POLLS 3450    BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

COURSE TUTOR: Dr Nicholas D J Baldwin

The purpose of the course is to give a broad introduction to the origins, development, structure and workings of the British system of Government and of British politics.

Course Outline

1. The Historical Context of British Government and Politics
2. The British Constitution: Real or Imaginary?
3. The Monarchy: Strength through Weakness?
4. Parliament - The House of Commons: Executive Scrutineer?
5. Parliament - The House of Lords: Watchdog, Poodle or incontinent Labrador?
6. The Prime Minister and Cabinet Government: First among Equals?
7. The Civil Service: Britain's Ruling Class?
8. Devolved Government: From Unitary State to Union State?
9. Local Government: Force or Farce?
10. The Changing Role of the State: Enabling not Providing?
11. The Role and Power of the Courts – domestic and international
12. Britain, the European Union and Brexit
13. The Social Context of British Politics
15. Political Parties and Pressure Groups
16. Power and the British Political System
The course requirement for each student will be an assessed essay to be handed in no later than 4.00pm on Thursday Week 6 which will account for 25% of the final grade.

In addition, students are expected as a matter of course to present tutorials, to participate in tutorial discussions and to demonstrate some interest in the subject. Consequently, class work (consisting of general attendance and participation, 5 tutorial presentations, a class Parliamentary-style debate and the Parliament trip [circumstances permitting, it is hoped that the course will be supplemented by a trip to Parliament to meet Members of the House of Commons and House of Lords to discuss with them issues raised during the course], will count for an additional 35% of the final grade. It is your responsibility to attend all classes in the course. **Please note:** Failure to attend class can result in low grades and a loss of credit.

In addition, the course consists of a final three-hour essay-based (4 essays) examination which will count for the remaining 40% of the final grade.

Teaching is by lecture - including a number by visiting speakers and the use of video presentation(s) - and tutorial.
Learning outcomes:

The main thrust of the different methods of assessment used is to evaluate what students know, understand and can do.

On completion of the course, students will be expected to have gained:

- knowledge of the subject matter;
- an understanding of the subject matter;
- an appreciation of the nuances of the subject matter;
- an awareness of the need to be logical when dealing with material;
- an awareness of the need to be concise when dealing with material;
- an awareness of the need to be analytical when dealing with material;
- an awareness of the need to support arguments by reason and relevant evidence.

Please Note: Any student with documented medical, psychological or learning disabilities, who feels that they may need in-class academic adjustments, reasonable modifications, and/or auxiliary aids and services while taking this course, should first contact the Disability Support Services (DSS) on their home campus to discuss specific needs. FDU Florham Campus students should contact the Director of Disability Support Services at 973-443-8079. FDU Metropolitan Campus students should contact the Associate Provost at 201-692-2477. Once the academic adjustments, modifications, or auxiliary aids and services are approved by DSS, the College Dean and the Faculty concerned will be notified.
RECORD LIST:

**Recommended Background Reading**

3. Philip Norton, *Governing Britain* 328.42 NOR
4. Bill Jones, Philip Norton and Isabelle Hertner (Eds), *Politics UK* (10th edition) 320.42 JON
6. Richard Heffernan et al (eds), *Developments in British Politics* 10 320.42 HEF

**General – Recent Political History**

1. Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* 942 MAR
3. Nick Tiratsoo (ed.), *From Blitz to Blair: Britain since 1939* 329.9423TIR
4. Peter Clarke, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-1990* 942 CLA
5. Gavin Esler, *How Britain Ends* 942 ESL

**General – The European Context including Brexit**

David Charter, *Europe: In or Out* 341.185 CHA

David Charter, *What has the EU ever done for us?* 341.185 CHA

Harold Clarke et al, *Brexit: Why Britain Voted to Leave the European Union* 341.185 CLA

