



INSTEP-WFU LONDON

CONTEMPORARY BRITAIN AND EUROPE: POLITICS, ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

Britain is at a crucial juncture in its history. Brexit – the decision to leave the European Union – is leading many to question the United Kingdom’s entire political, social and economic relationship with Europe as a whole. This course critically examines the origins and evolution of the complex relationship between Britain and the European Union.

The course starts by exploring the United Kingdom as a political entity. What are the main institutions of the state? How does the constitution operate? This forms the basis for later discussions on how Britain fits into Europe. Moving on, it then examines the historical relationship between Britain and continental Europe. It will show how this has been shaped by a range of factors, including immigration, dynastic ties and conflict. As well as examining the European origins of the British, it will explore the main events in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century that have formed the basis of the modern relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union.

The course then looks at the origins and development of the European Union, tracing its development as a mechanism to build Franco-German peace following the Second World War into a continental body currently made up of almost 30 member states and made up of a complex system of institutions. Following on from this, it examines how Britain joined the EU and how that relationship evolved. What key policy areas did Britain fundamentally shape and in what areas did the United Kingdom choose to sit apart from the European project. Following this, it will explain the events leading up to the 2016 referendum and the campaign that led to the decision to leave the European Union, before exploring the Brexit negotiations. The course will conclude by looking at how Britain’s place in the world is changing as a result of the decision to leave the EU. How will Britain’s relationship with Europe change and how will it remain tied to the continent, for example through bodies such as NATO, the Council of Europe, and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Finally, the course will conclude by considering what Brexit could mean for the future of the United Kingdom and the EU.

Course Outline

- 1 What is Britain? A Portrait of the United Kingdom
- 2 Britain's Historical Relationship with Europe
- 3 The Process of European Unification
- 4 Britain's Path to EU Membership
- 5 The UK's Role and Influence in Europe
- 6 The UK, the EU and the World
- 7 The 2016 Referendum on EU Membership
- 8 The Brexit Negotiations
- 9 'Global Britain?'
- 10 The UK and the EU: What Next?

Course Aims and Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be expected to have a thorough understanding of:

- The United Kingdom's historical relationship with Europe;
- The origins and evolution of the European Union;
- The way in which the United Kingdom has shaped the European Union;
- The roots of Britain's decision to leave the EU;
- The course of Brexit negotiations;
- Britain's wider relations with Europe and the world.

Students will also be expected to be able to critically analyse:

- The nature of British-EU relations;
- The arguments for and against Brexit;
- The conduct of the Brexit negotiations;
- Britain's potential global role after Brexit.

Key Readings

- O'Rourke, Kevin, *A Short History of Brexit: From Brentry to Backstop* (London: Pelican, 2019)
- Pinder, John and Simon Usherwood, *The European Union: A Very Short Introduction*, 4th Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018)
- McCormick, John, *Understanding the European Union*, 7th Edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017)
- Smith, Julie, *The UK's Journey into and out of the European Union: Destinations Unknown* (London: Routledge, 2017)

Reports published by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons and the International Relations Committee of the House of Lords are often valuable sources of information on British foreign policy and the development of Brexit negotiations. These can be found at www.parliament.uk. There are many good reports published by British and European think tanks on Brexit, including the Centre for European Reform CER www.cer.eu, the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR www.ecfr.eu).

Regularly read British newspapers, such as *The Guardian* (anti-Brexit), *The Financial Times* (anti-Brexit), *The Telegraph* (pro-Brexit), and *The Times* (mixed Brexit positions). Also read *The Economist* on a weekly basis, especially the Bagehot and Charlemagne columns.

Course Assessment

Students will be expected to submit two essays of 1500 words. These will each count for 50% of the final mark. Questions can be selected from the list attached to each week.

TOPIC 1 THE EMERGENCE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

This week will outline the government and politics of the United Kingdom. It will explain the way in which the different component parts of the UK – England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – interact with one another and with the central government. It will also explore the various branches of the state, including the role of the Queen as head of state, the principles of parliamentary democracy, the role of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, the structure of the judiciary and the civil service, and the nature of the devolved institutions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Finally, it will offer an overview of the British economy. The purpose is to lay the foundation for a thorough understanding of how the United Kingdom interacts with the European Union.

