

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 talk about nationality – what’s the difference between English and British and how does it matter? We discuss whether class or age is more important to UK politics. And see how race and ethnicity influence elections.

Next we turn to examine some of the old-fashioned **political institutions** that 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?

We bring this all together by discussing some of the big **political issues** in the UK. Of course we have to talk about Brexit, but you will get to decide what other issues we cover – Scottish independence, the monarchy, climate change in the UK, decline of socialism, or whatever you’re most interested in.

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**. Are British elections less corrupt than in the US? Is multiculturalism different in the UK and Germany? Does the UK House of Lords remind you of the Főrendiház (the former Hungarian Upper House)?

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, online worksheets, and even a simulation of vote in Parliament where you act as the MPs. There isn’t one big final essay, rather you will be assessed throughout the course with smaller assignments. And **at the end you get to pick your final assignment** – a verbal one-on-one discussion or a written argument.

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, 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

Name: Ruth Candlish

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Student hours: Online by appointment

Affiliation: CEU / Global Teaching Fellow

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 negotiating, 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)

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

Teaching style	Classes won't just be lectures where you sit and listen to me talk (there will be a bit of that), but we'll be doing lots of different learning activities together. 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, it might be in writing, or in an online forum). PUK is about content (what you learn about) and capacity (what you learn to do).
Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Come prepared</i> – some weeks will have academic readings, others you will be required to do listen to the news, others to do some googling before class. • <i>Be ready to get involved</i> – make sure you're on time, ready to listen to me and your classmates and keen to try new activities whether it's a mock election or an online quiz. • <i>Give me feedback</i> – Classes and activities will be tailored to fit your needs as students, if you're interested in climate change in the UK, we'll cover that; if you're keen to do English speaking practice, I'll make sure we do activities where we talk rather than write.
Assessment	<p><u>Assessment 1. Participation (40%)</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. You will also give short presentations introducing some of the key actors in UK politics (e.g. political parties).</p> <p><u>Assessment 2. Group posters (30%)</u> You will work in small groups to do a mini project comparing the UK with other countries and present your findings as a poster. Time will be allocated during classes to discuss and plan group work.</p> <p><u>Assessment 3. Individual argument (30%)</u>. You will make an argument about what you feel is the most important factor in explaining contemporary UK politics. You will focus on one of the topical issues discussed in class (e.g. Brexit, Scottish independence), or one you choose. You can choose whether to write a short paper or have a verbal discussion with me.</p>
Accessibility	I am committed to organising a course that is inclusive in its design and delivery. You can contact me directly or the ELTE Disability Center if you need adjustments or accommodations to any aspect of the course.
Readings	All readings and resources will be made available in advance via ELTE Moodle. 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) <i>UK Government and Politics</i> . London: Hodder; Ian Budge, David McKay, John Bartle and Ken Newton (2013) <i>The New British Politics</i> , 4 th ed. OUP: Oxford; or Duncan Watts (2012) <i>British Government and Politics: A Comparative Guide</i> . EUP: Edinburgh.

COURSE SCHEDULE: what should I do? And by when?

Part I. IDENTITY

Week 1. **National identity** – four nations or one?

Week 2. **Social identity** – social class, accents and geography

Week 3. **Racial, ethnic and cultural identity** – post-colonialism, multiculturalism

Week 3. **Deadline to choose.** Assessment 1. PARTICIPATION – Sign-up for presentations (Weeks 5 & 8)

Part II. INSTITUTIONS

Week 4. **People** – elections, voting, public opinion

Week 5. **Parties** – from the Conservative Party to the Monster Raving Loony Party

Week 6. **Parliament** – elected representatives, aristocrats and appointees

Week 7. **Devolution** – Scottish & Welsh Parliaments, Northern Irish Assembly, city governments

Week 8. **Money** – party funding, electoral funds, corruption

Week 9. **Referendums** – plebiscites, referendums, consultations

Week 9. **Deadline to submit.** Assessment 2. GROUP POSTER – Submit group project (date tbc)

Part III. ISSUES

Week 10. **The UK in 2022: After Brexit & Covid**

Week 11. **Decolonialise the UK** (Guest lecture)

Week 12. **Students Choice** (you choose the topic – Scottish independence, the Monarchy, the future of Northern Ireland, climate change in the UK, or something else suggested by you).

