Undergraduate module information 2016/17
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<th>Part-Time (Four Years) Three modules each year</th>
<th>Full-Time (Three Years) 4 modules each year</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>YEAR ONE</strong></td>
<td><strong>YEAR ONE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction to Global Politics (Level 4)</td>
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| **YEAR TWO**                                  | **YEAR TWO**                                |
| Intro to Int. Political Economy (Level 5)     | Intro to Int. Political Economy (Level 5)   |
| *Two level 4 options                          | *Two level 4 options                        |
| One Level 5 or 6 option                       | One Level 5 or 6 option                     |

| **YEAR THREE**                                | **YEAR THREE**                              |
| War and Modern Society (level 6)              | War and Modern Society (level 6)            |
| One level 5 or one level 6 option             | Three level 6 options or                    |
| One level 5 or one level 6 option             | Two level 6 options + dissertation          |

| **YEAR FOUR**                                 |                                              |
| Three level 6 options or                      |                                              |
| Two level 6 options + dissertation            |                                              |

*Students can substitute one or both of these Level 4 option modules with Level 5 or Level 6 option modules if they have obtained a grade of at least 50% in each of the two compulsory Level 4 modules taken the previous year (The Study of Politics and Introduction to Global Politics.

**PLEASE NOTE** students can take a maximum of 30 credits (1 module) from outside the department, which must be approved by the Programme Director before selection.
## BA Politics Programme Structure

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Full-Time (Three Years)</th>
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<td>The Study of Politics (Level 4)</td>
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<td><em>or</em> Governing by Numbers (Level 4)</td>
<td><em>or</em> Governing by Numbers (Level 4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two Level 6 options + dissertation</td>
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Option module descriptions are on the following pages
Politics Module information

Please note that options do not necessarily run every year, and may also sometimes be unavailable due to timetable clashes. While we do our best to put on a wide range of options, staff availability is likely to determine both what is on and the evening on which it is taught.

Level Four Modules
The Study of Politics

Module Code: SSP0017S4 AAA Monday Term 1 (Core for Global Politics & International Relations year 1 students)

Module Code: SSP0174S AAB Thursday Term 1 (Core for Politics and Government year 1 students)

What is politics? How can we best study it? Such questions define this module. The answer to the first might seem obvious, but politics can be constructed differently in different times, cultures and disciplines, and those constructions can be contested and changed. To that extent, this module is historical and interdisciplinary. We will examine the possibility that the study of politics is a branch of the social sciences. But philosophers and historians also study politics, while feminists both study politics and seek to transform it. The resulting models of politics are not hermetically sealed from one another, but they are different (quite apart from the differences within each discipline). This introduction is framed in terms of political concepts and the skills necessary to work fruitfully with them. That means being able to negotiate between different arguments, different theories, and different bodies of evidence in making one's own judgements. In short, it means thinking for oneself.

Aims
The module aims

- to introduce the study of politics and government;
- to outline some of the main concepts and theories used in the study of politics;
- to explore and practice different forms of argumentation in the study of politics;
- to examine the different kinds of evidence appealed to in studying politics; and
- to foster understanding of the relations between theory and evidence in the study of politics.

Learning Outcomes
On completion of the module, you should be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of different approaches to the study of politics and government and of some of the main concepts involved in them;
- make a critical assessment of the kinds of arguments advanced in the study of politics;
- appraise the evidence advanced in such arguments;
- understand the relationship between theory and evidence in the study of politics;
- display all the above in practising the skills of research, critical thinking and essay-writing.
Background Reading


Assessment

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<td>003</td>
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<td>Essay - c. 1,200 words</td>
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Introduction to Global Politics

Module Code: SSPO118S4 AAA

Monday Term 2

Global politics is a complex arena where a vast number of actors, including nation-states, multinational corporations, and inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations, pursue often conflicting agendas. This module is designed to provide students with an overview of global politics by looking at both its historical development and the relevant contemporary issue areas in the light of various analytical approaches to international relations. Among the topics to be covered are the historical trends in international politics, the dynamics of international security, international law and organisations, processes and consequences of economic globalisation, and the changing architecture of global governance.

Aims

The module aims to:

- Introduce the main concepts and the key theoretical approaches employed in the study of global politics;
- Provide a broad overview of the historical evolution of the interstate system;
- Examine the debates over various contemporary issue areas in global politics;
- Foster an understanding of the relationships between actors, norms and institutions in global politics today.

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of the module, students should be able to:

- Critically apply the theories, concepts, and approaches employed in the study of global politics and international relations to both historical and contemporary
events and processes.

- Demonstrate a broad understanding of the major historical developments in global politics and international relations;
- Understand, analyse and critically engage a variety of sources and data relating to the study of global politics and international relations;
- Demonstrate practical and transferable skills of critical evaluation, analytic investigation, written argument, oral communication.

