**JN302**

**BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS**

**And NCTJ Public Affairs- Central and Local Government.**

**Course outline, 2010-11**

Democracy in Britain is in a state of flux. The general election of 2010 did not produce an outright winner so for the first time in seventy years we have a coalition government with the Conservatives in partnership with the Liberal Democrats. Underpinning the government is the Coalition Agreement – its programme for government.

Perhaps the outcome is a reflection of a citizenship less engaged with, and less trusting of, politicians and the political process than previously. Critical questions are being asked about the role and effectiveness of such key institutions as the electoral system, political parties and parliament. At the same time, the nature of political authority in Britain is changing rapidly. While power has been transferred upwards to the European Union the economic crisis has led to a crisis within the Eurozone which according to the newly created President of the European Council is causing a crisis within the European Union itself.

Power has also been devolved downwards to devolved bodies in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and London. So where does this leave the political system at the start of the 21st century? Are citizens still engaged with politics and the political process? Who really holds power in Britain? Is government effective and democratic? Or are Britain’s political institutions failing?

These challenges are being faced by many other countries. The course sets Britain in a wider comparative context of changing contemporary states. But studying the British political system is a particularly instructive form of political analysis. Britain is commonly held to be a ‘Westminster model’ of democracy. Focusing on the distinctive British political system thus allows judgements to be made about the strengths and weaknesses of different models of democracy. This course thus introduces students to some key contemporary issues facing Britain, as well as other western democracies too.

# Learning outcomes

The module aims to develop students’ understanding of the British political system. In particular, it aims to develop students’ understanding of how political decisions are made, how political institutions perform in shaping these decisions, and to what extent these institutions might be reformed to improve democratic and governmental performance.

More specifically, this course will help students:

* Understand the way that political decisions are reached in Britain, focusing on the links between citizens, intermediary bodies and executive institutions.
* Identify the main evidence and criteria used in determining which actors shape key policy decisions.
* Identify the ways in which Britain’s political system has undergone significant structural change in the last decade or so.
* Critically examine the strengths and weaknesses of political institutions in Britain, and analytically evaluate arguments around the merits of alternative institutional arrangements.
* Understand how the design and operation of Britain’s political system relates to alternative arrangements in other western democracies, and identify the main consequences of these similarities/differences.

NCTJ Public Affairs

In parallel with the more discursive academic topics we will also be preparing for the Public Affairs component of the NCTJ qualification. This is divided into 2 headings – local and central government.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Spring Term*** |  |  |
| Monday Lectures 2-3pm | Wednesday Seminar 11-12 and 12-1 | Thursday NCTJ class 2-3 pm |  |
|  |  |  |
| Tuesday Seminar 2-3 |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Summer Term  Monday Central Govt PA class  2-3pm | NCTJ REVISION  Thursday Local Govt PA class  2-3pm |  |
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# assessment

The module is assessed through a two hour written exam in the summer (50%) and one essay (50%).

**Essay:** One essay of no more than 2,000 words (excluding footnotes). Essays must be word-processed or typed, properly referenced, and contain a full bibliography of sources (not included in word count).

EXAMS

University exam in Summer term and NCTJ Public Affairs exam – local and central government 2 x 2 hour papers June 2009.

# reading

## Useful introductions:

Tony Wright British Politics: A Very Short Introduction is a good place to start, followed by either Anthony King or Vernon Bogdanor’s recent books on the British constitution.

Have a good look at the library offerings (politics, history, law and biography shelves) –including the various political diaries, memoirs, political biographies, and general books by authors such as Peter Oborne, Peter Hennessey, Michael Cockerell will give a good background. Or another easy read is for example Oona King’s memoir ‘House Music’ which gives a recent account of politics at Westminster and beyond. Aside from the memoirs and biographies by and about politicians there are plenty of interesting memoirs by recent spin doctors such as Bernard Ingham, Alastair Campbell, Lance Price or by political journalists such as Nick Jones.

Even the DVD of Alan Clark’s diaries or the classic political serial ‘Yes Minister’ or the more recent dramas ‘Party Animals’ or ‘The Thick of It’ are worth looking at, as well as the recent docu-drama programmes about Mrs Thatcher .... feel free to ask if you want me to recommend.

There are also a range of books on politics and spin which you may find interesting as well as more theoretical books for example on the nature of democracy.

