Aims and Objectives

To provide knowledge and understanding of the political, economic, and social forces underpinning the trajectory and framing the context of modern British society.

To develop an understanding of the relations and intersections among (1) class domination, (2) nationalisms, racism, and xenophobia, and (3) patriarchy in contemporary Britain.

Modes of Teaching and Supervision Arrangements

The course is taught by means of lectures and supervisions. Students are advised to write at least four essays over the year. Students will be expected to produce a minimum of 4 essays. They will be supported with 6 supervisions. Each supervision session will typically be used to read and discuss an article, and students may be asked to present on a topic, or find other ways to address the topic in ways that are stimulating and provide a learning experience for students. Students are expected to prepare for a supervision in advance and to actively engage in discussion.

In general, lecturers will give supervisions on their course; but students should consult their College Director of Studies and the Course Organizer.

Mode of Assessment

One three hour examination paper from which three questions must be answered.
Class Domination and Social Exclusion

Dr Jeff Miley & Dr Matthew Sparkes
Michaelmas, Fridays 10-12. Weeks 1-6, beginning 6 October

These lectures explore class and inequality in modern Britain. To do so we trace the major changes since 1945 in the ideologies, strategies and institutions for governing Britain. This includes: post war reconstruction and the settlement with labour; the Keynesian Welfare State and consensus politics; the ‘crises’ of the 1970s; electoral dealignment; the rise of the New Right; the politics of Thatcherism and the reconstruction of capitalism in Britain, 1979 – 1997; New labour; and the emergence of populism. The six lectures will trace the evolution of the class structure and trajectories of inequalities in view of these political and economic developments. We will explore the theoretical and empirical developments in the sociology of class that has sought to make sense of these shifts. Attention is paid to the dynamics of intersectionality, social mobility, and social exclusion.

Lecture One - From Engels and Orwell to Grenfell Tower: The Plight of the British Working Class (Miley)

Supervision essay Questions
A) Why should those who want to understand Modern Britain care about social class?
B) How have class politics been related to racism and/or patriarchy in Modern Britain?
C) In what ways is the recent Grenfell Tower tragedy illustrative of the deeper history of class domination in Britain?

Readings:
* Satnam Virdee, Racism, Class and the Racialized Outsider. Chapters 1, 2, 9.
* Selina Todd, The People: The Rise and Fall of the Working Class 1910-2010 (selections).
* Martin McKee, “Grenfell Tower fire: why we cannot ignore the political determinants of health BMJ 2017; 357 doi: https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.j2966 (Published 20 June 2017)
E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*
Owen Jones, *Chavs*
Beverly Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*
Paul Gilroy, *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack*

**Lecture Two – The Rise and Demise of Social Democracy in Britain (Miley)**

**Supervision essay Questions**

A) What were the causes of the rise of social democracy in Britain?

B) How was the contradiction between capitalism and democracy managed in the Social Democratic period?

C) Why did the Social-Democratic “Consensus” Collapse?

**Readings:**

* Karl Polanyi *The Great Transformation*, Part Three
* Geoffrey Ingham, *Capitalism Divided* (Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 9, Concluding Remarks)
* Perry Anderson, “The Figures of Descent,” in *English Questions*
* Ralph Miliband, *Capitalist Democracy in Britain*
* Tara Martin López, *The Winter of Discontent: Myth, Memory, and History*
* Colin Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*


Tess Lanning, “Feminism and Democratic Renewal,” [https://www.lwbooks.co.uk/sites/default/files/s52_02lanning.pdf](https://www.lwbooks.co.uk/sites/default/files/s52_02lanning.pdf)
Lecture Three – The New Right, the Politics of Thatcherism, and the Class Structure (Sparkes)

Supervision essay Questions
A) Is it accurate to describe the 1970s as a decade of crisis? If so what were the causes?
B) To what extent did ideology drive the Thatcher governments’ policies and legislation?

Readings:


* Bulpitt, J. (1986), The discipline of the New Democracy: Mrs Thatcher’s domestic statecraft”, Political Studies, 34.