Week TBC. **Deadline to submit.** Assessment 3. ARGUMENT – Submit paper / have discussion (date tbc)

COURSE PLAN: what should I read / watch? What should I expect to do?

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.

CLASS ACTIVITY: TEAM QUIZ

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

- **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)

CLASS ACTIVITY: CASE STUDIES

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.

CLASS ACTIVITY: DISCUSSION

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

4. **The People – who votes?** Elections, voting, public opinion

- **READ** Rick Noack (13/12/2019) [If Britain had Germany's electoral system, Boris Johnson may have lost the election](#), *Washington Post*.

OPTIONAL 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.

CLASS ACTIVITY: MOCK ELECTION

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.

CLASS ACTIVITY: STUDENT MINI PRESENTATIONS

6. **The Parliament – who influences?** elected representatives, aristocrats and appointees

- **READ** Parliament UK (2015) [The House of Commons at Work](#)

OPTIONAL 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.

CLASS ACTIVITY: SIMULATION OF PARLIAMENT

7. **The Devolved – who delivers?** Scottish & Welsh Parliaments, Northern Irish Assembly, city governments

- **READ** Parliament UK (2019) [Introduction to devolution in the UK](#)
- **LISTEN** to one episode you choose from BBC Radio 4 (2019) [The Devolution Decades](#) (28:00min podcast)

OPTIONAL Phillip Lynch, Paul Fairclough and Toby Cooper (2017) 'Chapter 4. Devolution' in *UK Government and Politics*. London: Hodder.

CLASS ACTIVITY: STUDENT MINI PRESENTATIONS

8. **The Money – who funds?** party funding, electoral funds, corruption

- **READ** Opinion (10/02/2015) [Britain's parties should be funded by the state: Public suspicion that donors can buy influence is corroding trust](#), *Financial Times*.

OPTIONAL Rainbow Murray (2021) [It's a rich man's world: How class and glass ceilings intersect for UK parliamentary candidates](#). *International Political Science Review* (September 2021).

CLASS ACTIVITY: FUNDING GAME

9. **The Referendums – who chooses?** plebiscites, referendums, consultations

- **READ** J. Henley, R. Carroll, and M. Rice-Oxley (2019) [Referendums: who holds them, why, and are they always a dog's Brexit?](#), *The Guardian*

OPTIONAL M. Qvortrup (2018) 'Chapter 2. Western Europe' in M. Qvortup (ed.) *Referendums around the World*. Palgrave Macmillan: London.

CLASS ACTIVITY: CASE STUDIES

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

10. **The UK in 2022 – After Brexit and Covid**

- **READ** Robert Ford & Matthew Goodwin (2017) [Britain after Brexit: A nation divided](#), *Journal of Democracy* 28(1): 17-30.

OPTIONAL Eric Kaufman (07/072016) [It's NOT the economy, stupid: Brexit as a story of personal value](#).

11. **Decolonialize the UK** (Guest lecture)

- **WATCH** (6 mins) 'I am not de problem': Benjamin Zephaniah on modern racism - Newsnight. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXDxMH2EUTY>

OPTIONAL Sheila Nair (2017) Introducing Postcolonialism in International Relations Theory. <https://www.e-ir.info/2017/12/08/postcolonialism-in-international-relations-theory/>

12. **Students Choice:** *Session 12 is open for you to choose your preferred topic from: Scottish Independence; the Monarchy, the future of Northern Ireland, climate change in the UK; or a topic suggested by you.