**Background Reading**


**Assessment**

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<tr>
<td>003</td>
<td>Test</td>
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</table>

**The Evolution of the International System**

**Module Code: FFIN903S4 ACB Tuesday Term 1 Class A**  
**Module Code: FFIN903S4 BCB Wednesday Term 1 Class B**

*The Evolution of the International System* provides an introduction to the study of the historical evolution of the international state system and an examination of contemporary regional international relations. The first part of the course reviews the emergence of the modern state system and the workings of the balance of power, before exploring the causes, course, and consequences of World War I, World War II, and the Cold War, concluding with an exploration of the nature of the post-Cold War international order. The second part of the course reviews the contemporary regional international politics of East Asia, Central Eurasia, the Euro-Atlantic region, the Greater Middle East, the Americas, and Africa. Where appropriate, an historical perspective is employed.

**Aims**

- To introduce students to the study of the historical evolution of the international state system
- To enable students to examine analytically contemporary regional international politics, employing where appropriate an historical perspective

**Learning Outcomes**
• On completion of the module, students should:
  • Have an understanding of the broad historical evolution and current workings of the international state system
  • Have knowledge of the international politics of the major regions
  • Be able to analyse critically contending analytical and theoretical frameworks

**Background Reading**


**Assessment**

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**International Organisations**

**Module Code:** FFIN909S4 ACB

**Wednesday Term 2**

This module provides a framework for the understanding and analysis of the politics of international organisations. The history of the thinking and processes that led to the creation of international organisations will be outlined. Distinctions will be drawn between different types of international organisations and different types of decision-making within organisations. The implications of these distinctions will then be examined. A range of diverse types of organisations will be surveyed, including the UN, IMF, EU, NATO, AU and ASEAN. Evaluation of these organisations will be undertaken, including the introduction of methods for explaining and measuring the success of each.

**Aims**

• To introduce students to the concept of international organisation
• To introduce students to knowledge about a range of international organisations
• To acquaint students with different theories about international politics and institutions that can be used in the analysis of international organisations
• To understand the role of international organisations in the international system and their impact on international politics
• To help develop students’ abilities to acquire, organise and present information in writing

**Learning Outcomes**

On completion of the Module, students should:

• Possess a broad understanding of the role of international organisations in global politics
• Have knowledge of the activities and politics of several international organisations
• Be able to critically evaluate the activities of a number of international organisations
• Be familiar with academic literature and debates about international organisations and international relations
• Have improved their transferrable research and writing skills

Background Reading

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Modern Political Analysis
Module Code: POS0084S4
Tuesday Term 1

Aims
The course aims to provide students with an understanding of the main theoretical approaches to the analysis of politics by drawing on ideas from political sociology, political science and political theory. Students will employ these theoretical approaches in order to understand and explain modern political institutions, processes and relations.

Outcomes
Students completing this course will:

• Understand the main approaches to politics in classical political sociology and contemporary political science and political theory;
• Be able to apply theoretical approaches to the analysis of political institutions, processes and relations;
• Have developed an understanding of the key role played by the concept of power in political analysis, and appreciate the variety of ways in which power is conceptualised in political discourse;
• Have developed an appreciation of the central role played by theory in the analysis of politics;
• Recognise the importance of employing theoretical and empirical approaches in concert in the study of politics.

Background Reading
A classic work of political sociology is Tom Bottomore’s *Political Sociology*. Robert Dahl’s *Modern Political Analysis* isn’t, as the title may suggest, the template for the course, but it nonetheless provides an invaluable insight into the subject. Another classic, now out of print, but well worth looking at if you can find it, is W. J. M. Mackenzie’s *Politics and Social Science*. On political theory see John Dunn, *Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future*, and W. G. Runciman, *Social Science and Political Theory*. Excellent text books on the state and democracy are Patrick Dunleavy and Brendon O’Leary, *Theories of the State* and David Held’s *Models of Democracy*. Adrian Leftwich’s, *What is Politics?* (2nd edition, 2004) is a very good collection of introductory essays on that subject. A more recent primer examining some of the topics we will cover is David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (eds.) *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. In the third part of the course, we’ll be using a number of chapters from Terence Backet al. (eds.), *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*.

### Assessment

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<tr>
<td>003</td>
<td>Test</td>
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- Book review 500 words
- Short essay 1000 words
- In class test 2 hours

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**The Practice of Politics**

**Module Code:** SSPO016S4  
**Tuesday Term 2**  
**Dr Edwin Bacon**

Admire any political figures?

Find yourself shouting at the television when other politicians are interviewed?  
Thinking of engaging in politics more yourself?

Students who study politics often do so not just because they have a theoretical interest, but because they are driven, inspired, and motivated by engaging in the stuff of politics themselves.

*The Practice of Politics* is a different sort of module. It’s about doing politics – exploring personal motivations and values; asking how to successfully practice politics; strengthening competence in different modes of political behaviour; and engaging with a range of political careers and activities, and with those who do such things now in, for example, parliament, NGOs, lobby groups, the EU, local government, think tanks, BBC journalism, and so on.

