Britain in World Affairs:
British foreign policy from 1945 to the present

Prof. Klaus Larres
Our class meets twice a week:

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 12.30-1.45pm

Office hours in Room 416 Hamilton Hall:

Tuesdays: 3.00-4.00pm
Wednesdays: 4.00-5.00pm
or by appointment

Email: larres@unc.edu
(also: k_larres@yahoo.com)
BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The course provides an historical, political, and socio-economic framework for understanding British history and politics in the 20th and 21st centuries. While we will also assess important turning points in domestic British politics — including the establishment of the welfare state, the Thatcher “revolution,” and the politics of Tony Blair’s “New Labour” — our main focus will be on British foreign relations and the UK’s role in the world during both the Cold War and the post-Cold War years. We will also try to assess the legacy of the Blair/Browns governments and evaluate the performance of the Conservative/Lib Dem coalition government within the context of the global economic and financial crisis and the Euro crisis which have had a considerable impact on the UK.

Particular attention will be paid to the following:

1. the legacies of Britain’s imperial past and the repercussions of Britain’s victory in World War II on the country’s post-1945 role in the world;

2. Britain’s economic performance and the mismatch between resources and “punching above” the country’s weight in world politics;

3. the UK’s complex relations with continental Europe and the United States; and

4. the UK’s role in the world since 9/11.

The course begins and concludes with reflections on contemporary Britain. The themes and issues to be discussed will include the following: Can the British serve as a “bridge” between the U.S. and continental Europe? Will Britain join France and Germany in promoting a more autonomous European foreign and defense policy? What is the state of the bilateral relationships with Germany and France? In view of the current global financial and economic crisis, has Britain once again moved away from Europe? Does the so-called “special relationship” with the U.S. still exist? Has David Cameron proven to be an effective Prime Minister? Has the conflict in Northern Ireland been resolved? What is Britain’s role in what used to be called the “war on terror”? In view of the successful war in Libya and other events, will the UK continue to play a leading role in international affairs?

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

It is the aim of this course to give students an analytical overview of British foreign policy during the Cold War and the post-Cold War years, from the end of World War II, to the opening of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 and the 2010 election of the first coalition government in Britain since Churchill’s national coalition of the war years. Students will gain insight into the relations between Britain and its European allies and obtain an understanding of the way historians have dealt with the many complex problems of Britain’s role in the world. An analysis of the so-called Anglo-American ‘special relationship’ will also be part of the course. The course also aims at providing students with an understanding of the politics of transition and decline. Students will be introduced to the major themes and key figures in British contemporary history and will develop an ability to assess the importance of individual actors and structural forces that have shaped British history and politics since 1945.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- **Students are expected to give at least one oral presentation in class (c. 10 min.).**
  
  Each week there will be two student presentations in class (one on Tuesdays; one on Thursdays).

**Students are expected to write two assignments and sit a final exam:**

**Assignments:**

i) **a book review of c. 1000 words (3 pages)** of a book of your choice related to the theme of the course. Please select a book — a monograph, not a student textbook — of at least 200 pages which was published between the year 2000 and the present. Please consult your professor regarding the book you wish to select.

A book review often consists of the following sections:

- Brief summary of the content of the book
- Assessment of the qualities of the book (the good and the bad things, content, style, etc.)
- Recommendation: whether or not you can recommend the book for purchase and which audience would benefit from reading it and why.

A more detailed book review writing guide will be distributed.

ii) & iii) **TWO essays of c. 2000 words each (7 pages)** on a topic of your choice dealing with the theme of the course (the chosen topic should be different from the main topic covered by the book review).

Your chosen essay topics need to be agreed with your professor. Naturally, the two essays need to be well structured (feel free to use sub-headings), well-written and have to include footnotes/endnotes and a bibliography of the books/articles you have used.