Nick Clegg, *How to stop Brexit* 341.185 CLE

Ian Dunt, *Brexit: What the Hell Happens Now?* 341.185 DUN

Geoffrey Evans and Anand Menon, *Brexit and British Politics* 341.185 EVA

Jason Farrell and Paul Goldsmith, *How to Lose a Referendum* 341.185 FAR

Ian Kearns, *Collapse: Europe after the European Union* 341.185 KEA

Denis MacShane, *Brexit: How Britain left Europe* 341.185 MAC

Denis MacShane, *Brexit, No Exit* 341.185 MAC

Craig Oliver, *Unleashing Demons* 341.185 OLI

Fintan O’Toole, *Heroic Failure: Brexit and the Politics of Pain* 341.185 OTO

David Reynolds, *Island Stories: Britain and its History in the Age of Brexit* 942 REY

Tim Ross and Tom McTague, *Betting the House* 324.42 ROS

Tim Shipman, *All Out War* 341.185 SHI

Brendan Simms, *Britain’s Europe: A Thousand Years of Conflict & Cooperation* 341.185 SIM

Graham Taylor, *Understanding Brexit* 341.185 TAY

Hugo Young, *This Blessed Plot* 341.184 YOU
**General Reading List**

This is a selective bibliography. It is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive. It should be employed solely as a guide to possible reading.

Walter Bagehot *The English Constitution* 342.42 BAG
The Independent *Guide to the UK Constitution* 328.42 IND
Dennis Kavanagh *British Politics: Continuities and Change* 320.42 KAV
RM Punnett *British Government and Politics* 354.42 PUN
P Bromhead *Britain's Developing Constitution* 342.42 BRO
I Gilmour *The Body Politic* 354.42 GIL
ECS Wade & AW Bradley *Constitution and Administrative Law* 342.42 WAD
P Norton *The Constitution in Flux* 342.42 NOR
Ferdinand Mount *The British Constitution Now* 342.42 MOU
J Harvey & L Bather *The British Constitution* 342.42 HAR
Keith Sutherland *The Rape of the Constitution* 342.42 SUT
Anthony King *The British Constitution* 342.42 KIN
P Hennessy *The Hidden Wiring: Unearthing the British Constitution* 342.42 HEN
Nicholas Bamforth *Public Law in an Multi-Layered Constitution* 342.42 BAM
Vernon Bogdanor *The Coalition and the Constitution* 342.42 BOG
Vernon Bogdanor *The British Constitution in the Twentieth Century* 342.42 BOG
Vernon Bogdanor *The New British Constitution* 342.42 BOG
Robert Hazell *Constitutional Futures Revisited* 342.42 HAZ
Peter Leyland *The Constitution of the United Kingdom* 342.42 LEY
Lord Nolan *The Making and Remaking of the British Constitution* 342.42 NOL
House of Lords, House of Commons *Conventions of the UK Parliament* 328.42 HMSO OS
F N Forman *Constitutional Change in the United Kingdom* 342.42 FOR
Andrew Blick, *The Codes of the Constitution* 342.42 BLI
Peter Riddell *Parliament Under Pressure* 328.42 RID
Robert Blackburn *Towards a Constitutional Bill of Rights for the United Kingdom* 342.42 BLA
Joshua Rozenberg *Trial of Strength – The Battle Between Ministers & Judges Over Who Makes The Laws* 342.42 ROZ
David Starkey *The Monarchy of England Vol. 1 – The Beginnings* 321.7 STA
Tom Nairn *The Enchanted Glass: Britain and its Monarchy* 321.7 NAI
Vernon Bogdanor *The Monarchy and the Constitution* 321.7 BOG
Robert Hardman *Monarchy – The Royal Family at Work* 321.7 HAR
F Hardie *The Political Influence of the British Monarchy* 321.7 HAR
R Hazell & B Morris *The Queen at 90: The Changing Role of the Monarchy and Future Challenges* 321.7 HAZ
(Available at: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/sites/constitution-unit/files/170.pdf)

John Cannon *British Monarchy* 321.7 CAN
William Shawcross *Queen and Country* 321.7 SHA
Jeremy Paxman *On Royalty* 321.7 PAX

...continued
Reading list continued ...

