

Advanced English: Disunited Kingdom? Discovering British Politics

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This course is meant for students of the advanced C1 level. Theme-based language classes aim at developing written and oral skills through the study of a specific topic.

Presentation

Should Britain rejoin the EU? Will Scotland become independent? Could civil war resume in Northern Ireland? Is the monarchy in jeopardy? Does the rise of the far-right signal the end of Britain's exceptionalism? Is Britain a model of multiculturalism? Is it still, in Orwell's words, "the most class-ridden society under the sun"? Can the Westminster system still offer one of the best forms of democratic government tried since the Enlightenment? Will the new Labour government definitively turn the page on Thatcherite politics? Can Britain afford to remain a global power? Will the Labour and Conservative Parties disappear? And last but not least, is the UK still the country of pubs, clubs, and football?

Course Objectives

Since Brexit, British politics have become increasingly complex, reviving tensions within the union, taking new directions, but also reflecting broader challenges and trends common to other democracies. This course aims to help students move beyond generalisations and clichés to develop a nuanced understanding of the United Kingdom.

The main objectives are:

- To refine students' command of English through the in-depth analysis of a wide range of materials, with a focus on political vocabulary and cultural references
- To acquire a precise and quite sophisticated understanding of British institutions, politics, and society—particularly useful for students considering a year in the UK or simply curious about the country
- To develop critical thinking through the analysis and discussion of diverse sources.

Course Description

There is no prerequisite for this class, apart for a taste for politics and some enthusiasm for all things British!

Each session will begin with a review of current affairs, linked to a specific topic and set of sources. Students will be encouraged to think critically and use English as a means to debate political issues. They will be

introduced to the historical, institutional, and cultural context and asked to engage in various activities, including debates, roleplay, and various writing exercises.

Students will explore British politics through the weekly study of the press and news, as well as films, TV series, podcasts, official reports, memoirs, speeches, art and monuments, academic research, statistics, and more.

Their English proficiency and ability to analyse sources and issues will be assessed through engaging and dynamic activities such as live interpreting, roleplay, writing a news dispatch, and debating in the style of the House of Commons, among others.

The topics covered will be adapted to recent developments in the news and students' interests but will include key themes such as Parliament, the Executive, geopolitics, political parties, devolution, regional and social divides, Brexit and its impact, and more.

Organization

Activities will develop all four language skills, with an emphasis on speaking, comprehension, and listening:

- **Reading:** students will be expected to read articles and other written materials for each class. They may also be encouraged to read a full book of their choosing in English
- **Writing:** several written assignments or short research projects will be required during the semester
- **Listening:** challenging audio and video extracts relevant to each topic will be used in class
- **Speaking:** students will participate in a variety of speaking activities inspired by real-life situations and prepare short presentations to discuss key issues.