The essay should include the following features:

- clear and logical thesis statement
- substantive detail and knowledge about the subject
- clear and coherent structure (logical transitions from one section to the next)
- the use of two to four sensible sub-headings is recommended
- grammar and spelling to a high standard
- presentation and referencing system (footnotes/endnotes) to a high standard
- bibliography of the material used

A more detailed essay writing guide will be distributed.
Final Exam:
The final exam may ask about ALL major topics and issues that have been covered in the course. Further information will be given out in due course.

Naturally, students are also expected to attend regularly, read intensively and participate actively in class.

GRADING:
- Oral presentations & regular attendance & active participation: 10%
- Weekly submission of summary of your reading: 20% in total
- Book review: 10%
- Essay 1: 20%
- Essay 2: 20%
- Final exam: 20%

DEADLINES:
- Book review: Thursday, September 13
- Essay 1: Thursday, October 11
- Essay 2: Thursday, November 8
- Final Exam: will take place between December 7-14.

READING REQUIREMENT:
In general students are expected to read c. 60-70 pages per week (or more). Please select the relevant books, chapters and articles from the reading listed for each week. Please also consult the books listed under "Recommended general introductory reading" below.

Students are also strongly encouraged to browse in the libraries in the British history section and thus discover many other good books and articles by themselves.

From among the listed reading (and the books and articles you have discovered from your own browsing), students are free to select the relevant chapters themselves.

PLEASE NOTE -- WEEKLY REQUIREMENT:
For each week every student is obliged to submit a listing of the articles/chapters (of a total of c. 60-70 pages) you have read, briefly summarizing the main arguments of the articles/chapters and whether or not the articles were useful. This can be done on 2 pages per week; perhaps you should write approximately half a page on each article/chapter you read for each week (thus if an article is 20 pages long, you'll have to read AT LEAST THREE articles/chapters per week).
You are also required to list the name of the author, title of the book, and title of the chapter/article, and publisher and year of publication at the top of each listing.

The assessment of this weekly requirement will count toward 20 per cent of your overall grade for this course.

**Main textbook for this course:**

There are no main textbooks for this course. For each session, a certain number of different books and articles have been listed. Thus, for the required reading, please check the listings under the individual sessions below.

**Recommended general introductory reading for background information:**

[if in the course of this course you find that you appear to lack certain background information, then please consult some of the books below to fill in the missing details and facts]

- Dennis Kavanagh, David Richards, Andrew Geddes, and Martin Smith, *British Politics* (various editions; good introduction to the theory and practice of British political institutions).
- Alex May, *Britain and Europe since 1945* (Longman, 1998)

Links to online resources on contemporary history and international and current affairs are also available via my website: [http://klauslarres.com/](http://klauslarres.com/) -- click on “Online Resources.”
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>CLASS THEME &amp; READING</th>
<th>SESSION CONTENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WEEK 1</td>
<td>Introduction to the course</td>
<td>General introductions</td>
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<td>Course Organization</td>
<td>Discussion of Britain’s role in the world today</td>
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<td>Overview:</td>
<td>One student presentation on Thursday</td>
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<td>“British contemporary history from 1945 to the present &amp; Britain's role in the world</td>
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<td>Topic for Presentation on Thursday:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Give an overview of the foreign policy of the Conservative/Lib Dem coalition</td>
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<td>government of the present.</td>
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<td>Required Reading (select 60-70pp.):</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• John W. Young, <em>Britain and the World in the Twentieth Century</em> (Arnold, 1997),</td>
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<td>Chaps. 6-8: pp.141-232.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Also investigate the latest developments with the help of the *Economist, Financial</td>
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WEEK 2
Tues./Thur.
August 28/30

"Churchill, World War II, and the Transition to the Post-war World"

Questions for Presentations:

- After having successfully fought the Second World War, why did Churchill and the Conservative Party lose the British general election in the summer of 1945?

- Assess Britain's global position in the years 1944-47 - during the transition from war to cold war.