Philip Murphy  
Monarchy and the End of Empire  321.7 MUR
NDJ Baldwin (ed)  
Parliament in the 21st Century  328.42 BAL
Robert Rogers & Rhodri Walters  
How Parliament Works (6th edition)  328.42 ROG
P Norton (ed)  
Parliament in the 1980s  328.42 NOR
Philip Norton  
Parliament in British Politics  328.42 NOR
Michael Rush  
Parliamentary Participation in the 19th & 20th Centuries  328.42 RUS
Philip Norton  
The Individual Member in the British House of Commons  
Strengthening Parliament  328.42 NOR

D Oliver (ed)  
The Law and Parliament  343 OLI
M Rush  
Parliament and the Public  328.42 RUS
David Beetham  
Parliament and Democracy in the Twent-First Century  
– a Guide to Good Practice  328.42 BEE

A Horne & A Le Sueur,  
Parliament: Legislation and Accountability  328.42 HOR

G Drewry (ed)  
The New Select Committees  328.42 DRE
Alex Brazier  
Systematic Scrutiny: Reforming the Select Committees  328.42 BRA
House of Commons  
Departmental Select Committee 30 Years of Scrutiny  328.42 HOU
Hannah White,  
Select Committees under Scrutiny  328.42 WHI
Martin Linton  
The House of Commons  328.42 LIN
P Norton  
The Commons in Perspective  328.42 NOR

Michael Rush  
Opening Up the Usual Channels  328.42 RUS
Parliament  
The House of Lords – A Brief Guide  328.42 HOU
House of Lords  
House of Lords: A Guide to Business  328.42 HOU
Philip Cowley  
The Rebels How Blair Mislayd His Majority  328.42 COW
Mark Shephard  
UK Parliamentary Scrutiny & Oversight of the ‘War on Terror’  328.42 SHE
D Shell  
The House of Lords  328.42 SHE
NDJ Baldwin  
The House of Lords: A Study in Evolutionary Adaptability  328.42 BAL OS
EA Smith  
The House of Lords - in British Politics & Society 1815-1911  328.42 SMI
William Wyndham  
Peers in Parliament Reformed  328.42 WYN
Reform of the House of Lords: A Consultation Paper  328.42 REF OS
Meg Russell  
The Contemporary House of Lords  328.42 RUS
Meg Russell  
Reforming the House of Lords: - Lessons from Overseas  328.42 RUS

House of Lords  
A House for the Future:  
- Royal Commission on the Reform of the House of Lords  328.42HOU
Nicholas Baldwin  
Reforming the Second Chamber  328.42 BAL OS
Emma Crewe  
Lords of Parliament – Manners, Rituals and Politics  328.42 CRE
Philip Norton  
Party Cohesion in the British House of Lords  328.42 NOR OS
Philip Norton, Reform of the House of Lords  328.42 NOR
Alexandra Kelso  
Connecting the Parts to the Whole: Parliament & House of Lords Reform 1997-2004  328.42 KEL

Kenneth Clarke, Robin Cook, Paul Tyler, Tony Wright, George Young  
Reforming the House of Lords – Breaking the Deadlock  328.42 CLA OS

...continued
Reading list continued ...

Meg Russell, Maria Sciara  The House of Lords in 2006: Negotiating a Stronger Second Chamber  328.42 RUS OS

Chris Ballinger, The House of Lords 1911-2011 A Century of Non-Reform  328.42 BAL

Peter Hennessey The Prime Minister  354.4203 HEN

D Shell & R Hodder-Williams Churchill to Major: The British Prime Ministership since 1945  354.4203 SHE

Steve Richards, The Prime Ministers: Reflections on Leadership from Wilson to May  354.4203 RIC

F W G Benemy  The Elected Monarch - The Development of the Power of the Prime Minister  354.4203 BEN

A King (ed)  The British Prime Minister  354.4203 KIN

Graham Thomas  Prime Minister & Cabinet Today  354.4203 THO

Dennis Kavanagh The Powers Behind The Prime Minister  The Hidden Influence of No.10  354.4203 KAV

