

**Department of Politics
Birkbeck
University of London**

**Options Booklet
2017-18**

**Politics
Global Politics & International Relations
Programmes**

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.

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Please note: While we do our best to ensure that this this booklet remains accurate, the information contained here is provisional and subject to change.

For more information, contact ugpolitics@bbk.ac.uk.

Department of Politics Undergraduate Timetable 2017/18

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
The Study of Politics Term 1	The Practice of Politics Term 2	Governing by Numbers Term 1	The Study of Politics Term 1	No UG Classes
Introduction to Global Politics Term 2	Modern Political Analysis Term 1	Surveying Political Research Term 2	Transformations in Modern Politics: Democracy, Conflict & Globalisation Term 1 & 2	
Introduction to International Political Economy Term 1 & 2	Political Identities Term 2	Comparative Government Term 2	Russian Politics & Society 1908 to Today Term 1 & 2	
War & Modern Society Term 1 & 2	The Evolution of the International System Term 1	The Evolution of the International System Term 1		
	Contemporary British Politics Term 1 & 2	International Organisations Term 2		
	International Migration & Transnationalism Term 1 & 2	Parliamentary Studies Term 1 & 2		
	The United States in International Politics Term 1 & 2	Politics & the Middle East Term 1 & 2		
	Social & Political Theory Term 1 & 2			

Note: This timetable may be subject to change should staffing, room booking, or similar issues demand it, although we do not at this stage anticipate any such changes.

Undergraduate Teaching Weeks			
WEEK		POLITICS WEEKS FOR TEACHING	UG
1	Oct	2-Oct-17	Teaching
2	Oct	9-Oct-17	Teaching
3	Oct	16-Oct-17	Teaching
4	Oct	23-Oct-17	Teaching
5	Oct	30-Oct-17	Teaching
6	Nov	6-Nov-17	Reading Week
7	Nov	13-Nov-17	Workshop Week L5 & 6 only
8	Nov	20-Nov-17	Teaching
9	Nov	27-Nov-17	Teaching
10	Dec	4-Dec-17	Teaching
11	Dec	11-Dec-17	Teaching
	Dec	18-Dec-17	Break
	Jan	25-Dec-17	
	Jan	1-Jan-18	
1	Jan	8-Jan-18	Teaching
2	Jan	15-Jan-18	Teaching
3	Feb	22-Jan-18	Teaching
4	Feb	29-Jan-18	Teaching
5	Feb	5-Feb-18	Teaching
6	Feb	12-Feb-18	Reading week
7	Feb	19-Feb-18	Workshop Week L5 & 6 only
8	Mar	26-Feb-18	Teaching
9	Mar	5-Mar-18	Teaching
10	Mar	12-Mar-18	Teaching
11	Mar	19-Mar-18	Teaching

BA GLOBAL POLITICS & INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

The year of study in the table below refers to the year you will be in during 2017/18.

Part-Time (Four Years)	Full-Time (Three Years)
Year One The Study of Politics (Level 4) Introduction to Global Politics (Level 4) Transformations in Modern Politics (Level 5)	Year One The Study of Politics (Level 4) Introduction to Global Politics (Level 4) Transformations in Modern Politics (Level 5) One Level 5 option*
Year Two Intro to Int. Political Economy (Level 5) Two Level 4 options†	Year Two Intro to Int. Political Economy (level 5) Two Level 4 options† One Level 5 or Level 6 option
Year Three War and Modern Society (Level 6) One Level 5 or Level 6 option One Level 5 or Level 6 option	Year Three War and Modern Society (Level 6) Three Level 6 options or Two Level 6 options + dissertation
Year Four Three Level 6 options or Two Level 6 options + dissertation	

*Alongside Politics options students can choose from modules outside of The Department of Politics for this Level 5 option, these modules are:
 Social Justice - Geography; From Ancient to Medieval Societies – History; History of Philosophy – Philosophy; Intercultural Communication in Business Contexts – ALC;
 International Management Communication - ALC

Please contact the department office if you wish to choose one of these modules

Note: Students can take a maximum of 30 credits (1 module) from outside the department, subject to the approval of the Programme Director.