Make sure to keep abreast of political news in both daily newspapers and weekly publications (Economist Bagheot column) New Statesman, Spectator and the myriad political blogs; Nick Robinson, Michael Crick, Guido Fawkes etc etc.

For an understanding of the coalition agreement, and a fascinating insight into those dramatic days following the 2010 General Election. David Laws’ book, 22 Day in May The Birth of the Lib Dem – Coalition is essential reading.

## Text Books

There are several good ones which you can choose from – including for example – You will need this throughout the course so it is worth investing in one or other.

Dennis Kavanagh, David Richards, Martin Smith and Andrew Geddes, *British Politics*, 5th edition, Oxford University Press.

This is the main book I shall refer to in setting the reading but you can also use one of the following and read the equivalent chapters accordingly.

Gillian Peele: Governing the UK. British Politics in the 21st Century

Bill Jones: Politics UK

John Kingdom Politics and Government in Britain

There are also several others in the library - but make sure that you are using the latest edition which reflects all the up to date changes.

**NCTJ Textbook for Public Affairs exam**

James Morrison: Public Affairs for Journalists (Feb 2009 OUP)

## Internet resources

The web contains a vast amount of information, and there's plenty relating to British government and politics. While much of this is useful, much is not, and students can spend a lot of valuable time surfing around material that will give them very little help in preparing essays and seminar presentations. For this reason, I have been very selective in the websites I recommend where students can access useful materials. This is not to suggest that students should not trawl around other web material (much as you should in relation to written sources); but be careful you don't waste too much time doing so. In general, additional reading of written sources will prove a better use of time than aimless trawling of the web. Particularly useful websites are:

(a) Lectures

Lectures by Vernon Bogdanor (Professor of Government at Oxford) on the changing constitution, delivered at Gresham College between November 2004 – May 2005. These lectures cover issues such as devolution, the Human Rights Act, reform of parliament and of the electoral system and the role of the European Union.

<http://www.gresham.ac.uk/eventsresults.asp?PageId=4&frmSubject=5&frmPeriod=past>

(b) Research papers

The House of Common Library produces a large number of research papers each year. Directed at MPs and peers, they are freely available and are an authoritative source of information on many policy issues. Paper number 37 (2001), for instance, gives election results back to 1945.

<http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_publications_and_archives/research_papers.cfm>

The Parliament UK portal is useful too just to have a look at and gives plenty of information on how things work.

(c) General resources

The Political Studies Association has a useful page that contains links to various aspects of British politics: elections, constitutional reform, political parties etc.

<http://www.psa.ac.uk/www/UK.asp>

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) has produced a series of short briefing papers on various aspects of governance and citizenship in Britain (including devolution and elections):

<http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/facts/UK/governance/>

# Provisional module timetable (order may be subject to change)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***1*** | ***18th Jan*** | ***Introduction to module/NCTJ requirements*** |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| 2 | 25h Jan | Overview of the British political system |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| 3 | 1st Feb | Are citizens in Britain disengaged from the political system? |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| 4 | 8th Feb | Does the electoral system for Westminster need reforming? |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| 5 | 15th Feb | Are political parties becoming obsolete? |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| 6 | 22rd Feb | Is Parliament irrelevant? | |
|  |  |  |  |
| 7 | 1st Mar | Is the UK breaking up? |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| 9 | 15th Mar | Is the Centre of British Government London or Brussels? |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| 10 | 22rd Mar | Are unelected judges undermining or strengthening democracy in Britain? |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| 11  12 | 29th Mar  8th April | Is Government in Britain representative and accountable?  Q and A session. NCTJ Preparation |  |
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**Week 1:**

**INTRODUCTION TO STUDYING BRITISH POLITICS**

The lecture will introduce students to the aims, focus and logistics of the course, including the Public Affairs NCTJ component. It will address the issues of why study British politics, what is British politics, and what are the main contemporary issues in British politics

**Set texts**

**I will not list the relevant chapter each week in every one of the possible text books but just refer to Kavanagh and if you wish to use a different text (eg Peele, Jones, Kingdon etc ) it is all clearly set out and you just need to read the equivalent chapter.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Dennis Kavanagh et al | *British Politics*, 5th edition, Oxford University Press (2006), chapter 1 |

**Week 2:**

**OVERVIEW OF THE BRITISH POLITICAL SYSTEM**

This week, we will explore the historical development of the British political system, and competing accounts, or models, of the contemporary British state.