Lecture Four – Transformations of the Class Structure, Meritocracy and Social Mobility (Sparkes)

Supervision Essay Questions
A) How does culture add to our understanding of social class in contemporary Britain?
B) Is British society meritocratic? Is it fair?
   OR
   What are the factors that contribute to the class pay gap?

Readings (A):

**Reading (B)**


Goldthorpe, J. (1980). *Social Mobility and the Class Structure in Modern Britain.*


Breen et. al. (2004). *Social Mobility in Europe*. Oxford University Press.


Lecture Five – Classificatory Struggles and Classification Situations: the Underclass Debate and the Dynamics of Exclusion (Miley and Sparkes)

Supervision Essay Questions
A) In what ways does classification affect the lives of British citizens?
B) What are the most important factors contributing to social exclusion and/or the existence of “an underclass” in Britain?

Readings (A)

Readings (B)


Field. (2012). After the riots: The final report of the Riots Communities and Victims Panel.


Jin et al. (2011). Poverty and Inequality in Britain


Lecture Six – Austerity Politics, Class Dynamics, and the Rise of Jeremy Corbyn

Supervision Essay Questions:
A) Is neoliberalism dying in Britain?
OR
B) What was the role played by social class in the 2017 general election?

Readings


All that is Solid, “Jeremy Corbyn and the Working Class,” [http://averypublicsociologist.blogspot.co.uk/2017/07/jeremy-corbyn-and-working-class.html](http://averypublicsociologist.blogspot.co.uk/2017/07/jeremy-corbyn-and-working-class.html)


Rosanna Hutchinson, “A Victory for Labour’s Left-Wing Women,” [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/83189/1/Engenderings%20%E2%80%93%20A%20victory%20for%20Labour%E2%80%93%20Left-Wing%20Women.pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/83189/1/Engenderings%20%E2%80%93%20A%20victory%20for%20Labour%E2%80%93%20Left-Wing%20Women.pdf)

Nationalism and Ethnicity

Dr. Mark Ramsden & Dr Jeff Miley
Michaelmas: Fridays 10-12, Weeks 7-8, beginning 17 November
Lent: Fridays 12-2, Weeks 1-4, beginning 19 January

Nationalisms, Racism and Xenophobia in Britain

The aim of these lectures is to study nationalisms, racism and xenophobia in Modern Britain. We begin with an exploration of the relations among Empire, nation and state in the British context. We then examine the “troubles” in Northern Ireland, with a special focus on the attempt to forge a “consociational” solution to the violence there, before turning to analyze the causes and consequences of the process of devolution in Scotland (and Wales), with special attention paid to the 2014 referendum. After which, we turn to focus on patterns of racialized, religious and xenophobic exclusions at work in Britain, as they play themselves in the politics of the ongoing “war on terror,” as well as the politics of migration. We finish by analyzing contending interpretations of the social forces and political significance of Brexit. Throughout, we will pay attention to intersections with gender and class hierarchies.

Lecture One: The United Kingdom, Great Britain, Greater Britain. Empire, State and Nation in England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland and Beyond. (Dr. Ramsden)


Supervision Question: What is the relation among Empire, nation and state in the British context? In what ways do Imperial prejudices and exclusions continue to condition dominant national imaginaries in contemporary Britain?

**Lecture Two: Accommodation and Conflict in Northern Ireland (Dr. Gardner)**

*Whyte, J. (1991) *Interpreting Northern Ireland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Ch6 (The Traditional Nationalist Interpretation); Ch7 (The Traditional Unionist Interpretation); and Ch8 (Marxist Interpretations).]


Supervision Questions: Does the current “consociational” arrangement in Northern Ireland constitute a fair and stable solution? In what is the “traditional Marxist interpretation” of the conflict in Northern Ireland plausible?

**Lecture Three: Self-Determination for Scotland? (And what about Wales?) (Dr. Ramsden and Dr. Miley).**


Richard Rose, “Is the United Kingdom a State?,” in Peter Madgwick and Richard Rose, eds., The Territorial Dimension in United Kingdom Politics


Tom Nairn, *After Britain: New Labour and the Return of Scotland* (Granta, 2001)


Vernon Bogdanor, *Devolution in the United Kingdom* (Oxford University Press, 1999)

C. Jeffrie, “Devolution and the Lopsided State,” in Patrick Dunleavy, et al.,

Supervision Questions: What are the most important causes and consequences of devolution in Great Britain? What were the most important social factors at work in the referendum in Scotland?