†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)

BA POLITICS/POLITICS & GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Please note the year of study refers to the year you will be in during 2017/18

Part-time (four years)	Full-time (three years)
Year One The Study of Politics (Level 4) Transformations in Modern Politics (Level 5) Comparative Government OR Modern Political Analysis (Level 4)	Year One The Study of Politics (Level 4) Transformations in Modern Politics (Level 5) Comparative Government OR Modern Political Analysis (Level 4) Level 5 or 6 option
Year Two The Practice of Politics (Level 4) Modern Political Analysis (Level 4) Transformations in Modern Politics (Level 5)	Year Two The Practice of Politics (Level 4) Modern Political Analysis (Level 4) Transformations in Modern Politics (Level 5) Level 5 or Level 6 option
Year Three Social and Political Theory (Level 6) Level 5 or Level 6 option Level 5 or Level 6 option	Year Three Social and Political Theory (Level 6) Three Level 6 options or Two Level 6 options + dissertation
Year Four Three Level 6 options or Two Level 6 options + dissertation	

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: SSPO017S4 AAA Monday Term 1 (*Core for Global Politics & International Relations year 1 students*)

Module Code: SSP0174S AAB Thursday Term 1 (*Core for Politics 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

- Blakely, Georgina, and Bryson, Valerie, Eds. 2007. *The Impact of Feminism on Political Concepts and Debates*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Dunn, John. 2000. *The Cunning of Unreason: Making sense of politics*. London: HarperCollins.
- Leftwich, Adrian, Ed. 2004. *What is Politics? The activity and its study*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Manent, Pierre. 2006. *A World Beyond Politics? A defence of the nation-state*. trans.
- Marc LePain. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Minogue, Kenneth, 2000. *Politics: a very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schmitt, Carl. 1996. *The Concept of the Political* [1932]. trans. George Schwab, foreword Tracy B. Strong. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Assessment

001	Coursework	20	Bibliographical Exercise
002	Coursework	30	Essay Plan
003	Coursework	50	Essay - c. 1,200 words

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

- Best, Anthony et al. 2008. *International History of the Twentieth Century and Beyond, Second Edition*. Oxford: Routledge.
- Heywood, Andrew. 2011. *Global Politics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nye, Jr., Joseph S., and Welch, David A.. 2012. *Understanding Global Conflict and Cooperation: An Introduction to Theory and History, Ninth Edition*. New York: Longman.
- Reus-Smit, Christian, and Snidal, Duncan, eds. 2010. *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wilkinson, Paul. 2007. *International Relations: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Assessment

001	Coursework	25	Book review - 500 words
002	Coursework	25	Short Essay - 1000 words
003	Test	50	Take-home test

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

- Nye, Joseph S. and David A. Welch, 2012. *Understanding Global Conflict and Cooperation: An Introduction to Theory and History*, 9th Edition. London: Pearson
- Best, Antony et al, 2008. *International History of the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, 2nd Edition. London: Routledge
 - Edition. London: Routledge
- Mearsheimer, John J., 2001. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York and London: W. W. Norton

Assessment

001	Coursework	60	Essay - 2000 words
002	Test	40	Take-home test

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 of 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

- Armstrong, D., Lloyd, L. and Redmond, J. (2004), *International Organisations in World Politics*, 3rd ed., London: Routledge
- Hurd, I. (2010), *International Organizations: Politics, Law, Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Mazower, M. (2009), *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Weiss, T., Forsythe, D. and Pease, K-K. (2010) *The United Nations and Changing World Politics*, 6th ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press

Assessment

001	Presentation	10	Presentation
002	Coursework	45	Essay
003	Test	45	Take-home test

Modern Political Analysis

Module Code: POSO084S4

Tuesday Term 1 | Dr Kevin Manton

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 Ball et al. (eds.), *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*.