The motivation of many students entering a politics degree programme is an interest in engaging with politics, as opposed to simply studying it. Many Birkbeck politics students either work in politics-related roles and wish to improve their prospects, or have ambitions to work or volunteer in political life, broadly defined. This module will improve employability by providing an awareness of the practice of politics in a range of job roles, as well as developing
awareness of, and improving competence in, relevant modes of political behaviour, and exploring personal motivations and values.

The module covers issues such as:

- personal awareness: considering values, motivations, priorities and development needs as they relate to the practice of politics;
- political communication: such as, public speaking, formal debates, different forms of formal written communication (for example, position papers), informal written communication (for example, blogs, wikis, podcasts), lobbying;
- political leadership: the study of positive and successful political leaders, in terms of their characteristics, values, approaches, life path, and so on;
- political activity: sessions on a variety of roles through which political activity occurs, be that careers, voluntary activity, elected politics, or other relevant approaches. Outside speakers from these areas of activity will speak and answer questions.

Teaching methods move beyond the lecture and seminar model, with guest speakers invited, and the intention being to develop a community of interested and aspiring practitioners. Assessment similarly differs from many other modules in the politics department. There is no examination, but instead a set of varied tasks, in-class and at home, such as an assessment of your own political values, analysis of inspiring political leaders, and engagement with e-politics.

**Assessment**

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<td>Analysis of leader/speech - 1000 words</td>
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<td>Project</td>
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<td>Electronic communication task - 500 words</td>
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<td>Policy brief - 300-400 words</td>
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<tr>
<td>005</td>
<td>Practicals (inc laboratory, computing)</td>
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<td>Working with others - peer assessment</td>
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**Politics of Identity, Culture & Conflict**

**Module Code: FFIN938S4 ACB**

**Tuesday Term 2**

This course explores the politics of core social identities in the modern world. We will especially examine the politics of social identities based on nationality, ethnicity, gender and class within the context of political and cultural conflict. Combining the study of the main theoretical approaches with the analysis of specific case studies, the course aims to provide an overview of the main debates and manifestations of identity politics.

**Aims**

- To introduce students to the principal identity-forming ideas and agents
- To present students with debates around these ideas
- To enable students to question what they may have hitherto taken to be facts of
To enhance students' abilities to use and present information in writing and orally

**Learning Outcomes**

On completion of the Module, students should:

- Be familiar with role of main ideas that seek to explain how our identities are formed
- Understand that these are ideas and be able to counter them with other ideas
- Be able to critically assess the impact of various agencies on identity formation

**Background Reading**


Bocock & Thompson, eds. (1992) *Social & Cultural Forms*, London, OUP


**Assessment**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Component</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>003</td>
<td>Test</td>
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Book review - approx 750 words

Essay - approx 1000 words

Take-home test

**Comparative Government**

**Module Code: FFPO956S4**

**Thursday Term 2**

Comparative government introduces students to the comparative study of political institutions and systems. It focuses on a number of states from Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas, including large, small, rich, poor, democracies, one-party systems, monarchies, republics, unitary and federal systems.

Subjects covered include constitutions, legislatures, executives, the judiciary, bureaucracy, parties, elections, political movements, and political communication.

**Aims**

- To introduce students to the principal institutions and systems of government and politics
- To present students with knowledge about different kinds of political institutions and systems from across the world
- To enable students to acquire theories and methods for researching and comparing differences and similarities in political institutions and systems between states
- To enhance students' abilities to use and present information in writing and orally
**Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of the module, students will:

- have a broad understanding of the diversity of political institutions and systems across the world
- be familiar with the role of political institutions in different political systems
- have engaged with academic literature and debates about comparative government and politics
- be able to critically analyse comparative cases

**Background Reading**

- Daniele Caramani (2011) *Comparative Politics*, Oxford University Press

**Assessment**

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**Governing By Numbers**

**Module Code: No code yet**

**Tuesday Term 1**

**Aims:**

- To introduce students to the wealth of official statistical information available, and encourage them to use it
- To ensure that students can interpret simple statistics, use a spreadsheet and create and read graphs
- To promote reflection about statistics and governance, by comparing how statistics are used in different contexts and cross-nationally

**Indicative content:**

- Population: What do we know about national, regional and global populations? Why do some countries know more about their population than others? Ways of calculating and portraying growth
- Migration flows: what do we know about legal and illegal migration, and where refugees come from and end up
- Enfranchisement and voting behaviour: when is an election ‘fair’?
- GDP/economy: GDP compared with ‘welfare’; why do governments, international organisations, banks etc care about GDP and GNP?
- Indicators of poverty and inequality; issues of cross-country comparison
- Government spending and debt; why debt can explode or shrink
- Health and mortality..
- Aging populations: visualising population age distributions
- Controversial statistics: e.g. why do some countries create/collect statistics about ethnicity while others don’t?
- Contested statistics: investigating an example of a topical issue with statistical content.
Assessment for Level 5 & 6 modules

PLEASE NOTE that the assessment pattern for the majority of our Politics Level 5 & 6 modules, will be 25% essay and 75% exam, unless otherwise stated after the module details.