**Seminar questions**

1. How does the historical development of the political system in Britain help account for the nature of British democracy today?
2. What are the main contemporary accounts/models of the British political system?

**Set texts**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Dennis Kavanagh et al | *British Politics*, 5th edition, Oxford University Press (2006), chs 2-3 |

**Additional reading**

***Westminster model***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| David Judge | *Political Institutions in the United Kingdom*, Oxford University Press (2005), pp24-32 |
|  | or: |
|  | *Representation: Theory and Practice in Britain*, Routledge (1999) ch1 |
|  |  |
| Anthony King | *Does the United Kingdom Still Have a Constitution?* Sweet and Maxwell (2001), chs 1-2 |
|  | *The British Constitution* OUP (2007) |
| Malcolm Shaw | ‘The British Parliament in International Perspective’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 57:4 (2004) |
|  |  |
| Graham Wilson | 'The Westminster Model in Comparative Perspective', in Ian Budge and David McKay, eds, *Developing Democracy*, Sage (1994). \*\*. |
|  |  |
| Tony Wright | *British Politics: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press (2003) ch4-7 |
|  | *Citizens and Subjects: An Essay on British Politics*, Routledge (1993) chs 6-12 |

***Challenges to the Westminster model***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Peter Dorey | *Policy Making in Britain*, Sage (2005) ch8 |
|  |  |
| Ian Holliday | ‘Is the British State ‘Hollowing Out’?’, *Political Quarterly*, 71:2 (2000) |
|  |  |
| David Richards and Martin Smith | *Governance and Public Policy in the UK*, Oxford University Press (2002) ch 2-3 |
|  |  |
| Martin Smith | ‘The Institutions of Central Government’, in Ian Holliday et al, eds, *Fundamentals in British Politics*, Macmillan (1999). \*\* |

**Week 3:**

**ARE CITIZENS IN BRITAIN DISENGAGED FROM THE POLITICAL SYSTEM?**

This week, we will explore how far citizens in contemporary Britain are becoming disengaged from politics and the political system. We will cover various forms of citizen behaviour and attitudes, and will examine what factors might explain disengagement.

**Seminar questions**

1. What evidence is there that citizens are becoming disengaged from politics in Britain?
2. Why do you think disengagement is taking place?
3. Does it matter if citizens are disengaging from politics?

**Set texts**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Dennis Kavanagh et al | *British Politics*, 5th edition, Oxford University Press (2006), chs 22-23 |

**Additional reading**

***Electoral turnout***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Catherine Bromley and John Curtice | ‘Where Have All the Voters Gone?’, in Alison Park et al, eds, *British Social Attitudes, The 19th Report*, Sage (2001). Available on WebCT\*\* |
|  |  |
| John Curtice | ‘Electors Stay Home – Again’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 58:4 (2005) |
|  |  |
| Shelagh Diplock | ‘Non-Voters, Political Disconnection and Parliamentary Democracy’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 55:4 (2002) |
|  |  |
| Peter Kellner | ‘Britain’s Culture of Detachment’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 57:4 (2004) |

***Non-electoral participation***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| John Curtice and Ben Seyd | ‘Is There a Crisis of Political Participation?’, in Alison Park et al, eds, *British Social Attitudes, the 20th Report* (2003). Available on \*\* |
|  |  |
| Declan McHugh | ‘Wanting to be Heard But Not Wanting to Act? Addressing Political Disengagement’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 59:3 (2006) |
|  |  |
| Charles Pattie et al | 'Civic Attitudes and Engagement in Modern Britain’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 56:4 (2003) |
|  |  |
| POWER Inquiry into Britain’s Democracy | *Power to the People*, Final report of the POWER inquiry (2006). See ‘Web resources’. |
|  |  |
| Ben Rogers, ed | *Lonely Citizens*, Report of the Working Party on Active Citizenship, Institute for Public Policy Research (2004). See ‘Web Resources’. |

***Political attitudes***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| John Curtice and Ben Seyd | 'Political Engagement, Trust and Constitutional Reform', in Alison Park et al, eds, *British Social Attitudes, The 18th Report*, Sage (2001). Available on WebCT |
|  |  |
| Catherine Bromley et al | *Is Britain Facing a Crisis of Democracy?* Working Paper (2004). \*\* |

**Web resources**

The POWER Commission spent over a year examining the state of British democracy. Their 2006 report contains a diagnosis of the problem of citizen disengagement, and multiple proposals to reform the British political system. It can be read online at: <http://www.powerinquiry.org/>