James Naughtie  The Accidental American – Tony Blair & The Presidency  329.9423 NAU

M Rush  The Cabinet and Policy Formation  354.4205 RUS

H Wilson  The Governance of Britain  354.42 WIL

JP Mackintosh  The British Cabinet  354.4205 MAC

S James  British Cabinet Government  354.4205 JAM

M Burch & I Holliday  The British Cabinet System  354.4205 BUR

P Gordon Walker  The Cabinet  354.4205 WAL

R Crossman  Inside View  354.4203 CRO

Sir Ivor Jennings  Cabinet Government  354.42 JEN

P Hennessy  Cabinet  354.4205 HEN


Peter Riddell, 15 Minutes of Power: The Uncertain Life of British Ministers  354.42 RID

W G Runciman  Hutton & Butler – Lifting the Lid on the Workings of Power  327.42 RUN

P Kellner & Lord Crowther-Hunt  The Civil Servants: An Inquiry into Britain's Ruling Class  351.1 KEL

Jock Bruce-Gardyne  Ministers & Mandarins – Inside The Whitehall Village  351.1 GAR

H Young & A Sloman  No Minister: An Inquiry into the Civil Service  351.1 YOY

R Rose  Ministers and Ministries  354.42 ROS

G Kaufman  How to be a Minister  354.42 KAU

Tim Coates & Scott Light  The Hutton Inquiry, 2003  327.42 COA

B Thompson  Under the Scott-light  354.42 THO

D Lipsey  The Secret Treasury – How Britain’s Economy is Really Run  354.42062LIP

Nicholas Henderson  Mandarins: The Diaries of Nicholas Henderson  351.1 HEN

John Dickie  The New Mandarins – How British Foreign Policy Works  327.42 DIC

R Pyper  The British Civil Service  351.1 PYP

G Drewry & T Butcher  The Civil Service Today  351.1 DRE

Michael Barber  Instruction to Deliver  329.9423 BAR

Guy Lodge, Ben Rodgers  Whitehall’s Black Box  354.42 LOD

G Peele  Governing the UK  354.42 PEE

F F Ridley & David Wilson  The Quango Debate  354.42 RID

Robert Hazell  The State & The Nations: The First Year of Devolution in the United Kingdom  328.42 HAZ

Alan Trench  The State of the Nations – The Second Year of Devolution  328.42 TRE

Alan Trench  Has Devolution Made a Difference – The State of the Nations 2004  328.42 TRE

Alan Trench  The Dynamics of Devolution – The State of the Nations 2005  328.42 TRE

Robert Hazell, Richard Rawlings  Devolution, Law Making and the Constitution  328.42 HAZ

Vernon Bogdanor  Devolution in The United Kingdom  328.42 BOG

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Reading list continued ...

James Mitchell, Devolution in the UK 328.42 MIT
Michael O’Neill, Devolution and British Politics 328.42 ONE

David Laws  22 Days in May: The Birth of the Lib Dem-Conservative Coalition 354.42 LAW

Rob Wilson  5 Days to Power: The Journey to Coalition Britain 354.42 WIL
John Stewart Modernising British Local Government
- An Assessment of Labour’s Reform Programme 352 STE

D Wilson & C Game Local Government in the United Kingdom (3rd edition) 352 WIL
M Cross & D Mallen Local Government and Politics 352 CRO
T Byrne Local Government in Britain 352 BYR
J D Derbyshire An Introduction to Public Administration 352 DER
William Niccol Understanding the European Union 341.184 NIC
Jo Shaw Law of the European Union (3rd ed.) 341.184 SHA
B Jones (ed) Political Issues in Britain Today 320.42 JON
Martin Harrop Elections & Voters – A Comparative Introduction 324.42 HAR
David Farrell Electoral Systems – A Comparative Introduction 324.42 FAR
L Dick Elections in Britain Today: A Guide for Voters & Students 324.42LEO
A Heath, R Jowell & J Curtice How Britain Votes 324.42 HEA
P. Cowley, Sex, Lies and the Ballot Box 324.42 COW
Hansard Society Commission on Electoral Reform 324.42 HAN
The Governance of Britain Review of Voting Systems: 324.42 GOV
- The Experience of New Voting Systems in the United Kingdom Since 1997