Key questions for this week include:

- Is the United Kingdom a partnership of equals?
- What are the benefits and drawbacks of an unwritten constitution?
- Is the UK a federation in all but name?
- Is the UK anything more than a services-based economy?

Key Reading:

- *Life in the United Kingdom: Official A Guide for New Residents* (The Stationary Office, 2019)

Additional Reading:

- Loughlin, Martin, *The British Constitution: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)
- Wright, Tony, *British Politics: A Very Short Introduction*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

TOPIC 2 BRITAIN'S HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP WITH EUROPE

This week explores the nature of Britain's historical relationship with continental Europe. It starts by exploring the historical relationship between England and Europe, starting with the Romans and proceeding through the settlement of the German tribes and the arrival of the Normans. It will then examine how England's relations with the continent evolved in the Middle Ages, with particular attention given to the traditional antagonism between Britain and France, culminating in the Napoleonic Wars. It will then analyse the nature of Britain's relationship with Europe over the course of the nineteenth century, and the emergence of the many key European states, including Germany. It will then look at how Britain's relationship with Europe evolved during the first half of the twentieth century, and the role of the First and Second World Wars in shaping its ties to the continent.

Key questions for this week include:

- To what extent is Britain historically and culturally 'European'?
- How can we best describe Britain's historical relationship with Europe?
- How did the world wars affect Britain's ties to Europe?
- How can we best define Britain's traditional economic relations with Europe?

Key Reading:

- Black, Jeremy, *Britain and Europe: A Short History* (London: Hurst, 2018)

Additional Reading:

- Rapport, Mike, *The Napoleonic Wars: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)
- Tombs, Robert and Isabelle, *That Sweet Enemy: Britain and France, the History of a Love-Hate Relationship* (London: Pimlico, 2007)

TOPIC 3 THE PROCESS OF EUROPEAN UNIFICATION

This week will explore the origins and evolution of the European Union. It will start by looking at the historical antecedents of European integration, including the Napoleonic era and the experience of Nazi conquest and occupation. It will then examine the ideas underpinning peaceful European integration after the Second World War. It will explain the origins of the Treaty of Rome and trace how the European Coal and Steel Community became the Common Market and then the European Union. It will outline some of the key milestones in the development of the EU, such as the Treaty of Maastricht and the Lisbon Treaty; which in their different ways have shaped British attitudes towards the European Union.

Key questions for this week include:

- Is the EU best understood as a peace project?
- Is the EU still dominated by France and Germany?
- Is the Lisbon Treaty really a European Constitution in all but name?
- What is the EU: an international organisation, a proto-state, or something else?
- Is the European Union more about politics or economics?

Key Reading:

- Dinan, Desmond, *Origins and Evolution of the European Union*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

Additional Reading:

- Hix, Simon and Bjørn Høyland, *The Political System of the European Union*, 3rd Edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan,
- McCormick, John, *Understanding the European Union*, 7th Edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017)
- Pinder, John and Simon Usherwood, *The European Union: A Very Short Introduction*, 4th Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018)

TOPIC 4 BRITAIN'S PATH TO EU MEMBERSHIP

This week will explore the nature of Britain's relationship with the European Union. It will look at how and why the United Kingdom joined the Common Market despite earlier French reservations and examine the debate that took place in Britain over membership, including the 1975 referendum on the issue. It will then trace Britain's relationship with Europe throughout the 1980s and examine why Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, an ardent supporter of Britain's membership of the European Communities became increasingly hostile to 'Brussels'. It will also explore how Britain's relationship evolved under the Labour government of Tony Blair.

Key questions for this week include:

- What were the main factors that led to British membership of the European Union?
- How have Labour and Conservative positions on Europe evolved?
- What changed Margaret Thatcher's position on Europe?
- Did Tony Blair miss an opportunity to put Britain at the heart of Europe?