The Electoral Commission is a valuable source for research reports into aspects of electoral participation in Britain. In particular, it has conducted annual ‘audits’ of political engagement, in 2004, 2005 and 2006. The reports – entitled *An Audit of Political Engagement* – can be found on the Commission’s website, under ‘Publications’: <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/>

The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) issued a report in 2004 examining the state of citizenship in Britain and what could be done to reinvigorate it. The report is available at:

<http://www.ippr.org.uk/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=225>

**Week 4:**

**DOES THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM FOR WESTMINSTER NEED REFORMING?**

This week will consider the role and functioning of the voting system used for elections to the House of Commons. There are many commentators who are critical of the electoral system, and who argue that democracy would be enhanced by reforming the way we elect our MPs. Are they right?

**Seminar questions**

1. Why has the Westminster electoral system come in for so much criticism in recent years?
2. What would the effects be if Britain changed from a plurality to a proportional electoral system?
3. Would democracy be enhanced or weakened by a change in the electoral system?

**Set texts**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Dennis Kavanagh et al | *British Politics*, 5th edition, Oxford University Press (2006), ch 20 |

**Additional reading**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| David Beetham | ‘How Should We Vote?’, Democratic Audit paper (not dated). See ‘Web resources’. |
|  |  |
| Vernon Bogdanor | ‘Electoral Reform’, in *Power and the People: A Guide to Constitutional Reform*, Victor Gollancz (1997). Available on WebCT (pp 53-64 gives a summary of the debate over electoral systems; the rest explains how various PR systems work) |
|  |  |
| Michael Cole | ‘Adversary Politics and Proportional Representation’, *Political Quarterly*, 70:2 (1999) |
|  |  |
| David Farrell | *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*, Palgrave (2001) chs 2, 7-9 |
|  |  |
| David Judge | *Representation: Theory and Practice in Britain*, Routledge (1999) chs 2-3 |
|  |  |
| Pippa Norris | ‘The Politics of Electoral Reform in Britain’, *International Political Science Review*, 16:1 (1995). \*\* |

**Web resources**

Valuable information about the pros/cons of the existing electoral system, as well as a proposal for reform, is contained in the report of the Independent Commission on the Voting System, chaired by Lord (Roy) Jenkins:

<http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm40/4090/4090.htm>

Analyses and statements in favour of electoral reform can be found at the website of the Electoral Reform Society: <http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/>

The Democratic Audit of the UK has some good papers on electoral reform in Britain on its website (under ‘Issues’ and then ‘Electoral reform’): <http://www.democraticaudit.com/>. See in particular the paper by David Beetham, entitled ‘How Should We Vote?’

Peter Kellner has written a short magazine piece on the effect of electoral reform, ‘Reform Could Lead to a Seismic Upheaval’ (Oct 2006).\*\*

**Week 5:**

**ARE POLITICAL PARTIES IN BRITAIN BECOMING OBSOLETE?**

This week examines the role of political parties in British democracy. We focus on a seeming paradox: while parties are central to government and policy making, they enjoy increasingly weak links among the citizenry. Does this means parties are losing their legitimacy from the ‘bottom up’?

**Seminar questions**

1. What role do political parties play in contemporary democracies?
2. How far are British parties internally democratic bodies?
3. Are parties losing their legitimacy in Britain?

**Set texts**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Dennis Kavanagh et al | *British Politics*, 5th edition, Oxford University Press (2006) ch 18 |

**Additional reading**

***The party system***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Philip Lynch and Robert Garner | ‘The Changing Party System’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 58:3 (2005) |
|  |  |

***Party organisation***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Justin Fisher | ‘Political Parties: Organisational Change and Intra-Party Democracy’, in Justin Fisher et al, eds, *Central Debates in British Politics*, Pearson (2002) |
|  |  |
| David Judge | *Political Institutions in the United Kingdom*, Oxford University Press (2005) ch3 |
|  | or: |
|  | *Representation: Theory and Practice in Britain*, Routledge (1999) ch 4 |