Level 5 Modules

Contemporary British Politics
Module Code: POSO003S5
Tuesday
Dr. Ben Worthy/Dermot Hodson

This module aims to provide students with an understanding of British politics and government, its key institutions and actors, and the main issues of controversy and contestation. The module outlines the main institutions and processes of government and the state in the context of contemporary British politics, particularly the arrival of Coalition government and financial crisis.

The first half of the course examines the basic political institutions in Britain, such as Parliament, central government and local government, and some of the key forces and pressures, from the electoral system to the media. The second half looks in more detail at key aspects of British governance through case studies and ends by analysing the political future of the United Kingdom in an increasingly globalised world, examining the influence of the EU and changing British foreign policy. Students graduating from the module will:

• be familiar with the main theories and models applied in the study of British politics and government, their ambitions, achievements and limitations;
• have a good understanding of British political institutions and processes, and how they relate to one another;
• develop a critical approach to current debates and issues in British politics;
• develop practical skills of communication, evaluating and analysing argument;
• and
• develop transferable skills, including critical evaluation, analytical investigation, written presentation and oral communication.

Background Reading
To understand British politics Developments in British Politics 9 (2011) by Richard Heffernan, Philip Cowley is recommended as good introductory text. This textbook is used as a basis for the course. It begins with chapters sketching out the changing nature of British politics with the arrival of the Coalition government, constitutional reform and a strengthening Executive. It then moves on to look at the wider political system from the EU to the media and ends by looking at the financial crisis and what it means for the future. Another recommended book is Robert Leach et al. (2011) British Politics, 2nd edition which offers an overview of the British political system dealing thematically with institutions and policies, offering a historical overview of how British politics has developed. Tony Wright’s British Politics: A Very Short Introduction (2013) is also an excellent, readable overview of how British Politics works and
some of the key themes and issues.

Students are encouraged to find up to date resources. To follow developments in the Coalition see Hazell and Yong’s research on how the Coalition really operates (2011) ‘Inside Story: How Coalition Government Works’ (available online here) and this House of Commons Research Briefing (2013) ‘Coalitions at Westminster’ which explains where Coalitions come from, how they work and why and how they end here. For the financial crisis, Colin Hay’s 'Things can only get worse' British Politics Vol. 5, 4, 391–401 (available here) looks at some possible future scenarios for British politics in a time of severe austerity while Sukhdev Johal et al’s ‘The future has been postponed: The Great Financial Crisis and British politics’ British Politics 7, 69-81 (2012) offers some thoughts as to what the crisis means for British politics and why it is so hard to resolve—see here.

**Democracy and Authoritarianism**

**Module code: POS0012S5**

**Thursday**

**Dr. Dionyssis Dimitrakopoulos and Dr. Edwin Bacon**

The aim of this course is to equip students with knowledge of political institutions and processes in democratic and non-democratic states through an understanding of the conceptual and theoretical approaches applied to those processes and institutions, and through the substantive investigation of relevant cases.

Students graduating from the course should:

• be familiar with the main theories and models applied in the study of democratic and non-democratic regimes and politics, their ambitions, achievements and limitations;
• have substantive knowledge of political institutions, processes and debates concerning models of democracy, theories of democratisation, the operation of democratic and non-democratic regimes in a variety of economic, social and cultural settings;
• have developed a critical approach to current debates and issues concerning democratic and non-democratic politics;
• be able to conduct comparative analysis of political systems and processes;
• have developed practical skills of communication, evaluating and analysing argument
• have developed transferable skills, including critical evaluation, analytical investigation, written presentation, oral investigation, and communication.

**Preliminary Reading**

No single book can cover all the material relevant to the course. However, for the first part of the course, useful books are:

Democracy

Authoritarianism

- Although there is no key book for the course you are encouraged to buy Paul Brooker, Non-Democratic Regimes, 2nd ed. (Palgrave, 2009)
- For historical background see Hobsbawm, Eric, Age of Extremes (Abacus 1998) or overviews such as Brown, Archie, The Rise and Fall of Communism (2010)
- To gain an understanding of how totalitarian regimes work, you are strongly advised to read (or re-read) Orwell, George, Nineteen Eighty Four (Penguin numerous reprints)

Introduction to International Political Economy

Module Code: POS0029S5
Monday
Dr. David Styan

Are 'market forces' more powerful than national governments? What role does politics play in the shaping of global markets for the clothes and food you buy, or the banks you use? How do bodies such as the World Trade Organisation or the International Monetary Fund influence peoples' lives? The aim of this module is to provide students with knowledge of international political and economic processes through an understanding of the conceptual and theoretical approaches applied to such questions, processes and institutions by the study of International Political Economy.

