



GEO

Study Abroad

SYLLABUS

CONTEMPORARY BRITISH POLITICS

Instructor: Andrew Whitehead

Contact Hours: 40

**Language of Instruction:
English**

LONDON, ENGLAND

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines three of the most pronounced - and to many observers, surprising - developments in British politics over the last few years:

- Brexit, the decision to leave the European Union: why was the referendum held; why did 'leave' win when opinion polls pointed to a 'remain' victory; how is withdrawal being negotiated and conducted; and how does this reshape British politics?
- the opposition Labour party's swing to the left: in Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour party has the most left-wing leader in its history, who appeals particularly to the young. What's lies behind this left-wing neo-populism?
- the rise of separatist parties: what underlies the growing support for the pro-independence Scottish National Party; is the United Kingdom likely to break up; will the country move to a federal structure, including devolution within England?

Political currents in Britain are fast moving and unpredictable, and the scope of this course will be revised as necessary to ensure that it remains fully topical.

Note: 'Contemporary British Politics' is designed to complement Professor Priscilla Southwell's 'Political Parties & Elections' course. Students are required to sign up for both of these classes, as part of GEO's 'Politics in London' 2018 summer program.

Students also have the option of seeking extra credits as PS 407 Research by pursuing an additional research project with either instructor, after the completion of these courses.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course aims to analyze recent political, cultural and social developments in Britain and so provide students with a context for their study options. It will provide students with the grounding and analytical tools to compare and contrast contemporary Britain with the United States. We aim to take advantage of London's unique status not simply as Britain's political and cultural capital but also as one of the world's most diverse urban centers. Classes will include talks by experts and those directly involved in the political process, and will be complemented by excursions and study trips.

LEARNING OUTCOME:

Students who undertake this course and participate fully can expect to gain a thorough knowledge of the country's political process, as well as its key cultural, social and economic challenges.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY

The course introduces competing interpretations, drawing in particular on the fields of comparative politics and history. Students will be able to gain from direct access to scholars of and participants in Britain's political processes.

RULES AND PROCEDURES

Attendance at the sessions and excursions is obligatory. The sessions combine introductory lectures, presentations, discussions and group work. In some sessions, students may be asked to participate in debates and to prepare and deliver group presentations. You are expected to prepare actively for all classes and to contribute to all seminars.

STUDY VISITS AND EXCURSIONS:

During the field school, the course aims to integrate study visits, many of which are dependent on our class schedule and so subject to confirmation. These are likely to include:

- a class trip to either Edinburgh or Cardiff to look at political culture away from London and the impact of the devolution of power to Scotland and Wales.
- a guided tour round the Houses of Parliament at Westminster
- a walk around the East End of London, with its vibrant political history
- a visit to a gallery specialising in the rich tradition of political cartoons

ESSENTIAL READING:

Martin Upham (2017) *Britain Explained: Understanding British Identity* - an excellent and brand new book by a former director of GEO London

Craig Oliver (2016) *Unleashing Demons: the inside story of Brexit*

Iain Macwhirter (2014) *Disunited Kingdom: how Westminster won a referendum but lost Scotland*

WATCH OR LISTEN TO THE NEWS:

This is essential. Our classes will be shaped by current political debates and developments - and you need to be well informed. The main TV news bulletins are on BBC1 at 18:00 and 22:00 and Channel 4 at 19:00. The best current affairs analysis is on Newsnight (BBC2) at 22:30. In the morning most opinion formers listen to the Today programme on BBC Radio 4 (93.5 FM) from 06:00 to 09:00.

... AND SURF THE WEB:

The BBC's news website is a good place to start www.bbc.co.uk/news - but you also need to read more partisan news platforms. The Guardian www.guardian.co.uk tends to take a left of centre view - while the Telegraph www.telegraph.co.uk (a subscription website but you can make several visits a month without subscribing) is right of centre.

METHOD OF EVALUATION (GRADING)

The standards of this course are identical to the expectations of regular term-based courses at the University of Oregon.

You will be required to complete a 1,000-word assignment - subject to be advised - by the third week of the summer school. You will need to submit a detailed essay plan and reading list during the previous week. In the final week, you will be required to write an essay under exam conditions. The proportion of marks for your overall grade will be as follows:

- week 2: essay plan and reading list for assignment (10%)
- week 3: assignment (40%)
- week 4: essay under exam conditions (40%)
- class participation through the course (10%)

COURSE OUTLINE

These are all provisional and may change to take account of study trips, the availability of guest speakers and to reflect emerging political issues and controversies

Week 1 - from July 30	How Brexit happened Reading: Oliver; Upham, chapter 9
Week 2 - from August 6	What Brexit will mean Reading: to be advised
Week 3 - from August 13	A disunited kingdom? Reading: Macwhirter; Upham, chapters 4-7
Week 4 - from August 20	Labour turns left Reading: Upham chapter 2; other readings to be advised

[ENDS]

Dr Andrew Whitehead is honorary professor in the School of Politics and International Relations at the University of Nottingham. He has been a senior news journalist and editor in BBC News, including four years as a correspondent specialising in British politics. He teaches 'Britain Today' to Global Education Oregon students in London as well as teaching news journalism at GEO's communications summer school in London.