about the different possible relationships between the state and the market.	Garnett and Lynch, chapter 3
Monday Feb. 19	We'll visit the Bank of England today to learn about economic policy making in the UK	O'Neil, Fields, and Share, <i>Cases in Comparative Politics</i> , section on political economy. ☞
Monday Feb. 26	Legislative-executive systems in advanced democracies, and the U.K. model. You will learn to identify and understand the three major variations of legislative-executive systems in the democratic world, and we will apply this knowledge to the UK case. This would be a very bad class to miss!	Garnett and Lynch, chapters 5 and 6.
Thurs. March 1	Presidentialism vs. parliamentarism: Does the U.S. model or the U.K. model work best in theory and practice? Be prepared to debate this question!	Garnett and Lynch, chapter 7  A. Stepan and C. Skach, "Presidentialism and Parliamentarism in Comparative Perspective." ☞
Monday March 5	Excursion to the European Parliament UK Office for a talk by Ms. Avis Furness. Class starts at 3 p.m. today to allow travel to the EU UK office.	Garnett and Lynch, chapter 12.  <b>Journals Due: submit printout to me and post online at Blackboard's digital drop box</b>

Thurs. March 8	The UK ideological Spectrum. You will learn to identify the major "isms" and to distinguish between political attitudes and ideologies. We will apply this knowledge to help us understand what people in the U.K. quarrel about. <i>Current Events Presentation (Peter Collins)</i>	Russell Dalton, "Elections and Political Parties"   Garnett and Lynch, chapter 13
Monday March 12	The UK Party System. What do the parties stand for, and how do they differ? <i>Current Events Presentation (Sarah Mirick)</i>	D. Wring, "The Labour Campaign."   A. Seldon and P. Snowdon, "The Conservative Campaign," read through page 737.   A. Russell, "The Liberal Democrat Campaign." 
Thurs. March 15	Electoral Systems: UK and US elections in comparative perspective. You may be surprised to learn that the U.S. and the U.K. employ the same electoral system for national legislative elections. But do they yield the same results?	Garnett and Lynch, chapter 16, (pages 384-406 only).  A. Grant, "Party and Election Finance in Britain and America." 
Monday March 19	Midterm Review. <i>Current Events Presentation (Autumn Darms)</i>	Bring all notes and readings to class.
Thurs. March 22	Midterm Examination	

## Part II: Politics in the UK in the Era of Thatcher and Blair

Date	Topic and Activities	Readings
Monday April 2	Advanced Democracies and their challenges. In the age of globalization, advanced democracies like the UK and US face a new set of challenges. We'll learn about them in comparative perspective.	J. Steiner, "Becoming Modern in Europe and America."   Reitan, Introduction and chapters 1 and 2. You should have a page of notes for each chapter of this book.
Wed. April 4	We'll visit the houses of parliament today at Westminster for a private tour, 2 p.m.	
Thurs. April 5	UK Politics in the media age. The electronic media in advanced democracies are playing an increasingly vital role in shaping political attitudes. How are they changing, and what are some distinctive characteristics of the UK media? Visit to ITN Channel 4 Studios, and Victoria Eastwood, Reporter, and politics editors.	Garnett and Lynch, chapter 4.  Bartle, "The Press, Media, Internet, and the 2005 Campaign." 
Thurs. April 12	<i>Current Events Presentation (Lindsay May)</i> . I'll talk a little bit about the role of party whips in parliament.  7:30 pm: <i>Whipping it Up!</i> A new play about British politics. New Ambassadors Theatre	Reitan, chapters 3 and 4.

Monday April 16	The Politics of Diversity in the UK and Europe. We'll have a special visit by Dr. Daud Abdullah, vice-secretary general of the British Muslim Council.	D. Kavanagh (et. Al.), "The Politics of Immigration, Asylum, and Ethnic Diversity." ☺  T. Dalorymple, "Veiled Threat" ☺
Thurs April 19	Controversial social issues in the UK and the US. It is often claimed that the US and UK share a common political creed. Why, then, do they differ so much when it comes to key social issues? <i>Current Events Presentation (Adam Fuller)</i>	M. Durham, "Abortion, Gay Rights, and Politics in Britain and America: A Comparison" ☺  <b>Journals Due: submit printout and post online at Blackboard's digital drop box</b>
Monday April 23	The U.K and Europe. We'll have a special guest speaker this day from the United Kingdom Independence Party.	Garnett and Lynch, chapter 12.  D. McKay, "The Reluctant European: Europe as an Issue in British Politics" ☺  <i>Economist</i> , "UKIP if you Want to" ☺
Tuesday, April 24	<i>Who needs to be British?:</i> A Guardian / British Museum public forum. 8 p.m. (doors open at 7:30), with journalist Jon Snow, writer and broadcaster, Andrew Marr, historian, Professor Lisa Jardine, Canadian politician, Bob Rae and writer, broadcaster and critic, Ziauddin Sardar.	
Wed. April 25	<i>Theatre: The Trial of Tony Blair.</i> This evening performance is mandatory for this class.	
Thurs. April 26	The U.K. and the World. <i>Current Events Presentation (Ami Jhaveri)</i>	L. Freedman, "The Special Relationship, Then and Now."
Mon. April 30	Political Leadership in Advanced Democracies: The Thatcher Era. What is the legacy of Thatcherism? To what extent did Thatcherism pave the way for Blair's New Labour? <i>Current Events Presentation (Caitlin Rasplica)</i>	Reitan, chapters 5, 8 and 9

Thurs. May 3	The Blair Phenomenon. How can we view the political legacy of Tony Blair? <i>Current Events Presentation</i> (Caroline Sherwood)	Reitan, chapter 10  P. Hennessy, "Rulers and Servants of the State: The Blair Style of Government, 1997-2004."  A. King, "Why Labor Won—Yet Again."
Mon. May 7	Final Exam Review and <i>Current Events Presentation</i> (Peter Kowen)	Bring all notes and readings from the entire semester to class today.  <b>Final Essay Due today in class</b>
Thurs. May 10	Final Examination	



Martin Rowson, *Guardian*