By the end of the module, you should be familiar with key theories and models applied in the study of international political economy, their ambitions, achievements and limitations. Hopefully you will have gained a substantive knowledge of political processes and debates concerning: the emergence and breakdown of order in the global economy; international cooperation; and the role of the state in the economy. Through reading and argument in seminars, you should develop a critical approach to current debates and issues concerning trade, finance, inequality, poverty and global governance.

Introductory Reading:


Political Transformations

Module code: POS0010S5
Wednesday
Dr. Jason Edwards/Eric Kaufmann

This course aims to provide students with the skills to understand and explain the major
structural transformations in social and political processes and systems since the early modern period. Students will be introduced to a range of theoretical perspectives, with the objective of providing students the tools to engage critically in debates concerning: the rise of the modern state; modern political ideologies; the formation and development of the international state system; colonialism and its impact, including the changing nature of north-south relations in the contemporary era; and challenges to the future role of the nation-state and the inter-state system.

Students graduating from the course will:

- be familiar with an array of techniques for analysing large-scale historical shifts;
- have detailed knowledge of key milestones in the development of the modern political institutions;
- have developed a critical approach to debates concerning the role of ideologies in shaping the range of options within which political choices are made;
- have developed transferable skills, including critical evaluation, analytical investigation, giving oral presentations, communication and teamwork.

**Preliminary Reading**

For understanding what the modern state is – that is, to grasp its distinctive features – the best place to begin is with Roger King, *The State in Modern Society* (1986). This, as well as H. Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and its Competitors*, introduce both domestic and international influences on state formation. Brief and accessible introductions to the state and other basic political concepts can also be found in Andrew Gamble’s *An Introduction to Modern Social and Political Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1981) as well as in David Held’s edited volume *States and Societies* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1983).


There are also several useful books covering the international aspects of this module. Brief introductions to many of the topics covered are available: John Baylis et al. *The Globalisation of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations* (Oxford: OUP, 2011). A good place to start for debates on the concept of imperialism is Alex Colás’s *Empire* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007). For more comprehensive account of European colonialism see: David Abernathy’s *The Dynamics of Global Dominance: European Overseas Empires, 1415-1980* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000). Turning towards the spread of democracy and free markets, students can get useful background from Ian Clark, *Globalization and Fragmentation* (Oxford: OUP, 1997). One important account of these processes is provided in Samuel Huntington’s *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).
Level 6 Modules

Capitalism and the Politics of Markets
Module Code: SSP0116S6
Dr Deborah Mabbett and Dr Sam Ashenden
Friday

The course examines the historical emergence, development and contemporary forms of capitalism, enabling students to gain a detailed understanding of the debates attending modern capitalist economic relations from their inception to the present. Running throughout is a concern with the analysis of the systemic character of capitalist economic relations, and with the bifurcation of economic from other aspects of life (politics, morals, environment etc). The course brings together political, economic and sociological analysis in order to address key topics such as the emergence of a distinct domain of the 'economy'; the meaning of money; financialisation, debt and property; the contemporary commodification of both human and non-human life; and anti-capitalist protests.

Learning objectives:

- Identify the main historical debates about the nature of capitalism and the market economy;
- Understand and criticise the assumptions made by writers from different economic perspectives;
- Apply theoretical insights from political economy and economic sociology to topical economic issues;
- Marshall and appraise the arguments of others, produce arguments supported by relevant evidence.

Recommended reading:

There is no one text book for the course. Any background reading you complete in advance of the course will be very useful.

Useful introductions include:


More historically inflected introductions include:

Books that engage historical and current debates include:


British & Comparative Foreign Policy Analysis
Module Code: SSPO129S6
Dr David Styan
Wednesday

This module explores both the academic analysis and the practical experience of formulating foreign policy in the UK and other states. It identifies the diverse actors and pressures influencing foreign policy-making, including domestic political pressures and multilateral bodies. While the core focus of the lectures will be the UK, the module aims to provide students with the conceptual and analytical tools to analyse policy making in a variety of states, including emerging powers. While the course is grounded in theory, practical sessions will focus on detailed case-studies and draw on the direct experience of practitioners of policy in the UK and elsewhere.

On successful completion of this module a student will be expected to be able to:
- analyse the origins and evolution of the principal theories and approaches within foreign policy analysis.
- compare and contextualise such approaches within the broader fields of international
relations and public policy.

- Critically apply such approaches to analyse specific aspects of, and decision-making within, foreign policy formulation.
- Demonstrate an detailed knowledge of the mechanisms of UK foreign policy making, be able to engage in comparative analysis with other states' foreign policies, and demonstrate familiarity with, and analysis of, key primary sources of such policies.

**Introductory Reading:**

- Paul Williams, *British Foreign Policy under New Labour*, Palgrave 2005

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**Parliamentary Studies**

**Module Code: SSPO122S6**

**Wednesday**

**Dr. Ben Worthy**

This course offers a unique opportunity to understand how Parliaments work by learning from Parliamentary officials themselves. Birkbeck is one of only a handful of universities able to offer this course in conjunction with officials in Parliament. Five of the weeks of the course will be taught by Parliamentary officials with the other weeks taught by academics, including guest speakers.