Michael Pinto-Duschinsky Send the Rascals Packing:
- Defects of Proportional Representation & The Virtues of the Westminster Model 324.42PIN
The Rt. Hon. Peter Mandelson Make Votes Count 324.42 MAN
Martin Lincott Making Votes Count – The Case for Electoral Reform 324.42 LIN
Electoral Commission Election 2001 – The Official Results 324.42 ELE
David Butler & Dennis Kavanagh The British General Election of 2001 324.42 BUT
Dick Leonard & Roger Mortimore Elections in Britain, A Voter’s Guide 324.42 LEO
D Broughton Public Opinion Polling & Politics in Britain 324.24 BRO
Hansard Society Public Opinion: Sounding Out the Public 324.42HAN
Nick Moon Opinion Polls: History, Theory & Practice 324.42 MOO
Robert Worcester British Public Opinion:
- A Guide to The History & Methodology of Political Opinion Polling 324.42WOR
Roger Awan-Scully, The End of British Party Politics 329.942 AWA
John Lees Political Parties in Modern Britain 329.942LEE
Robert McKenzie British Political Parties
- The Distribution of Power within the Conservative & Labour Parties 329.942McK
David Simpson Pressure Groups 328.368 SIM
W N Coxall Parties and Pressure Groups 328.368 COX
M Davies The Politics of Pressure 328.368 DAV
P Whitehead The Writing on the Wall 320.42 WHI
Wroxton Papers in Politics 320.42 WRO
S James British Government - A Reader in the Policy Making 354.42 JAM
HMSO Review of Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction
- Report of a Committee of Privy Counsellors 327.42 HMSO

Anthony Sampson Who Runs This Place? The Anatomy of Britain in The 21st Century 327.42 SAM

...continued
Other available sources include:

BBC Documentary *The Diamond Queen* (presented by Andrew Marr)
On DVD available from Reception

The News:
Students are advised to keep up with current political developments by watching the news and occasional current affairs programmes on television and looking at appropriate websites (for example: [www.bbc.co.uk/news](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news)), as well as listening to the news on the radio (eg BBC Radion4).

Web Sites - especially:

Parliament: [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)

Institute for Government: [www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk](http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk)

BBC site: Democracy Live: [www.bbc.co.uk/democracylive](http://www.bbc.co.uk/democracylive)

General Election Study: [www.britishelectionstudy.com](http://www.britishelectionstudy.com)

WEEK 1  General Introduction & Historical Background

WEEKS 2 - 14   Subject Lectures – including with guest speakers

Tutorial Topics:

**WEEK 3: The Constitution / The Monarchy**
(a) The British Constitution. What is it?
(b) The Monarchy: Strength through Weakness?

**WEEK 5: Parliament**
(a) The House of Commons
(b) The House of Lords.
What are the functions and powers/influence of Parliament [viz-a-viz the Executive]?

**WEEK 7: Central Government:**
(a) Prime Minister & Cabinet;
(b) Ministers & the Civil Service.
Where does power reside?

**WEEK 9: Government beyond the Centre**
(a) Devolved Government;
(b) Local Government;
(c) Executive Agencies, QUANGOS, Public Corporations, Regulatory Authorities;
(d) The Courts (national and international).
Power dispersed?

**WEEK 11: The Public**
(a) Elections;
(b) Referenda;
(c) Opinion Polls;
(d) Political Parties;
(e) Pressure Groups.
The Public Voice - seen but never heard?

**WEEK 12: Visit to the Houses of Parliament (provisional)**

**WEEK 14: Power and the British Political System**
Parliamentary-style debate
Final class session - all students to meet together.