Key Reading:

- Gowland, David, *Britain and the European Union* (London: Routledge, 2016)

Additional Reading:

- Saunders, Robert, *Yes to Europe! The 1975 Referendum and Seventies Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019)
- Smith, Julie, *The UK's Journey into and out of the European Union: Destinations Unknown* (London: Routledge, 2017)
- Wall, Stephen, *A Stranger in Europe: Britain and the EU from Thatcher to Blair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

TOPIC 5 BRITAIN'S ROLE AND INFLUENCE IN THE EU

This week look at the way in which British membership influenced the development of the EU, such as its leading role in the development of the Single Market and its strong support for European enlargement, culminating in the so-called 'Big Bang' enlargement in 2004, when 10 Central and Eastern European countries joined the EU. At the same time, the roots of British antipathy to the EU will be examined alongside its decision to opt out of many of the flagship European policies, such as the euro, Schengen and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. It will also examine Britain's place in key European institutions, such as the European Commission and the European Parliament.

Key questions for this week include:

- To what extent is the contemporary European Union a product of British influence?
- Should Britain have been given opt outs on key policies?
- Was the United Kingdom ever really committed to the European project?

Key Reading:

- Gowland, David, *Britain and the European Union* (London: Routledge, 2016)

Additional Reading:

- Smith, Julie, *The UK's Journey into and out of the European Union: Destinations Unknown* (London: Routledge, 2017)
- Wall, Stephen, *A Stranger in Europe: Britain and the EU from Thatcher to Blair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

TOPIC 6 THE UK, THE EU AND THE WORLD

This week examines the way in which the European Union operates as an actor on the international stage and analyses how the United Kingdom has enhanced this. It will start by exploring how the EU conducts external relations and the role of member states in that process. What does the UK contribute to this, both in terms of its economic and political standing as well as in terms of its wider international ties? It will examine how the EU operates as an economic actor by analysing its ability to negotiate trade agreements on behalf of its members. It will also explore how the EU's regulatory environment can change international standards. It will also look at how the EU operates as an international aid provider and how this also has been shaped by the United Kingdom. Finally, it will assess the EU's ability to be a coherent foreign policy player, and what Britain has contributed to this.

Key questions for this week include:

- Is the EU really just an economic power?
- In what way has Britain influenced EU trade and aid priorities?
- How has Britain increased the EU's international standing?
- How has the EU enhanced Britain's international standing?

Key Reading:

- Review of the Balance of Competences between the United Kingdom and the European Union, Foreign Policy, July 2013 [Online]

Additional Reading:

- Amelia Hadfield et al. (editors), *Foreign Policies of EU Member States: Continuity and Europeanisation* (London: Routledge, 2016)
- Christopher Hill et al. (editors), *International Relations and the European Union*, 3rd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)

TOPIC 7 THE REFERENDUM ON EU MEMBERSHIP

The United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union (Brexit) has become the defining political issue of contemporary Britain. However, it is the culmination of decades of Euroscepticism in Britain, fed by parts of the political establishment, on both the political left and right, and a largely hostile media. This week will look at how Britain's views towards Europe soured and the events leading up to the decision to call a referendum on EU membership in 2016. It will analyse the run up to the vote itself, examining the various arguments for and against membership and how the campaign was run by the two sides.

Key questions for this week include:

- What were the roots of Euroscepticism in Britain?
- Why did people vote to leave the European Union?
- Did Leave run a good campaign or Remain a poor one?
- Was the vote to leave the EU avoidable?

Key Reading:

- Clarke, Harold D. et al, *Brexit: Why Britain Voted to Leave the European Union* (Cambridge University Press, 2017)

Additional Reading:

- Oliver, Craig, *Unleashing Demons: The Inside Story of Brexit* (Hodder and Stoughton, 2016)
- Shipman, Tim, *All Out War: The Full Story of Brexit* (William Collins, 2017)
- EU Referendum Analysis - <http://www.referendumanalysis.eu>

Essential Viewin

- *Brexit: The Uncivil War*, Channel 4 (available at www.channel4.com)

TOPIC 8 NEGOTIATING BREXIT

This week will examine the Brexit negotiations between the United Kingdom and the European Union. It will outline the key points of contention – such as the Customs Union and Single market, rights of EU citizens and outstanding debts – and analyse why they have become so difficult. It will also look at how Northern Ireland has come to dominate the debate. Finally, it will explore the political debate surrounding Brexit and explain how and why efforts to reach a negotiated settlement have failed.