The course will examine the theory and practice of Parliament’s role within the British system. It reflects on Parliament as a key symbolic and functional element in our democracy and considers how parliaments around the world differ. Topics include the work of select committees and other scrutiny instruments, reform of the House of Lords and Commons, Parliament and the media and new developments in public participation. Students graduating from the course will:

- Understand the theoretical relationship between the government, parliament and people within differing concepts of power
- Critically assess ideas around the role of legislatures in the modern world, particularly the idea that parliaments have ‘declined’ and have little influence
- Understand how Westminster compares with other bodies within the UK and elsewhere in terms of role, power and influence
- Have developed a range of independent research skills through analysing parliamentary records, statistics and online resources
- Have developed transferable skills, including critical evaluation, analytical investigation, giving oral presentations, communication and teamwork

**Preliminary Reading and Viewing**


In addition parliamentary papers and articles covering course themes can be accessed online. Particularly good are briefing notes and research papers from the House of Commons and Lords. See for example background papers on how the House of Commons works e.g. this 2012 paper on traditions and customs of the House and how the House of Lords works.

The Parliamentary Outreach team also offers regular public lectures on different aspects of Parliaments. These two lectures by the most senior official in the House of Lords and Commons can be viewed here ‘An Insider's Guide to The House of Commons’ by Robert Rogers (Clerk of the House of Commons) and ‘An Insider's Guide To The House of Lords’ by Clerk of the Parliaments, David Beamish, (the most senior official in the House of Lords).

Assessment

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Politics Power & Human Nature

Module code: POSO039S6
Day: Thursday
Dr Jason Edwards

This module explores the relationship between power, politics and human nature. All three of these terms are to be understood both as concepts employed in social and political thought and as real objects of social and political analysis. Students will be encouraged to adopt a critical attitude towards these terms and the various arguments that have been constructed in the history of social and political thought about the relationship between them. In particular, the module will bring under critical scrutiny the principal claim about this relationship that has characterised Western political thought since classical antiquity: that human politics and relations of power are to be conceived of as a manifestation of human nature understood as the fundamental biological, psychological and social characteristics of the species. Various ways in which this claim can be contested by turning it on its head – i.e. regarding human nature as a product of human politics and relations of power – will be explored.
Part one of the module examines ideas about the relationship between human nature and politics from classical antiquity to the eighteenth century. In part two, debates concerning the origins of human politics and civilization that arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century out of Darwin’s account of evolution are considered. Part three focuses on the bringing into question of the central position of ‘man’ and human nature that takes place in the twentieth. The final part of the module attends to contemporary debates in social and political theory about human nature, power and politics, including questions concerning cultural transmission and social conflict, the relationship between human and animal politics, religion, and the impact of biotechnology on politics and social relations.

Recommended reading

- Aristotle – *The Nicomachean Ethics*, book 1
- Charles Darwin – *The Descent of Man*, chapter 21 – General Summary
- Hannah Arendt – *The Human Condition*
- Mary Midgley – *Man and Beast*

**Russian Politics and Society, from 1905 to today**

**Module code:** POS0008S6  
**Day:** Friday  
**Dr. Edwin Bacon**

Russia – the world’s biggest country, sitting between East and West in terms of its political culture, between democracy and authoritarianism, between modernisation and stagnation. In the last hundred years or so Russia has experienced upheavals on a scale beyond most other nations – revolutions, staggering war deaths, dictatorships, empire building and collapse, superpower status, unprecedented decline and partial renewal. Its society has repeatedly experienced radical transformation. Its politics have been key to the way our contemporary world has developed. Today Russia stands as a prominent player in world affairs, one of the emergent ‘BRIC’ nations set to challenge US hegemony and Euro-centric conceptualisations.

**Aims and Objectives**

This course provides students with a thorough knowledge of modern Russian politics and society. It examines political thought in Russia, the processes of profound social and political change that have taken place since 1905, and Russia’s place in the world. Students will also develop critical abilities and analytical skills to help weigh competing approaches to key questions and communicate conclusions clearly.

- For most of the 20th century Russia – in the Soviet Union – was seen by many as being on
the cutting-edge of a new global political order. In its first part the course deals with the rise of the Communist regime and the Soviet Union, from workers on the streets in the 1905 revolution to superpower status within 50 years. We examine the tensions between ideology and reality, between holding onto power and creating a new and fairer society. We analyse an attempt to build a ‘new’ state from scratch and explore different social and political perspectives on this experience.

- The second part of the course looks at contemporary Russia, since the Soviet Union collapsed. We investigate how to move from an authoritarian to a democratic regime, and whether Russia under Putin, Medvedev, and Putin again has moved back towards authoritarianism. Through considering Russia, we ask questions about the impact of a state’s history and culture on notions of democracy and governance today. We look at sudden cultural and economic transformation in Russian society, and consider what Russia’s insistence that it is a ‘great power’ means in global terms.

