

COURSE TITLE: PUK – Politics in the UK

Politics in the UK (PUK) is a course designed to help you understand how politics happens in the UK. We will learn about **why** politics happens the way it does, **who** is involved in politics and **what** are the things that matter.

We start by looking at the people who live in the UK and talk about **politics and identity** in the UK. We'll look at national differences - what's the difference between English and British and does it matter for politics? We'll ask if social class and accents still shape British politics? We will also talk about how race, ethnicity and culture influence British politics.

Next we turn to examine some of the rather old-fashioned **political institutions** that seem to dominate British politics – Why is there no Christian party in the UK? Why are there more aristocrats than Liberal Democrats in the UK Parliament? How was a Russian oligarch allowed to become the biggest party funder in the 2019 election? Where is the constitution if it's not written down?

We bring this all together by discussing some of the big **political issues** in the UK – Brexit, Scottish independence, post-colonialism, decline of socialism. Of course we have to talk about Brexit, but you will get to decide whether you also want to talk about whether Scotland will ever become independent? Will the UK stop trying to resurrect the Empire?

PUK will help you understand what goes on in British politics. But **this course is not just about the UK it's about making comparisons**. Is multiculturalism different in the UK and Germany? Isn't the UK House of Lords similar to the Főrendiház (the former Hungarian Upper House)? Why is Scottish independence different to Catalonia?

Each session will be interactive but in different ways. We will start with a pub quiz (an important British institution) and throughout the course we will have lectures, seminars, role plays, discussion groups, debates, and even a simulation of a bill passing through the UK Parliament where you act as the MPs.

The instructor has several years' experience in UK politics (in the UK, Scottish Parliaments, various UK Ministries, local / regional government and with the EU) so you will get to hear about the practical workings of politics. We will focus on **developing practical skills** including debating, policy writing, team working etc. PUK will also give you the opportunity to practice **studying in English**, whether you have done so before or not.

Course details

Course type: seminar

Level: BA / MA

Credits: 2

Language of instruction: English

Instructor details

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Office hours: TBC

Affiliation: CEU / Global Teaching Fellow 2020

COURSE INFORMATION: what is this course about? Is it for me?

Aim	To introduce the main political ideas, institutions and issues in the UK
Pre-requisites	You do not need to have prior knowledge about the UK You do not need to have done classes before in English, but you will need to be ready to read, talk and do some writing in English
Learning goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gain an understanding of the main ideas, institutions and issues in UK politics.• Improve your ability to see different positions and perspectives on an issue.• Develop your practical skills related to policy-making, problem-solving and team-work.• Practice your abilities in academic reading, writing and discussing politics in English

COURSE STRUCTURE: what does this course cover?

The PUK course is divided into three parts, each addressing a different topic / question

(Sessions 1 – 3) Political identity (**why** politics happens the way it does in the UK)

(Sessions 4 – 9) Political institutions (**who** is involved in UK politics)

(Sessions 10 – 12) Political issues (**what** are the things that matter right now in UK politics)

There are no set textbooks, but if you want more detailed info on UK politics or any of the topics check out:

Phillip Lynch, Paul Fairclough and Toby Cooper (2017) *UK Government and Politics*. London: Hodder.

Ian Budge, David McKay, John Bartle and Ken Newton (2013) *The New British Politics*, 4th ed. OUP: Oxford.

Duncan Watts (2012) *British Government and Politics: A Comparative Guide*. EUP: Edinburgh.

INTRODUCTION: what do you know about the UK?

All students will be expected to read one short intro reading to UK politics – you choose which text you prefer!

Duncan McTavish (2019) 'Chapter 1. Defining Britain: home and away' in *Themes and Flux in British Politics: Evolution, change and turbulence*. Routledge: Oxford.

Phillip Lynch, Paul Fairclough and Toby Cooper (2017) 'Chapter 1. Historical context of the UK political system' in *UK Government and Politics*. London: Hodder.