Required Reading (select 60-70pp.):


Two student presentations. Discussion of weekly topic & discussion of the subject of the two presentations.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>WEEK 3</th>
<th>&quot;Labour in Power: Radical Changes in British Foreign Policy &amp; the Creation of the Welfare State&quot;</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tues./Thur. Sept. 4/6</td>
<td>Questions for Presentations:</td>
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<tr>
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<td>• What does the British welfare system consist of? Why and how was it set up?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Assess the Labour government's Cold War policies and its approach to dealing with the lack of resources in the immediate post-war years.</td>
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<td>Required Reading (select 60-70pp.):</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rodney Lowe, <em>The welfare state in Britain since 1945</em> (Macmillan, 1993)</td>
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Two student presentations. Discussion of weekly topic & discussion of the subject of the two presentations.
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<th>WEEK 4</th>
<th>&quot;Turning Point: Britain, the early Cold War &amp; the Suez Crisis</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tues./Thur.</td>
<td>Sept. 11/13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questions for Presentations:</td>
<td>Two student presentations. Discussion of weekly topic &amp; discussion of the subject of the two presentations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Was Anthony Eden a good politician? Assess his performance as Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister (except during the Suez crisis).</td>
<td>Discussion regarding the availability and accessibility of primary sources on contemporary British history</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Analyze Britain's policy in the Suez Crisis. Should the country have gone to war against Egypt in 1956? Was it a necessary war?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Required Reading (select 60-70pp.):</td>
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<td>Deadline: Book review due: Sept. 13</td>
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WEEK 5  
Tues./Thur., Sept. 18/20

"Trilateral Relations: Britain, Germany, and France from the 1950s to the Present"

- Why have Germany and France cooperated more intensively with each other within the EC/EU than with Britain?
- How important are the European "Big Three" in comparison to other important European countries such as Italy, the Benelux countries, Poland, Spain?

**Required Reading:**

- Klaus Larres, “Margaret Thatcher, the British Foreign Office, and German Unification,” *Cercles: Revue Pluridisciplinaire du Monde Anglophone* [electronic online journal] Vol. 5 (2002), pp.165-173 (the article is published in both German and English translation).

**Independent Reading**  
(NO class sessions)

PREPARATION of first essay

### WEEK 6

**Tues./Thur., Sept. 25/27**

**“1960s Britain & Decolonization: Origins, Process and the Contemporary Legacy”**

**Questions for Presentations:**

1. Assess the main foreign policy characteristics of the governments led by Macmillan, Douglas Home and Wilson in the 1960s.

2. Was British Decolonization a voluntary process or was it forced onto the country? Did British governments do a good job in coping with these challenges?

**Required Reading (select c. 60-70pp.):**

- Paul J. Deveney, *Callaghan’s Journey to Downing Street* (Palgrave, 2010).


- John Gallagher, “The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire,” in Anil

**Two student presentations. Discussion of weekly topic & discussion of the subject of the two presentations.**

Discussion of the value of “Memoirs” and oral history sources in contemporary British history.
Seal (ed.) *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire* (Cambridge UP, 1982).


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**WEEK 7**

Tues./Thur., October 2/4

"Britain and Empire: History and Legacy"

**Questions for Presentations:**

1. How important was India for the British Empire? Why was it regarded as ‘the jewel in the Crown’? Was this justified?

2. Analyze the British withdrawal from Palestine in 1948; was this the right and most prudent thing to do?

**Required Reading (60-70pp.):**

WEEK 8
Tues./Thur.,
October 9/11

"The Thatcher Revolution - Domestic and External Repercussions"

Questions for Presentations:

1. Did Margaret Thatcher’s domestic politics revive the British economy?

2. How important was the Falklands conflict for Thatcher’s foreign policy and her domestic popularity?

Required Reading (select c. 60-70pp.):


- Paul Hirst, “Margaret Thatcher: Miracle or Mirage? The Thatcher Years, 1979-

Two student presentations. Discussion of weekly topic & discussion of the subject of the two presentations.

Working with Primary Sources: Practical Experiments. ONE

Deadline: First Essay due on October 11.

- Louisa Hadley and Elizabeth Ho, *Thatcher & after: Margaret Thatcher and her afterlife in contemporary culture* (Palgrave, 2010).