On this course you will learn a good deal about Russia, its remarkable history and continuing importance. Through the study of Russia, the course aims also to develop students’ facility to answer wider and deeper questions. Can political theory change country? How should we balance the requirements of individuals, society, and great political movements? How aware are we of the narratives which shape our world views?

Students successfully completing this course will:

- have substantive knowledge of Russia’s political, economic, and social development
- 1905 to the present day;
- be familiar with the models, theories and concepts applied in studying Russia and the
- Soviet Union
- be familiar with the major debates among both Russian and Western analysts concerning key events and themes in Russian affairs, and have developed a critical approach to these debates, based on an understanding of a wide variety of perspectives and a sensitivity to standards of argument and evidence; and
- have developed transferable and cognitive skills, including critical evaluation, analytical investigation, written and oral presentation and communication.

**Background Resources**

For an introduction to Russia today, which includes an outline of the historical background, the course tutor’s own textbook – Edwin Bacon, *Contemporary Russia* (2nd edition 2010, 3rd edition to be published in 2013-14) – provides a decent overview. It has chapters on most aspects of Russian life today (politics, society, the economy, culture, international relations) and provides essential background which clearly will reflect the approach taken on this course.


*A good pre-course read is Archie Brown’s* *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (2009).
You will be using theory-laden concepts throughout your studies: terms such as freedom, power and justice. The moment one pauses to explain what one means by them, one is theorising. Of course, a lot of the time we use these words without too much explication, and provided everyone feels pretty confident about taking their meaning for granted, that’s fine. But once in a while that tacit agreement breaks down. Then we need to think again. That’s when theory happens.

That’s why many of the significant works in this field are written around moments of historical crisis, when the assumptions that make sense of one’s social and political life fail. Machiavelli seeks to plumb the secrets of power, because Italy in his day is impotent in the face of foreign powers. Hobbes’s theory seeks to reconstruct unity in the face of civil strife. Burke seeks to articulate a vision of sustaining tradition just as the French Revolution ruptures it. Marx emerges from the aftermath of the French Revolution, surveys the suffering inflicted by the industrial revolution, and looks to another political revolution to redeem it. However abstract it may be, social and political theorising of any value is not divorced from reality, but seeks to re-engage with it on new terms; and however great its intellectual sophistication, it’s anything but bloodless. It’s driven by conviction, and it aims to make a difference.

This determines two defining features of the course.

- First, we study these writings in the historical context in which they were written: to understand them adequately we must do our best to know what they were addressing and what they meant then. That’s why the course is organised chronologically.
- Second, we’re also concerned with what they have to say to us now. Often the more deeply they engage with their own times, the more powerfully they speak to ours.

It’s important to take the course as a whole. You may end up writing about just three authors in your coursework essays. But implicitly or explicitly, these writers are engaged in a debate with each other across the centuries, even as we will engage in debate with their yet living voices. They illuminate each other, and they illuminate our times. That’s why, though most of the sessions deal with particular thinkers, the course is punctuated with sessions on such themes as justice or freedom or the individual. These are moments at which to compare the positions of different writers, and to draw together the strands of the course and interweave them with our preoccupations in the present.
Books that outline a general approach to the field from different points of view, and will help you to get your bearings, include:

- Terence Ball, *Reappraising Political Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) [The first part discusses the significance we might today find in the classics of political theory and how to approach them; the second includes discussion of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau, Utilitarianism, Mill and Marx]
- T Ball, J Farr and R Hanson (eds) *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989) [essays on the historical development of concepts such as democracy, representation, the state, public opinion, property, revolution]
- Ernest Gellner, *The Condition of Liberty* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1994) [discussion of the socio-political conditions required to sustain civil society and political freedom on the western model; suggests that the affinity many suppose to hold between modernity and liberty may not exist]
- Geoffrey Hawthorn, *Enlightenment and Despair* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987) [A critical history of social theory from the eighteenth century to the present, including prehistory of social theory in Rousseau, Kant and Hegel]
- Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics*, 2nd edn. (London: Routledge, 1998) [A history of moral philosophy from the Greeks to the present, emphasising the importance of historical context to moral concepts and ideas]

However, the best way into the course is to start getting to grips with the texts we’ll be studying. They include:

• John Locke, Second Treatise in Two Treatises of Government, ed. Peter Laslett (CUP, Cambridge, 1988)

Assessment

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The United States in International Politics

Module Code SSP0131S6
Dr Robert Singh
Tuesday

This course aims to introduce students to the key scholarly debates about US government and politics since 1945. The emphasis is expressly contemporary but it is also designed to ensure that a clear historical grounding is achieved in order better to analyse the US today. As well as dealing with governing institutions and standard features of US government (presidency, Congress, courts, political parties) it focuses through the second term of study on issues of topical interest from gun control to immigration