**WEEK 15  EXAMINATION**
Essay Questions Essay to be handed in no later than 4.00pm Thursday WEEK 6.

Choose EITHER

1. "In Britain because there is no written constitution only a collection of customs, practices and laws which have no special status, it can justly be said that no constitution exists." Discuss.

OR

2. "The Queen reigns but she does not rule" Is this a valid assertion?
NOTES ON PREPARING ESSAYS

1.Essays should be legible and written on paper on which the lines are widely spaced.

2. Ample margins should be left for comments.

3. Your own name should be written at the top of the essay, you should clearly state which question you are answering, and pages should be consecutively numbered.

4. Essays should be in the region of 2000 words in length.

5. The source of quotations and of important factual assertions should be indicated by footnotes/endnotes giving the author, title, publisher and date of publication of the relevant book or article AND a ‘Works Cited’ listing should be provided (attached to the essay).

6. A ‘Bibliography’ - a list of books and articles consulted - should be provided (attached to the essay).

8. Do not personalize your essay (No ‘I think this’ or ‘I think that’) and do not be ‘journalistic’ in your phrasing; be ‘academic’.

9. General advice can be summarised under two simple headings:

   (a) Be logical.

   Logic is of vital importance. Your essay should have a beginning, a middle and an end. You must: address the question as set and answer the question as set. The arguments in the essay should be developed in a clear analytical sequence, with each point supported by reasons and relevant evidence. A series of general assertions cuts little ice, while a mere collection of factual statements is boring. You should make it a rule never to put down a fact unless it is relevant to the argument you are developing, but you must support your arguments with facts. Always remember: unsubstantiated arguments lack force.

   in short: an essay should consist of:
   - an introduction
   - the body of argument
   - a conclusion

   your introduction
   should address the question as set

   - you should show that you understand the premise of the questions as set
   - you should show that you understand what is involved in answering the question as set.
   - you should explain/outline how you are going to go about answering the question as set.

   in the body of your essay
   you must set about answering the question as set

   consequently:
   - you do so step by step, point by point, in the format of the way you outlined in your introduction.
   - you must analyse the issues/arguments involved.
   - in all of this you must use factual material (examples) to back up and support what you are saying (always remember that unsubstantiated arguments lack force).

   - your conclusion should refer back to the specifics of the question as set and draw on the arguments you have outlined in the body of your answer.
(b) Be concise.

Your arguments will be much more effective if they are expressed concisely.

A question is likely to be a proposition – simply an idea put forward for consideration/discussion. Students should neither take it for granted that it is ‘right’ nor feel that they should agree with it.

What is required in answer is cogently to argue all sides, in essence discussing the topic and what is involved ‘in the round’, considering the arguments – both for and against – that are involved, and then come to a substantiated conclusion. An effective answer will proffer sufficient examples of points made, including up-to-date illustration.

If you take this approach and are both logical and concise you will be well on the way towards developing a good style. You should be self-conscious about your choice of words and about punctuation and the length of sentences. You should read your essays over to make sure you are satisfied with the substance and rhythm of the language.

Please note:

*Failure to follow this stipulated approach will result in your essay receiving an automatic fail.*

IN ADDITION: REMEMBER

1. Unless prior consent has been obtained from the Dean, and in the absence of reasonable explanation, work not handed in by the required time and date of submission is designated a fail.

2. Plagiarism - basically copying the work of others and passing it off as your own - ensures an automatic fail.
Examples of examination essay questions

1. "Unless a country can produce a Constitution in visible form, there is none” Discuss this in the context of Britain.

2. "The position of the Monarch in Britain today can be summed up as one of strength through weakness.” Is this a valid assertion?

3. "The function of the House of Commons is to serve as a body of scrutiny and influence." To what extent is this so, and how well does the House of Commons perform such functions?

4. "The composition of the House of Lords prevents it from making a significant contribution to the legislative process.” Discuss.

5. "Cabinet Government no longer exists in Britain: it has been replaced by Prime Ministerial Government." Outline the arguments for and against this assertion. Where does the balance lie?