**Lecture Four: Racism, Xenophobia, and the Politics of the War on Terror in Britain. (Dr. Miley).**


G. Peele, “The Politics of Multicultural Britain,” in Patrick Dunleavy, et al.,


Meer, N. & Modood, T. 'The Multicultural State We Are In: Muslims, 'Multiculture' and the 'Civic re-balancing' of British Multiculturalism', Political Studies, 57 (3), (pp. 473-497), 2009.

Question: In what ways do racism and xenophobia influence the politics of the “War on Terror”? In what ways do racism and xenophobia intersect with class and/or gender hierarchies in contemporary Britain?

Lecture Five: Migration Politics in Britain (Dr. Walsh)


Question: What are the main characteristics of attitudes and policy towards
immigration in contemporary Great Britain, and what are their main determinants?

Lecture 6: The Politics and Sociology of Brexit (Dr. Miley and Dr. Ramsden)

Brexit: The Secession of Britain from Europe


*Nadine El-Adny, “Brexit Is Not Only an Expression of Nostalgia for Empire, It Is Also the Fruit of Empire,”* [http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2017/05/11/brexit-is-not-only-an-expression-of-nostalgia-for-empire-it-is-also-the-fruit-of-empire/](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2017/05/11/brexit-is-not-only-an-expression-of-nostalgia-for-empire-it-is-also-the-fruit-of-empire/)


Supervision questions: How did class, racial, and gender dynamics intersect in and affect the outcome of the Brexit referendum?

**Patriarchy in Modern Britain**

Dr Tiffany Page, Thursdays 2 pm, weeks 5-8, beginning 2 November

**Lecture one: What is patriarchy, and what does it do?**

Supervision Essay Questions:

A) In considering the arguments set out by bell hooks, how does patriarchy impact both women and men?  
B) How might an analysis of patriarchy, as a “system of social structures and practices” (Walby 1989) help in understanding systems of oppression?

Readings:


**Lecture two: The challenge of intersectional understandings of oppression**

Supervision Essay Questions:

A) Consider what an intersectional analysis of patriarchy might entail.

B) How might ‘embodied intersectionality’ as a conceptual framework help to expand ways of understanding particular lived experiences.

Readings:


*Mirza, H. ‘A second skin’: Embodied intersectionality, transnationalism and narratives of identity and belonging among Muslim women in Britain.*


Lecture three: Responses to patriarchal structures

Supervision Essay Questions:
   A) How can the impact of austerity be analysed through a frame of patriarchy?
   B) Take the example of Sisters Uncut and apply an intersectional analysis to the issues of domestic violence.

Readings:


Media Diversified is a social enterprise working to enrich, engage and improve the UK’s media landscape and publishes work by writers of colour. https://mediadiversified.org

Sisters Uncut Manifesto: http://www.sistersuncut.org/feministo/


Lecture four: Gender inequalities in UK higher education: Institutional sexism

Supervision Essay Questions:
   A) What is the role of institutions in perpetuating sexism?
   B) What kinds of responses are required to address gender inequalities in higher education?

*Page, T. 2017. Why we need to address staff sexual misconduct in higher education. 7 March 2017. *Huffington Post*. Available at: [http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/dr-tiffany-page/sexual-misconduct-higher-education_b_15204012.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/dr-tiffany-page/sexual-misconduct-higher-education_b_15204012.html)


Jackson, C. and Sundaram, V. Is ‘lad culture’ a problem in higher education? Exploring the perspectives of staff working in UK universities. Society for Research into Higher Education. 2015. Available at: [https://www.srhe.ac.uk/downloads/JacksonSundaramLadCulture.pdf](https://www.srhe.ac.uk/downloads/JacksonSundaramLadCulture.pdf)