***Parties’ representative linkages***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Tom Bentley | *Everyday Democracy: Why We Get the Politicians We Deserve*, Demos (2005). Available online (see ‘Web resources’) |
|  |  |
| Tom Ellis | ‘Two Cheers for Party?’, *Political Quarterly*, 70:2 (1999) |
|  |  |
| Philip Parvin and Declan McHugh | ‘Defending Representative Democracy: Parties and the Future of Political Engagement in Britain’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 58:3 |
|  |  |
| Ben Rogers | ‘From Membership to Management: The Future of Political Parties as Democratic Organisations’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 58:3 (2005) |
|  |  |
| Andrew Russell | ‘Political Parties as Vehicles of Political Engagement’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 58:3 (2005) |
|  |  |
| Matthew Taylor | ‘Party Democracy and Civic Renewal’, *Political Quarterly*, 72:s1 (2001) |
|  |  |
| Paul Webb | *Democracy and Political Parties*, Hansard Society ‘Democracy Series’ pamphlet (2007). Available online (see ‘Web Resources’) |

**Web resources**

Tom Bentley’s paper for the think-tank DEMOS is available at:

<http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/everydaydemocracy>

Paul Webb’s paper for the Hansard Society is available at: <http://www.democracyseries.org.uk/booklets>

Two short magazine articles on the representative role of political parties in Britain today – by Vernon Bogdanor and Paul Webb – \*\*

**Week 6:**

**IS PARLIAMENT IRRELEVANT?**

Parliament used to be the focus of political activity in Britain (the broadsheet newspapers devoted whole pages to covering parliament). Today, its position has been marginalised (with many government announcements made on Radio 4’s ‘Today’ programme, and not to the House of Commons). But is parliament now an ineffective body? If so, what can be done about it?

**Seminar questions**

1. What are the main roles of parliament in Britain?
2. How effectively are these roles carried out?
3. Should the House of Commons and House of Lords be reformed to make them more effective bodies? If so, how?
4. To what extent are we moving towards a Presidential system?

**Set text**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Dennis Kavanagh et al | *British Politics*, 5th edition, Oxford University Press (2006), ch 19 |

**Additional reading**

***Parliament***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| David Judge | *Political Institutions in the United Kingdom*, Oxford University Press (2005) ch2 |
|  |  |
| Philip Norton | *Parliament in British Politics*, Palgrave (2005), chs 1-5, 13 |
|  |  |
| Peter Riddell | ‘Prime Ministers and Parliament’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 57:4 (2004) |
|  |  |
| Michael Rush | *Parliament Today*, Manchester University Press (2005) 1-4, 8-9, 11-12 |

***Reforming the House of Commons***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Robin Cook | ‘A Modern Parliament in a Modern Democracy’, *Political Quarterly*, 74:1 (2003) |
|  |  |
| Greg Power | ‘Making Government Accountable: The Report of the Hansard Society Commission on Parliamentary Scrutiny’, *Journal of Legislative Studies*, 7:2 (2001) |
|  | ‘The Politics of Parliamentary Reform: Lessons from the House of Commons’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 60:3 (2007) |
|  |  |
| Lord Norton (chair) | *Strengthening Parliament: Report of the Commission to Strengthen Parliament*, London: Conservative Party (2000). Available online (see ‘Web resources’). |
|  |  |
| Tony Wright | ‘Prospects for Parliamentary Reform’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 57:4 (2004) |

***Reforming the House of Lords***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Nicholas Baldwin | ‘The House of Lords: Into the Future?’, *Journal of Legislative Studies*, 13:2 (2007) |
|  |  |
| Vernon Bogdanor | ‘Reform of the Second Chamber: A Sceptical View’, *Political Quarterly*, 70:4 (1999) |
|  |  |
| Peter Riddell | ‘The House of Lords: In Search of a Complementary Role’, *Political Quarterly*, 70:4 (1999) |
|  |  |
| Donald Shell | ‘The Future of the Second Chamber’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 57:4 (2004) |
|  |  |
| Lord Wakeham (chair) | *A House for the Future? The Report of the Royal Commission on Reform of the House of Lords*, The Stationery Office (2000). Available online (see ‘Web Resources’). |

**Web resources**

The Conservative Party Commission on the House of Commons (chaired by Lord Norton) can be found online at:

<http://www.conservatives.com/pdf/norton.pdf>

The independent Wakeham Commission report on the House of Lords can be found online at:

<http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm45/4534/4534.htm>

**Week 7:**

**IS THE UNITED KINGDOM BREAKING UP?**

This week, we will explore the devolution of power to Scotland, Wales and London. We will consider what factors explain this decentralisation of power, and what the implications are for public policy and democracy.