• Advance a comprehensive and critical understanding of the role, influence and changing approaches of the United States to international affairs.
• Provide a balanced, clear and critical understanding of the recent (post-1945) reciprocal effects of the US on the international system and the effect of international affairs on domestic US politics.
• Provide a balanced, clear and critical understanding of a series of contemporary issues and controversies about US foreign policy, including terrorism and counter-terrorism, the ‘Israel lobby’, policy towards Iran and the Middle East, Russia, China, and the issue of American ‘decline.’
War is one of the oldest features of social life and one whose recurrence seems to endure in spite of all the political, social and cultural transformations it has traversed. Yet war is simultaneously never quite the same since its various manifestations are necessarily conditioned by the characteristics of the societies that wage it. This course goes beyond the narrow confines of strategic thought to a broad consideration of the complex relationships and dynamics which have interwoven the experience and practice of warfare to the past, present, and future development of states, societies, and the individuals who inhabit them.

Particular consideration will be given to the role of war in shaping political, social and cultural modernity through an exploration of its interplay with processes of state formation, its relationship to the industrialisation of societies and their uses of science and technology, its place within political and international relations theory, and its role in shaping historical consciousness and both individual and group identities. The personal and collective experience of war, its mediation and representation, and the uses of memory will also be considered. While the course will seek to contextualise war within its wider historiography, present issues such as the War on Terror, weapons of mass destruction, the revolution in military affairs, asymmetric warfare, humanitarian war, and genocide will also be covered.

Students taking the course will therefore acquire both a deeper understanding of the role of armed conflict in the history of the modern world than that provided by traditional accounts focused on great battles and military leaders as well as a set of conceptual tools and lenses with which to grasp and analyse the multi-faceted manifestations of war today.

**Preliminary Reading**

Paul Hirst, *War and Power in the 21st Century* provides an excellent introduction to many of the themes discussed in the course. John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* offers a highly readable account of war throughout world history with particular attention paid to its cultural dimension. William McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since A.D. 1000* does pretty much what it says on the tin, differing from Keegan in that the central focus is wider social change and war’s role within it. Lawrence Freedman, *War* is an edited volume with contributions covering a variety of relevant topics, from strategy and total war to ethical questions, the experience of war, and conflict in the developing world. Finally, Michael Howard, *Clausewitz* is a short but insightful introduction to the thought of the most pre-eminent philosopher of war.
Comparative Islamist Movements
Module code: No code yet (awaiting approval)
Thursday

The course aims to impart students a selection of contemporary Islamist movements. The emphasis is comparing these political-religious actors in terms of their ideologies, their strategies and their organisational structures. As well as dealing with the views of Islamist movements of competing ideologies such as liberalism, socialism, nationalism and fascism, the course will study the historical development of the relationship to states in the Middle East and of friction with the West. Looking at the range of movements, it allows for an informed debate about choice of political strategies, which range from accommodationist policies and non-violent opposition to then violence and militancy.
Dissertation

What is a dissertation?
A dissertation is a long piece of written work (8,000–10,000 words) that offers a detailed, sustained and critical treatment of a chosen topic. The aim of the dissertation is to enable students to advance their knowledge of the disciplines they have studied on their BA programme by pursuing an independent research project on a chosen topic within one or more of these fields. Students completing the dissertation will have examined a subject in substantial depth, shown evidence of an ability to undertake sustained critical analysis, developed and improved their research skills, and produced a long piece of written work that demonstrates understanding of an area relevant to your degree.

Who writes a dissertation?
BA students are not required to do a dissertation but they can choose to do one in their final year in lieu of a Level 6 option module (see programme handbooks for more details). The dissertation involves independent study, but it is in no way an ‘easy option’: students writing a dissertation should expect to dedicate at least the same amount of hours per week to researching, reading and writing as they would in any other Level 6 taught module. In many respects, the dissertation offers a taste of postgraduate study and throws up distinctive intellectual and logistical challenges associated to independent learning.

Proposing a dissertation topic
A copy of the dissertation proposal is available here along with further information: UG Dissertation Guidelines 2015-16.docx. The proposal, which must be relevant to your degree programme and approved in advance, should contain a provisional title and subtitle with the keywords identifying the theme of the dissertation. It also requires a 1,000-word outline description detailing the proposed structure and tentative content of the dissertation, including around a dozen key bibliographical references. The purpose of this form is to present a dissertation topic for approval by the undergraduate dissertation coordinator Dr Alex Colás, who will then help you identify a suitable supervisor. Once students have chosen to do a dissertation, they must e-mail the dissertation proposal to Dr Colas at a.colas@bbk.ac.uk by 31 August in their penultimate year of study.

Assessment Criteria
The dissertation is assessed according to the following criteria, with credit given to the extent that:

• the research question is well-defined, and contextualised
• an argument is specified, coherently presented and supported by evidence;
• alternative arguments are analysed
• the approach is critical, not descriptive
• a relevant methodology is employed
• relevant sources have been consulted;
• knowledge of relevant literature, issues and debates is demonstrated
• the style and presentation is clear and careful, and appropriate academic conventions have been observed.