6. "Civil Servants are servants of the Crown. For all practical purposes the Crown in this context means ... the Government of the day. The Civil Service as such has no constitutional personality or responsibility separate from the duly elected Government. The determination of policy is the responsibility of the Minister ... in the determination of policy the Civil Servant has no constitutional responsibility or role distinct from that of the Minister.” What is the relationship between Ministers and Mandarins?

7. "The privatisation of Government has not only ensured that the role of the State has changed from that of provider to that of enabler, but also has ensured that accountability is a thing of the past." Discuss.

8. Compare and contrast the roles and powers of the devolved legislatures and executives in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. To what extent has devolution altered the British Constitution?

9. Local Government can do only what Central Government wants it to do. Because of this, local autonomy is a farce.” Is such a view justified?

10. What have been the constitutional, legal, political and administrative implications of Britain's membership of - and subsequent withdrawal from - the European Union?

11. What is the constitutional position of the courts? What does this mean in practice?

12. On what grounds can the ‘First Past the Post’ electoral system be criticized? On what grounds can it be defended? Where do alternative systems fit in with this debate?

13. Political Parties are at the very centre of British Government and Politics. Discuss.

14. What is public opinion and how does it manifest itself? What influence does public opinion - both 'general' and 'organised' - have within the British political process?
Glossary of Terms

More extensive coverage and definitions can be found in Erskine May Parliamentary Practice, or Wilding and Laundry An Encyclopaedia of Parliament - see Reference section in the Library.

THE MONARCH
Head of State and theoretical Head of the Executive. Parliament cannot legislate without the assent of the Crown, though the Monarch only attends in person at the beginning of each session to read the speech from the Throne.
Current Monarch: Queen Elizabeth II (1952/3 - )

PARLIAMENT
Originally the word meant 'a talk' (parler F.). The British Parliament consists of the Sovereign, the House of Lords and the House of Commons. Together they exercise the legislative function of government.

CABINET
The executive organ of Government; consists of usually 20-24 senior members of the governing party (or coalition), called Ministers, and presided over by the Prime Minister. Ministers are answerable to Parliament, where they are either an elected Member of the House of Commons or a Member of the House of Lords.

THE PRIME MINISTER
The most senior minister, and (usually) the leader of the largest party in the House of Commons.
Current Prime Minister: Boris Johnson (2019- )

HOUSE OF COMMONS
The elected House. Each member (an MP) represents a constituency. There are currently 650 Members of the House of Commons.

HOUSE OF LORDS
Consists of 92 Hereditary Peers (elected by these individuals from amongst the ranks of those Hereditary Peers not members of the House of Lords), Life Peers and Lords Spiritual (Bishops). As of September 2021 there were 833 members eligible to take part in the work of the House.

THE EXECUTIVE
Those involved or concerned with making decisions and ensuring that they are carried out. In this context namely The Government of the day and the Civil Service.

CIVIL SERVICE
The Bureaucracy. Those who work in government departments responsible for the administration of policy. Sometimes referred to as 'Whitehall', from its geographical location in London.

THE GOVERNMENT
Comprises the Cabinet plus Junior Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries and Whips, and numbers about 110-120 persons; all are members of the majority party – or coalition of parties – in Parliament.

THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION
Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition - the largest minority party in The House of Commons. The 'Leader of the Opposition' is the leader of the largest minority party.

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MP
Abbreviation for Member of Parliament (Member of the House of Commons).

BACKBENCHER
An MP holding neither an office in the Government nor belonging to the inner council (front bench) of the Official Opposition Party.

FRONT BENCH
The two benches nearest the Table in the House of Commons. They are occupied on one side by Government Ministers and on the other side by the principal members of the official Opposition.

HANSARD
A colloquial term for the official report of the debates in the two Houses of Parliament.

SPEAKER
The non-partisan Chair of the House of Commons - an elected Member of Parliament, who in turn is elected by MPs to preside over the House.
Current Speaker: Sir Lindsay Hoyle (4 November 2019 - )

DIVISION
i.e. the House divides, or a vote is taken.