**Seminar questions**

1. Why has power been devolved to Scotland, Wales, N Ireland and London?
2. How has devolution changed the nature of democracy in the UK?
3. Does devolution make it more or less likely that the UK will break up?

**Set texts**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Dennis Kavanagh et al | *British Politics*, 5th edition, Oxford University Press (2006) ch 17 |

**Additional reading**

***Background to/nature of devolution***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Vernon Bogdanor | *Devolution in the United Kingdom*, Oxford University Press(2001) chs1, 6-8 |
|  | ‘Devolution: Decentralisation or Disintegration?’, *Political Quarterly*, 70:2 (1999) |
|  |  |
| David Judge | *Political Institutions in the United Kingdom*, Oxford University Press (2005) ch5 |
|  |  |
| James Mitchell | ‘The Creation of the Scottish Parliament: Journey Without End?’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 52:4 (1999) |
|  | ‘Devolution and the Future of the Union', in Justin Fisher et al, eds, *Central Debates in British Politics*, Pearson (2002) |
|  |  |
| Dawn Oliver | *Constitutional Reform in Britain*, Oxford University Press (2003), chs13-15 |
|  |  |

***Impact of devolution***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Jonathan Bradbury and James Mitchell | ‘Devolution: Between Governance and Territorial Politics’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 58:2 (2005). See also same authors’ article on devolution in the same journal, 57:2 (2004) |
|  |  |
| Russell Deacon and Alan Sandry | *Devolution in the United Kingdom*, Edinburgh University Press (2007) ch1-8, 12 |
|  |  |
| Joyce McMillan | ‘Will Scottish Devolution Make a Difference?’, *Political Quarterly*, 72:s1 (2001) |
|  |  |
| Michael Keating et al | ‘Does Devolution Make a Difference? Legislative Output and Policy Divergence in Scotland’, *Journal of Legislative Studies*, 9:3 (2003) |
|  |  |
| Alan Trench or Robert Hazell, eds | *The State of the Nations*, Imprint Academic (2001-5)  This volume represents a ‘yearbook’ on devolution, published annually. It contains some useful essays on devolution in Scotland, Wales and England. |

**Web resources**

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) research programme on Devolution contains a variety of useful policy reports that can be downloaded for free: <http://www.devolution.ac.uk>

You can see what the devolved institutions are doing at:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Scottish Parliament | <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/home.htm> |
| Scottish Government | <http://www.scotland.gov.uk> |
| Welsh Assembly/Government | <http://www.wales.gov.uk/> |
| London Mayor and Assembly | <http://www.london.gov.uk> |

**Week 9:**

**IS POLITICAL POWER IN BRITAIN CENTRED IN LONDON OR BRUSSELS?**

For thirty years, questions have been asked about how far political power in Britain is maintained in London, and how far it has been transferred upwards to Brussels. As the European Union has evolved, these questions have become more acute than ever, and will be the focus for this week.

**Seminar questions**

1. How far does the European Union hold power over issues affecting the lives of British citizens?
2. Does the transfer of power to the EU weaken democratic accountability?

**Set texts**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Dennis Kavanagh et al | *British Politics*, 5th edition, Oxford University Press (2006), chs 8-9 |

**Additional reading**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Ian Bache and Andrew Jordan, eds, | *The Europeanization of British Politics*, Palgrave (2006) parts 1, 4-5 |
|  |  |
| Andrew Geddes | *The European Union and British Politics*, Palgrave (2003), chs 3, 7-8 and 11 |
|  |  |
| Colin Pilkington and Duncan Watts | *Britain in the European Union Today*, 3rd edition, Manchester University Press (2005) chs 5-6 |
|  |  |
| David Richard and Martin Smith | *Governance and Public Policy in the UK*, Oxford University Press (2002), ch 7 |
|  |  |
| Roger Scully | ‘Europe and the European Union’, in Justin Fisher et al, eds, *Central Debates in British Politics*, Longman (2003) |
|  |  |
| Philip Stephens | ‘Britain and Europe: An Unforgettable Past and an Unavoidable Future’,  *Political Quarterly*, 76:1 (2005) |

**Week 10:**

**ARE UNELECTED JUDGES UNDERMINING OR STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY IN BRITAIN?**

With the introduction of the Human Rights Act in 2000, judges have gained more power to constrain government in the name of human rights. This week will examine why judges have gained this power, what use they have made of the power, and whether ‘judicial review’ can be said to be beneficial or detrimental to democracy in Britain.