Duncan Watts (2012) 'Chapter 1. The Setting of British Politics: British society and the British people' in *British Government and Politics: A Comparative Guide*. EUP: Edinburgh.

IDENTITY: the first part of the course covers different types of political identity in the UK

1. **National identity:** Four Nations or One? England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland or the UK?

- **WATCH** C.G.P. Grey (2011) [The United Kingdom \(and a whole lot more\) Explained](#) (5:14 mins video)
- **READ** Frank Bechhofer and David McCrone (2009) Chapter 1. National Identity' – ONLY pages 1-11 in *National Identity, Nationalism and Constitutional Change*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

OPTIONAL Frank Bechhofer and David McCrone (2009) [Stating the Obvious: Ten Truths about National Identity](#), *Scottish Affairs* 67(2): 7-22.

2. **Social identity:** Speaking the Queen's English – social class, accents and geography

- **READ** Charles Pattie and Ron Johnston (2009) 'Voting and identity' in Matthew Flinders, Andrew Gamble, Colin Hay and Michael Kenney (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of British Politics*. OUP: Oxford.
- **READ** Adam Taylor (14/06/2017) [In 20 years, British politics went from being about class to being about age](#), *Washington Post*.

OPTIONAL BBC Radio 4 (2016) [Tearing up the Politics Textbook](#) (27:22 mins audio)

3. **Racial, ethnic and cultural identity:** Ain't no black in the Union Jack – post-colonialism, multiculturalism

- **READ** Alita Nandi and Lucinda Platt (2020) [The relationship between political and ethnic identity among UK ethnic minority and majority populations](#), *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46:5, 957-979.

OPTIONAL Tariq Modood (2009) 'Ethnicity and religion' in Matthew Flinders, Andrew Gamble, Colin Hay and M. Kenny (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of British Politics*. OUP: Oxford.

INSTITUTIONS: the second part introduces the main political actors in the UK

4. The People – who asks? Elections, public opinion, civil society

- **READ** Rick Noack (13/12/2019) [If Britain had Germany's electoral system, Boris Johnson may have lost the election](#), *Washington Post*.
- **READ** Mostafa Farmani and Afshin Jafari (2016) [A Comparative Approach to Study the Electoral Systems of Selected Countries](#), *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, 2(4):1913-1924.

OPTIONAL - House of Commons Library (2020) [UK Election Statistics – 1918 – 2019: A Century of Elections](#).

5. The Parties – who controls? from the Conservative Party to the Monster Raving Loony Party

- **READ** Ross McKibbin (2016) [Ben Pimlott Lecture 2015 - A Brief Supremacy: The Fragmentation of the Two-Party System in British Politics, c. 1950-2015](#), *Twentieth Century British History* 27(3): 450–469.
- **TRY** [UK ISideWith 2020 Political Quiz](#)

OPTIONAL - Christopher Prosser, (2018) [The strange death of multi-party Britain: the UK General Election of 2017](#), *West European Politics*, 41(5): 1226-1236.

6. The Parliament – who influences? elected and non-elected parliamentarians

- **READ** Parliament UK (2015) [The House of Commons at Work](#)
- **READ** Meg Russell (2018) [Attempts to change the British House of Lords into a second chamber of the nations and regions: explaining a history of failed reforms](#), *Perspectives on Federalism* 10(2):268-299.

OPTIONAL R.A.W. Rhoades, John Wanna and Patrick Weller (2009) 'Chapter 7. Parliaments and Representation' in *Comparing Westminster*. OUP: Oxford.

7. The Government – who decides? the Prime Minister, Minister and the Cabinet

- **READ** Tony Wright (2013) 'Chapter 4. Governing the strong centre' in *British Politics: A Very Short Introduction*. OUP: Oxford.

OPTIONAL R.A.W. Rhoades, John Wanna and Patrick Weller (2009) 'Chapter 4. Executive and Cabinet' in *Comparing Westminster*. OUP: Oxford.