Assessment

001	Coursework	20	Book review 500 words
002	Coursework	30	Short essay 1000 words
003	Test	50	In class test 2 hours

The Practice of Politics

Module Code: SSPO016S4
 Tuesday Term 2 | 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

001	Coursework	30	Personal Portfolio - 5 pages / 1000 words
002	Coursework	20	Analysis of leader/speech - 1000 words
003	Project	20	Electronic communication task - 500 words
004	Coursework	20	Policy brief - 300-400 words
005	Practicals (inc laboratory, computing)	10	Working with others - peer assesment

Political Identities

Module Code: FFIN938S4 ACB

Tuesday Term 2 | Dr Kevin Manton

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 nature
- 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

- Baudrillard, Jean, (2001) *Selected Writings*, London, Polity
- Boccock & Thompson, eds. (1992) *Social & Cultural Forms*, London, OUP
- Gamble, A. (1982) *An Introduction to Modern Social and Political Thought*, London: Macmillan.
- Saunders, P. (1990) *Social Class and Stratification*, London: Routledge.

Assessment

001	Coursework	20	Book review - approx 750 words
002	Coursework	30	Essay - approx 1000 words
003	Test	50	Take-home test

Comparative Government

Module Code: FFPO956S4

Wednesday Term 2 | Dr Dale Mineshima-Lowe

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

- Rod Hague and Martin Harrop (2013) *Comparative Government and Politics – An Introduction*, 9th edn, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Daniele Caramani (2011) *Comparative Politics*, Oxford University Press
- Carol Ann Drogus and Stephen Orvis (2011) *Introducing Comparative Politics: Concepts and Cases in Context*, 2nd edition, London: SAGE

Assessment

001	Coursework	50	Essay 1 - 2000 words max
002	Coursework	50	Essay 2 - 2000 words max

Governing By Numbers

Module Code: SSPO137S4

Wednesday Term 1 | Professor Deborah Mabbett

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.

Surveying Political Research

Module code: SSPO140S4

Wednesday Term 2

What does it mean to do research in the fields of politics and international relations? Each week, a Department of Politics staff member will introduce a topic from their own research and explain its background and context. You will see how some of the great thinkers of the past have left their mark on political research, but also learn how the field has moved on with new techniques and changing questions. Lecturers will discuss how they see the relationship between politics, contemporary history and journalism, as well as the disciplinary overlaps and boundaries with sociology and economics.

This module provides a gentle introduction to thinking about the production of knowledge and research methods, which will help you to understand the context of your specialised Level 6 studies and to formulate your own ideas for your dissertation, if you choose this option.

Indicative module content

- Liberalism and neoliberalism
- Populations as units of analysis
- Seeing courts as political actors
- The exercise of power by political leaders
- Ways of looking at the European Union
- Bringing feminism to the study of political representation
- Marxist analysis of resource conflicts
- Competing ideas of what political economy is
- Violence and its relationships to political power
- The relationship between markets and morals
- Biology and politics
- 'The people': populism and representation

Objectives

On successful completion of this module, you will be expected to be able to:

- survey a topical area of research and identify its historical influences and/or disciplinary characteristics
- analyse and compare academic articles in politics or international relations in terms of their methodological features.

Assessment

001	Coursework	50	Article review essay - 1000-2000 words		
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002	Coursework	50	Historical review essay - 1000-2000 words
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Assessment for Level 5 & 6 modules

Please note: 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 & Professor Rosie Campbell

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

For those who know little about British politics, an excellent place to start is: Wright, Tony (2013) *British Politics: A Very Short Introduction* (2nd edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press) and also King, A. (2015). *Who Governs Britain?* (Penguin UK).

Students may find it useful to buy a copy of Cowley et al. (2016) *Developments in British Politics 10* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), although a few copies are available in the library.

Transformations in Modern Politics: Democracy, Conflict & Globalisation

Module code: SSPO139S5

Thursday | Dr Dionyssi Dimitrakopoulos & Dr Alex Colas

Why has the Arab Spring not led to the democratisation of the Middle East? What explains the rise of new populist parties, movements and leaders in the West? How did a billionaire businessman with no extensive political experience become US President? These are the kinds of questions addressed in this module, with reference to key concepts and theories of democracy, conflict and globalisation.

In this module you will learn about the historical transformation of modern politics, from the rise of the modern state and the notion of human rights, to the contemporary challenges of climate change and multicultural identities. You will acquire knowledge of how states operate domestically, and an understanding of the effect of international politics on domestic politics, as well as a wider familiarity with the formal processes and intuitions associated to democracy, government and globalisation in different regions of the world.

Indicative module content

State, Nation and Violence.

Democratic Politics.

Authoritarian Regimes.

Social Transformations.