**Seminar questions**

1. What explains the introduction of the Human Rights Act?
2. What powers do judges in Britain now wield?
3. Is greater judicial power good or bad for democracy in Britain?

**Set texts**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Dennis Kavanagh et al | *British Politics*, 5th edition, Oxford University Press (2006), ch 24 |

**Additional reading**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Keith Ewing | 'The Courts and the Judiciary', in Justin Fisher et al, eds, *Central Debates in British Politics*, Pearson (2003) |
|  |  |
| Christopher Foster | 'The Encroachment of the Law on Politics', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 53:2 (2000) |
|  |  |
| Derry Irvine | ‘The Human Rights Act: Principle and Practice’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 57:4 (2004) |
|  |  |
| David Judge | *Political Institutions in the United Kingdom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2005) ch 6 |
|  |  |
| Dawn Oliver | *Constitutional Reform in the UK*, Oxford University Press (2003), chs 5-6, 18 |
|  |  |
| Keith Starmer and Stuart Weir | ‘Strong Government and Weak Liberties: An Overview of Political Freedom in the UK’, *Political Quarterly*, 68:2 (1997) |
|  |  |
| Diana Woodhouse | 'The Law and Politics: More Power to the Judges - And to the People?', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 54:2 (2001) |

**Web resources**

The lead government department on human rights is the Ministry of Justice. However, useful information on the Human Rights Act (HRA) can be found on the website of the previous sponsoring ministry, the Department for Constitutional Affairs. It publishes a guide to the HRA, a review of the HRA and a list of cases brought under the Act.

See: <http://www.dca.gov.uk/peoples-rights/human-rights/index.htm>

Paul Dacre lecture on Judiciary and the Privacy Law November 2008

**Week 11:**

**CONCLUSION: IS GOVERNMENT IN BRITAIN REPRESENTATIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE?**

The final formal lecture reviews how far Britain’s political system can be said to be democratic? How well does it perform in providing for representation of public opinion, and for accountability of decision makers? What is the role and functions of the Monarchy? What reforms might be required to strengthen these qualities in Britain?

**Seminar questions**

1. How far would you say the British political system is representative and accountable?
2. Should the British political system be reformed to make it more representative and accountable? If so, how?

**Set texts**

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| Dennis Kavanagh et al | *British Politics*, 5th edition, Oxford University Press (2006) ch 10 |

**Additional reading**

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| David Beetham, ed | *Democracy Under Blair: A Democratic Audit of the United Kingdom*, Politicos (2002) |
|  |  |
| David Beetham et al | ‘Democratic Audit: Towards a Broader View of Democratic Achievement’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 56:2 (2003) |
|  |  |
| David Beetham and Stuart Weir | ‘Auditing British Democracy’, *Political Quarterly*, 70:2 (1999) |
|  |  |
| Samuel Beer | ‘Strong Government and Democratic Control’, *Political Quarterly*, 70:2 (1999) |
|  |  |
| David Judge | ‘Whatever Happened to Parliamentary Democracy in the United Kingdom?’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 57:3 (2004) |
|  |  |
| David Marquand | ‘Democracy in Britain’, *Political Quarterly*, 71:3 (2000) |
|  |  |
| POWER inquiry into Britain’s Democracy | *Power to the People*, Final report of the POWER inquiry (2006). See ‘Web resources’. |

**Web resources**

The Democratic Audit of the UK conducts ‘audits’ of British democracy. Its latest report (4pp) is entitled ‘Democracy Under Blair: Failing Democracy’, and can be downloaded from: <http://www.democraticaudit.com/auditing_democracy/index.php>

The Democratic Audit site contains a variety of useful material relating to democracy in Britain. Its website is: [http://www.democraticaudit.com/](http://www.democraticaudit.com/index.php)

The POWER Commission spent over a year examining the state of British democracy. Their 2006 report contains a diagnosis of the problem of citizen disengagement, and multiple proposals to reform the British political system. It can be read online at: <http://www.powerinquiry.org>

**Week 12**

This last lecture will consist of a Question & Answer session, at which students can raise any issues addressed during the course.

It will also give an outline of the NCTJ Public Affairs Central Government syllabus – in particular the areas that do not overlap such as the National Health Service.

James Morrison -*Public Affairs for Journalists* OUP 2009