Key questions for this week include:

- Was the UK prepared for the Brexit negotiations?
- Did the Lancaster House speech make a smooth ‘Brexit’ impossible?
- Why was EFTA not a desirable option for Brexiters?
- Why has the Irish backstop become such an important issue?
- Why is a ‘No Deal’ or ‘Clean Break’ Brexit not a viable option?

Key Reading:

- ‘Brexit: All You Need to Know about the UK Leaving the EU’, BBC News, 10 May 2019 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-32810887>

Additional Reading:

- Evans, Geoffrey and Anand Menon, *Brexit and British Politics* (Polity Press, 2017)
- O’Toole, Fintan, *Heroic Failure: Brexit and the Politics of Pain* (Apollo, 2018)
- Rogers, Ivan, *9 Lessons in Brexit* (Short Books, 2019)
- Smith, Julie, *The UK’s Journey into and out of the European Union: Destinations Unknown* (Routledge, 2017)

TOPIC 9 BRITAIN BEYOND THE EU

One of the key arguments put forward by those who support Brexit is that leaving the European Union will allow the United Kingdom to re-establish its place on the world stage as an independent sovereign state. This will allow it to re-establish its standing as a major international actor and global trading nation. This week will explore the nature of Britain’s traditional international role and how this is likely to change with the decision to leave the European Union. It will trace the history of the British Empire and how this has given way to the Commonwealth of Nations, and the global network of relationships that this has created. It will also assess significance of Britain’s permanent membership of the Security Council, its role as a leading member of NATO, and its membership of other European and International bodies and ask whether these factors will ensure that Britain remains relevant as an international actor after Brexit. Finally, it will explore how Brexit could affect Britain ‘special relationship’ with the United States.

Key questions for this week include:

- In what ways will leaving the EU change Britain's standing in the world?
- Is 'Brexit really about imperial nostalgia and creating 'Empire 2.0'?
- Is 'Global Britain' a viable aspiration in the modern era?
- Does world trade represent a realistic replacement to trade with Europe?
- Does Brexit make the United Kingdom's more or less important to the United States?

Key Reading:

- 'Global Britain', Sixth Report of Session 2017-2019, Foreign Affairs Committee, House of Commons, 6 March 2018
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmfaff/780/780.pdf>

Additional Reading:

- Hill, Christopher, *The Future of British Foreign Policy: Security and Diplomacy in a World after Brexit* (London: Polity Press, 2019)
- Jackson, Ashley, *The British Empire: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)
- O'Rourke, Kevin, *A Short History of Brexit: From Brentry to Backstop* (London: Pelican, 2019)
- Owen, David and David Ludlow, *British Foreign Policy after Brexit: An Independent Voice* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2017)

TOPIC 10 THE FUTURE OF THE UK AND THE FUTURE OF THE EU

Brexit will mark a profound moment of change for both the United Kingdom and the European Union. It will be the first time that a member of the EU has decided to leave. This week will explore the possible ramifications of Brexit on Britain and the EU. It will start by looking at the profound changes that Brexit could lead to within the United Kingdom. Many observers believe that it could lead to the possibility of social and political fragmentation. Many predict that it could even lead to the fragmentation of the country as Northern Ireland pursues unification with the Republic of Ireland and Scotland pursues independence. It will also look at how Brexit will could affect the European Union.

Key questions for this week include:

- Will Leave/Remain identities still dominate British politics in the years ahead?
- Does Brexit make Irish unification and Scottish independence more likely?
- Will other countries leave the European Union?
- Will the European Union survive?
- Will Britain ever re-join the EU?
- Does Britain need the EU more than the EU needs Britain?

Key Readings:

- Smith, Julie, *The UK's Journey into and out of the European Union: Destinations Unknown* (London: Routledge, 2017)

Additional Readings:

- Bogdanor, Vernon, *Beyond Brexit: Towards a British Constitution* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2019)
- Webber, Douglas, *European Disintegration? The Politics of Crisis in the European Union* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018)
- Zimmerman, Hubert and Andreas Dür, *Key Controversies in European Integration*, 2nd Edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017)