Objectives

On successful completion of this module, you will be expected to be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge of the competing theories of democracy, conflict and globalisation, and the emerging social and political issues related to the conduct of politics and the exercise of government between and across different parts of the world
- demonstrate knowledge of the context in which political transformation takes place and the ways in which political institutions and social processes help or hinder such change
- demonstrate an understanding of how various theoretical approaches drawn from the social sciences and humanities contribute towards the understanding of social and political transformations in the modern world
- make use of relevant research methods and study skills when critically analysing transformations in modern politics
- apply the methods and techniques you have learned to assess competing theories and empirical evidence as to the nature and scale of the social and political changes induced contemporary globalisation.

Introduction to International Political Economy

Module Code: POSO029S5

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

- Stubbs, R. Underhill R.D. (eds) *Political Economy and the Changing World Order* (OUP, 3rd edition, 2006) [RRC 337 POL]
- Robert O'Brien and Marc Williams, *Global political economy: Evolution and dynamics* (3rd ed. London: Palgrave, 2010) [RRC 337 OBR]
- Balaam, D. & Veseth, M. *Introduction to international political economy*, (4th ed. Pearson 2008) [RRC 337 BAL]

Level 6 Modules

Parliamentary Studies

Module Code: SSPO122S6

Wednesday | Dr Ben Worthy & Professor Sarah Childs

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

To understand the theory behind how Parliaments work see Norton, P. (2013) *Parliament in British Politics*, 2nd Edition. This text offers a wide ranging analysis of the UK Parliament's role in the modern world as a link between the electorate and the government and the paradox of its apparent decline as against its strong, but often 'hidden', influence. To understand more on Parliamentary reform in the wake of the expenses crisis see Kelso, A. (2011) 'Changing Parliamentary Landscapes', Chapter 4 in Heffernan et al. (2011) *Developments in British Politics* 9 and this House of Commons Research Briefing (2013) 'Coalitions at Westminster' [here](#) on how the Coalition has influenced Parliament. For a detailed explanation of the functioning of Parliament see Rogers, R. and Walters, R. (2006) *How Parliament Works*, 6th edition. The book explains Parliaments history, its shifting role and organization. It also examines how laws are made and how government is held to account, ending with a discussion of possible reform.

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

001	Coursework	40	Case Study - 3-4000 words
002	Coursework	60	Research Project - 5-6000 words

Russian Politics and Society, from 1905 to today

Module code: POSO008S6

Thursday | Dr. Edwin Bacon & TBC

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.

For the earlier period, Richard Sakwa *Soviet Politics in Perspective* (1998) provides comprehensive coverage.

A good pre-course read is Archie Brown's *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (2009).

Social and Political Theory

Module Code: POSO013S6

Tuesday | Dr Sam Ashenden

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.

Recommended Reading

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]
- John Dunn, *Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future*, rev. edn. (Cambridge: CUP, 1993) [Elegant appraisal of the (inadequate) resources of key strands in the western political tradition in relation to our current situation — with a streak of ecological pessimism]
- Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Meditations on Modern Political Thought: Masculine/Feminine Themes from Luther to Arendt* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State UP, 1992) [includes discussion of Luther, Rousseau, Liberalism, Hegel, Freud, Arendt]
- 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]
- Barry Hindess, *Discourses of Power* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) [Analysis of the concept power from Hobbes and Locke to neo-marxism and Foucault]
- 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]
- Pierre Manent, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*, trans. Rebecca Balinski (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994) [stimulating, if idiosyncratic, account of the character and problems of liberal thought]
- Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, rev. edn. (Princeton University Press: Press, 2004) [Combines thematic discussion with close attention to the work of particular writers; especially good on the Reformation, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and the emergence of liberalism in eighteenth-century debates about civil society, Marx and Nietzsche].

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

- Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (Cambridge: CUP, 1988)
- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: CUP, 1991) Parts I and II
- John Locke, *Second Treatise in Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (CUP, Cambridge, 1988)
- Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of The Wealth of Nations*, ed. IRH Campbell and AS Skinner (London: Liberty Fund, 1981) 2 Vols, esp. Book I chs. I-V; Book III chs. on economic and social history; and Book IV ch. II.
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, in *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. G.D.H. Cole, rev. JH Brumfitt & John C Hall (London: Everyman, 1973)
- Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. JGA Pocock (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co, 1987), esp. the first half.
- GFW Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M.Knox (Oxford: OUP, 1952) [also ed. A Wood (Cambridge: CUP, 1991)], esp. Introduction, Concept of the Philosophy of Right, of the Will, Freedom and Right; Part Three (iia), Civil Society, the System of Needs; Part Three (iiic) World History.