8. The Bureaucrats – who does? civil servants, apolitical bureaucrats

- **READ** R.A.W. Rhoades, John Wanna and Patrick Weller (2009) 'Chapter 6. The Public Service' in *Comparing Westminster*. OUP: Oxford.
- **READ** Institute for Government (2020) ['Whitehall Monitor 2020'](#)

OPTIONAL A. P. Kakabadse, and N. K. Kakabadse (2020) [SpAds: political sherpas bridging minister and civil servant](#). *Open Journal of Political Science* 10 (02): 234-252.

9. The Others – who checks? courts and pressure groups (unions, business etc.)

- **READ** Duncan Watts (2012) 'Chapter 5. The Judiciary' in *British Government and Politics: A Comparative Guide*. EUP: Edinburgh.
- **READ** Patrick Dunleavy (24/08/2018) [How democratic is the interest group process in the UK?](#), *Democratic Audit*.

OPTIONAL Grant Jordan (2009) 'Lobbying' in Matthew Flinders, Andrew Gamble, Colin Hay and Michael Kenney (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of British Politics*. OUP: Oxford.

ISSUES: the last part of the course will address contemporary challenges in UK politics*

10. *Students' choice*

11. *Students choice*

*Sessions 10 and 11 are open for you to choose your preferred topic from: The Commonwealth and post-colonial Britain; Scottish Independence; Ireland's future; Devolution, the relationship between Hungary and the UK after Brexit; or a topic suggested by you.

12. Brexit

- **READ** Duncan McTavish (2019) 'Chapter 4. Brexit referendum case study' and 'Chapter 7. UK departure from the EU case study' in *Themes and Flux in British Politics: Evolution, change and turbulence*. Routledge: Oxford.
- **READ** Robert Ford and Matthew Goodwin (2017) [Britain after Brexit: A nation divided](#), *Journal of Democracy* 28(1): 17-30.

OPTIONAL House of Commons Library (14/07/2016) [Brexit: national identity and ethnicity in the referendum](#)
AND Eric Kaufman (07/072016) [It's NOT the economy, stupid: Brexit as a story of personal value](#).

COURSE SPECIFICS: what's the approach? What will be expected of me? Anything else I should know?

Teaching style	My role as the instructor is to support you to explore, challenge and learn as a group. PUK is about content (what you learn about) and capacity (what you learn to do). Sessions might vary in their approach depending on the aim and the topic, but they will all be interactive so that you participate in some form (not necessarily verbally).
Expectations	Some weeks will have mandatory academic readings, others you will be required to do listen to the news, others to do some online research. You need to be on the ball and ready to get involved – make sure you're prepared for class and on time.
Assessment	<p><u>Participation (10%)</u> You are expected to come prepared to class and get involved, some activities will be more individual (e.g. short quizzes), some will be more about team work (e.g. simulating a day in the UK parliament). You won't be graded on your performance, but on your enthusiasm and involvement.</p> <p><u>In-class presentations (10%)</u> You will give short presentations (possibly in pairs) introducing the key actors in UK politics (e.g. political parties, bureaucrats).</p> <p><u>Group projects (40%)</u> You will work in small groups during the course to complete an imagined policy brief for the EU Negotiator. A list of possible issues will be provided and each group will need to describe the issue, identify the important actors and describe their opinions on the issue. Time will be allocated during classes to discuss and plan group work.</p> <p><u>Individual argument (40%)</u>. You will make an argument about which form of political identity (national, social, cultural) you feel is the most important in explaining contemporary UK politics. You will discuss how political identity matters for one of the topical issues discussed (e.g. Brexit, Scottish independence). You get to decide how you want to be assessed – you can write a short paper or have a verbal discussion plus questions with the instructor.</p>
Accessibility	I am committed to organising a course that is inclusive in its design. You can contact me directly or the ELTE Disability Center if you need adjustments or accommodations.