ACTS OF PARLIAMENT
Bills passed by one House of Parliament, agreed to by the other - either without amendment or with amendment to which the first House has agreed - and assented to by the Monarch. Referred to as Statutes.

A GENERAL ELECTION
The electoral contest held every five years to elect a new Parliament (House of Commons). The most recent General Election took place on Thursday 12 December 2019. Under the terms of the Fixed Term Parliament Act of 2011, the next General Election is not scheduled to take place until Thursday 12 December 2024. However, in 2021 the Government introduced legislation to abolish the Fixed Term Parliament Act and to return the position to what it had been prior to the passage of the Act.

A BY-ELECTION
A by-election is held to fill a vacancy in the House of Commons arising from the death or resignation of a Member.

CONSTITUENCY
England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are divided into electoral units, called constituencies, each of which elects, by a simple majority ballot, a Member of Parliament. (Currently there are 650.)

POLITICAL PARTIES
There are two main national parties with representation in the current House of Commons: the Conservative Party – usually described as being on the center/right of the political spectrum; the Labour Party – usually described as being on the center/left of the political spectrum; and two smaller parties represented in the House of Commons: the Liberal Democrat Party – Pro-European and usually described as being in the center of the political spectrum; the Green Party – environmentalist and usually described as being on the left of the political spectrum; ....
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There are also various sub-UK parties:
Scotland – the SNP (Scottish National Party);
Wales – Plaid Cymru (Welsh Nationalist);
Northern Ireland – various Unionist parties (for example the DUP) and Nationalist parties (for example Sinn Fein) as well as the non-aligned Alliance Party.

There are also a number of parties who do not have representation in the House of Commons, including:
The Brexit Party – Anti-the European Union and established to ensure that the UK left the Union; it was subsequently re-named Reform UK.
UKIP (the United Kingdom Independence Party) – Anti-European Union, anti-immigration and usually described as being on the right of the political spectrum.

DELEGATED LEGISLATION (SECONDARY LEGISLATION)
Delegated - or secondary - legislation allows the Government to make changes to a law without needing to go through the process of a completely new act of Parliament. This can occur when primary legislation (an act of Parliament) specifies that changes to the law may be delegated to ministers in certain circumstances in future. Delegated legislation may allow ministers to make technical changes to the law, like altering the level of a fine, but it can also sanction broader changes like fleshing out an act with greater detail. Its main purpose is to avoid overloading the parliamentary timetable.
Statutory Instruments (SIs) form the majority of delegated legislation, but other types include regulatory reform orders and human rights orders. Ministers currently enact about 3,500 SIs each year.

HENRY VIII CLAUSES
The Government sometimes adds a provision to a Bill which enables the Government to repeal or amend it after it has become an Act of Parliament. The provision enables the amendment of primary legislation using delegated (or secondary) legislation. Such provisions are known as "Henry VIII clauses". The House of Lords Select Committee on the Scrutiny of Delegated Powers in its first report of 1992-93 defined a Henry VIII clause as: a provision in a Bill which enables primary legislation to be amended or repealed by subordinate legislation, with or without further Parliamentary scrutiny. [HL 57 1992-93, para 10] The clauses were so named from the Statute of Proclamations 1539, which gave King Henry VIII power to legislate by proclamation.

JUDICIAL REVIEW
Judicial review is a type of court proceeding in which a judge reviews the lawfulness of a decision or action made by a public body. In other words, judicial reviews are a challenge to the way in which a decision has been made, rather than the rights and wrongs of the conclusion reached. It is not really concerned with the conclusions of that process and whether those were 'right', as long as the right procedures have been followed. The court will not substitute what it thinks is the 'correct' decision. This may mean that the public body will be able to make the same decision again, so long as it does so in a lawful way.
Examples of the types of decision which may fall within the range of judicial review include:
- Decisions of local authorities in the exercise of their duties to provide various welfare benefits and special education for children in need of such education;
- Certain decisions of the immigration authorities and Immigration Appellate Authority;
- Decisions of regulatory bodies;
- Decisions relating to prisoner's rights.