Assessment

001	Coursework	50	Essay – 2500 - 3000 words
002	Test	50	Home examination

The United States in International Politics

Module Code: SSPO131S6

Dr Robert Singh | Tuesday

Module Aims & Objectives

This module provides a comprehensive examination of the role and influence of the United States in international politics and the effect of international affairs on the USA. While a basic grasp of the history of US foreign policy is necessary, the focus is emphatically the modern era, with particular emphasis on the Cold War and post-Cold War politics and policy.

The module aims to enable students to deepen their understanding of the conceptual and empirical bases of political inquiry and develop skills of critical evaluation and analysis. Drawing widely on a combination of political science, history, and international relations, the key objectives are that students acquire:

- (i) a substantive knowledge of the content of US foreign policy from WWII to the present, and continuity and change therein.

(ii) an ability to critically analyse key contemporary issues and controversies in US foreign policy and the institutional and political processes by which it is made.

(iii) enhanced analytical, evaluative and critical capabilities in relation to the general area of the US in international politics through seminar discussions and independent study.

To these ends, the module is divided into three broad succeeding sections:

- i) **Theories & Histories.** This section considers a series of 'big theme' topics that include the American foreign policy tradition, the nature of the Cold War, the relationship between theory and practice, and the character of American nationalism as it shapes US foreign policy.
- ii) **Institutions and the Policy Process.** The second part examines the ways in which US foreign policy is formulated and implemented. It focuses on domestic and institutional politics and analyses key factors such as the constitutional balance of power, the war powers of Congress and the presidency, the roles of key institutional and non-institutional actors from legislators and political parties to interest groups and public opinion, and where power actually lies in the making of American foreign policy.
- iii) **Post-Cold War Case Studies.** The third section examines several case studies of recent US policy, concentrating on continuity and change in US policy in relation to US relations with Iran and the Middle East, Russia, and China and debates over American decline, US policy options today, and the relative impact of the US on the international arena and the international arena on the US.

Three broad questions underpin the module as a whole and specific topics we examine:

- Has US foreign policy been guided by 'realism' broadly conceived (power politics/national self-interest), 'idealism' (the promotion of ideological values commonly associated with liberalism: democracy, human rights, markets), or a hybrid of both?
- How far is US foreign policy determined by domestic political pressures rather than the national interest or are elite decision-makers able to act with relative autonomy from democratic/societal/pluralist forces (public opinion, interest groups, and the mass media)?
- How do we explain the relative continuity in US foreign policy in the context of apparent partisan and ideological polarisation and international volatility and change?

By the end of the module, students should have formulated clear, informed views on these broad questions - as well as specific topics - and be able to think critically about the goals, processes and effectiveness of US foreign policy. What you argue is of less significance than how –familiarity with the central academic literatures, and the carefully reasoned and reflective quality of your analysis, evidence and argument, are key.

Background Reading

In order to get a good sense of the interplay of international and domestic factors in the making of US foreign policy, it's strongly recommended that you read these and as many of

the following books as you can manage during the academic year:

- Colin Dueck (2015). The Obama Doctrine: American Grand Strategy [327.73009051 DUE]
- Colin Dueck (2006). Reluctant Crusaders: Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy [bbk 327.730090511]
- Peter Hays Gries (2013), The Politics of American Foreign Policy: How Ideology Divides Liberals and Conservatives over Foreign Affairs [bbk 327.73 GRI]
- Bryan Mabee (2013). Understanding American Power: The Changing World of US Foreign Policy [bbk 327.73 MAB]
- Peter Trubowitz (2011). Politics and Strategy: Partisan Ambition and American Statecraft [bbk rrc + bbk 327.73001 TRU]
- Joseph S. Nye Jr. (2015). Is The American Century Over? [bbk 327.73 NYE]

A vast number of excellent, non-partisan reports by the Congressional Research Service on topics we cover are available at: <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/index.html>

The best, non-partisan sources of daily information on US politics/foreign policy are:

<http://www.c-span.org/>

www.realclearpolitics.com

www.washingtonpost.com

For excellent sources of current public opinion and research see:

<http://www.pewresearch.org/>

www.gallup.com

War and Modern Society

Module code: POSO004S6

Monday | Dr. Antoine Bousquet

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.