That’s what she said: Women students’ experiences of ‘lad culture’ in higher education. University of Sussex and National Union of Students. Available at: [http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/49011/1/That's_what_she_said_full_report_Final_web.pdf](http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/49011/1/That's_what_she_said_full_report_Final_web.pdf)

**Lent Term**
Gender, the Family and Inequality in Britain

Prof Jacqueline Scott, Fridays 12, Weeks 5-8, Beginning 16 February


In this lecture we consider the progress and lack of progress in women’s employment, in modern Britain. The knowledge economy poses particular challenges for gender equality, even among the educated elite. The ‘caring’ penalty still matters and if women (or men) take time out of the labour force to care for families, their career progression suffers. The challenge of gender equality in employment interlinks with ethnicity, with ethnic minority women particularly disadvantaged.

Lecture 2. Work-family balance – the gender gap in paid and unpaid work

We examine the gender gap in paid and unpaid work across the family life course. Is the gender pay gap a result of women doing more of the unpaid work and therefore losing out to men in terms of human capital development? Can policy do anything to address this gender gap? We examine the development of work-family balance policies in the UK and suggest that the UK is lagging behind Nordic countries in addressing such issues.

Lecture 3 Family changes – changes in marriage and parenthood

Marriage is being delayed as increasing proportions of couples cohabit. Cohabitation was initially more evident among the highly educated but now cohabitation is common across the social class spectrum. The evidence suggests that cohabiting unions are less stable than marriages, but the meaning of this link is contested. Increasing proportions of children are born outside of marriage. How do such changing family forms influence the life chances of individuals? How are families and inequality linked?

Lecture 4 Growing up in modern Britain – class and gender inequalities

There is a continuing debate in Britain about whether social mobility is increasing or decreasing over time. Education seeks to compensate for those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds but does it succeed? We examine the way childhood disadvantages persist into early adulthood. We also examine the way young people’s aspirations and expectations of adult life are influenced by both gender and class.

Readings:

Gershuny, J 2000 Changing times: work and leisure in a postindustrial society, Oxford OUP.

Lewis J. (ed) 2006 Children, changing families and welfare states, Edward Elgar

Lewis Work-Family 2009 Balance Gender and Policy, Edward Elgar


Scott et al (eds) 2010 Gender Inequalities in the 21st Century, Edward Elgar

See www.genet.ac.uk for working papers that can be downloaded

Supervision Topics

1. To what extent does family background influence children’s life chances in modern Britain?
2. How do production and reproduction shape gender inequalities in modern Britain?
3. Is child poverty best addressed by policies encouraging maternal employment?
4. Why does a gender difference in paid and unpaid work matter if men and women do similar amounts of work overall?
5. Why is the gender pay gap so stubborn?

**Sexuality in Modern Britain**

Dr Robert Pralat, Thursdays 10-12, weeks 7 & 8 (on 1 and 8 March)

**Sexuality and Inequality in Modern Britain**

It has been 50 years since the passing of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, popularly understood as the legislation that decriminalised homosexuality in Britain. In this part of the paper we will examine the critical moments of the British gay liberation movement and the ongoing struggle for equality between the heterosexual majority and sexual minorities. The lectures will explore
specific landmarks that determined the trajectory of LGBT politics in Britain, with a particular focus on the debates about the age of consent, Section 28 and same-sex marriage.

**Background Reading**


**Supervision Questions**

What does it mean that, in 1967, homosexuality in Britain was decriminalised only ‘partially’?

If Section 28 had never been used in a prosecution, why was its repeal significant?

Why was equalising the age of consent contentious?

Why do people disagree about whether same-sex marriage constitutes progressive politics?

To what extent have sexual minorities in Britain achieved equality?
**Student Feedback:**
Your chance to put forward your opinions on the papers you take!

For Sociology Papers, student feedback is collected via hard-copy anonymous questionnaires distributed at various points in the academic year. It is crucial that you fill these out and give feedback on your papers. Getting good feedback from students makes the course better and shows the outside world how Cambridge degrees consider their students views.

Course organisers take students' concerns and suggestions into consideration each year when preparing their paper outlines and selecting supervisors for the year. So please remember to fill out a form either in hard-copy or on the undergraduate sociology website.