International Migration & Transnationalism

Module Code: SSPO109S6

Tuesday | Dr Matthijs van den Bos & Professor Eric Kaufmann

This course aims to explore the essential debates and key facts and historical developments involved in modern-day international migration and transnationalism. In the field of international migration, the module addresses global historical trends; the different trajectories of Europe and the United States; debates on (im)migration motives and policy; and the UK reality. In the field of transnationalism, the focus is on the

relation between (im)migration and integration. Topics will be addressed such as deterritorialization and citizenship, assimilation and multiculturalism, and transnationalism in relation to dual or long-distance nationalism.

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this course students will be expected to be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of key debates, facts and historical developments in modern-day international migration and transnationalism;
- In the field of international migration, demonstrate knowledge of global historical trends and regional specificity;
- In the field of transnationalism, demonstrate understanding of dilemmas regarding deterritorialization and citizenship;
- Marshal and appraise critically other people's arguments; formulate research

questions independently; and produce logical narratives and arguments supported by relevant evidence.

Recommended Reading

Any background reading you are able to accomplish will be extremely useful. No single book covers all the material relevant to the course. However, for introductions to international migration (studies), useful books are:

- Brettell, C.B., and J.F. Hollifield. 2008. *Migration Theory. Talking Across Disciplines*. 2nd edition. New York: Routledge.
- Castles, S., and M.J. Miller. 2009. *The Age of Migration. International Population Movements in the Modern World*. 4th edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Koser, K. 2007. *International Migration. A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

For historical and geographic overview articles on international migration:

- Cohen, R. 2010. *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Massey, D.S., et al. 2008. *Worlds In Motion. Understanding International Migration At The End Of The Millennium*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

For the topics of integration and citizenship:

- Koopmans, R., et al. 2005. *Contested Citizenship. Immigration And Cultural Diversity In Europe*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Martiniello, M., and J. Rath, eds. 2010. *Selected Studies in International Migration and Immigrant Incorporation*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Steiner, N. 2009. *International Migration and Citizenship Today*. Milton Park
- [etc.]: Routledge.

For the topics of globalisation and transnationalism:

- Moses, J.W. 2006. *International Migration. Globalization's Last Frontier*. London: Zed.
- Vertovec, S. 2009. *Transnationalism*. London: Routledge

Politics and the Middle East

Module Code: POSO036S6

Wednesday | Dr Barbara Zollner & TBC

This course provides an introduction to the contemporary politics of the Middle East. It aims to bridge International Relations and Area Studies perspectives in order to critically engage with political developments and conflicts in the region.

The focus of the course will be to

- develop a broad understanding of how the contemporary Middle East has evolved since 1918.
- identify and examine the key issues dominating politics in the region, including great powers' relations with the region and its peoples.
- put the politics of the Middle East in the broader perspectives of International

- Relations and Area Studies
- place the politics of the region within the wider comparative perspective of the developing world, highlighting similarities and differences.

By the end of the course, students should have gained knowledge of the evolution of Middle Eastern polities and societies, as well as external powers' interactions with them. They should also have developed a detailed knowledge of key concepts and texts used in the analysis of the region; and relevant historical and contextual knowledge, including on the international relations of the region.

Preliminary Readings

- Halliday, F. *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology*: (Cambridge University Press, 2005)
- Fawcett, L (ed) *International Relations of the Middle East* (Oxford University Press, 2004)
- R. Owen, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East*, (Routledge, 2000).
- S. Bromley, *Rethinking Middle East Politics: State Formation and Development*, (Polity, 1993).
- Halliday, F. *100 Myths About the Middle East*, (Saqi Books 2005)
- Dodge T. and Higgott R. (eds), *Globalisation and the Middle East, Islam, Economics, Culture and Politics*, (London and Washington: RIIA and the Brookings Institution, 2002)

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.