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<th>WEEK 9</th>
<th>&quot;Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan: Close Friends or Political Rivals?&quot;</th>
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<td>Tues., Oct. 16</td>
<td>Questions for Presentations:</td>
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<td>1. Does Reagan deserve credit for “winning” the Cold War? How important was Thatcher’s role?</td>
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<td>2. Right or Wrong? Assess Margaret Thatcher’s policies towards the U.S., the Soviet Union, and the EC.</td>
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<td>Required Reading (c. 60-70pp.):</td>
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<td>Two student presentations. Discussion of weekly topic &amp; discussion of the subject of the two presentations.</td>
<td>Working with Primary Sources: Practical Experiments. TWO</td>
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<td>NO CLASS on Thursday October 18 (fall break)</td>
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Relevant chapters from

- Nicholas Wapshott, *Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher: a political marriage* (New York: Sentinel, 1997);
- Geoffrey Smith, *Reagan and Thatcher* (London: Bodley Head, 1990);
- See also the literature mentioned for the previous week.

### WEEK 10
Tues./Thur. October 23/25

**“Britain and Ireland: from World War II to the Present”**

Questions for Presentations:

1. Why were British-Irish relations so difficult during most of the 20th century? Give an outline of the relationship from the 1916 Easter Rising to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.

2. Assess the ‘neutrality’ factor in Ireland's relations with the outside world. Has it been an important factor?

Required Reading (select 60-70pp.):


Two student presentations. Discussion of weekly topic & discussion of the subject of the two presentations.

Working with Primary Sources: Practical Experiments. THREE
### WEEK 11
Tues./Thur.,
October 30/
November 1

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<th>&quot;Britain, the U.S., and the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland&quot;</th>
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**Questions for Presentations:**

1. Why did the 'Troubles' explode onto the scene in the late 1960s? Were Catholic grievances valid or not? Outline the course of the 'Troubles' from c. 1968 to the early 1990s.

2. Why was it possible to overcome the 'Troubles' toward the late 1990s? Give an outline of the process dealing with the governments of John Major and Tony Blair. How important was the role of U.S. President Clinton and his team?

**Required Reading (select 60-70pp.):**


Two student presentations. Discussion of weekly topic & discussion of the subject of the two presentations.
WEEK 12
Tues./Thur.
November 6/8

"The Blair and Brown Years: New Labour, Cool Britannia, and the Iraq War"

Questions for Presentations:

1. Why did Britain join the U.S. in invading Iraq in 2003? Was this justified? What were the repercussions for Tony Blair's politics in Britain?

2. Were Blair and Brown pro-European politicians? Give an outline of 'New Labour's' policy toward Europe and the EU.

Required Reading (select c. 60-70pp.):


Two student presentations. Discussion of weekly topic & discussion of the subject of the two presentations.

Deadline:
Second Essay due on Nov. 8


• Christopher Meyer, *DC Confidential* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005).

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**WEEK 13**  
Tues./Thur., November 13/15  

"*British Society: Race, Culture, Religion, Gender, Poverty*"

Questions for Presentations:

1. What have been the most-pressing social problems in British society since the 1960s? What is the situation today?

2. Is Britain an inherently racist society? Use the 1993 murder of Stephen Lawrence as a case study (use mainly internet resources for this, including the Guardian newspaper archive: www.guardian.co.uk).

Two student presentations. Discussion of weekly topic & discussion of the subject of the two presentations.
Required Reading (c. 60-70pp.):

- Ralf Dahrendorf, *On Britain* (BBC, 1982).
- David Marquandt and Anthony Seldon (eds.), *The Ideas that Shaped Post-war Britain* (Fontana Press, 1996), Chaps. 5-9, 11-12: pp. 88-213, 257-308.
- Pat Thane and Liza Filby, *Unequal Britain: equality in Britain since 1945* (Continuum, 2010)
- Bill Osgerby, *Youth in Britain* (Blackwell, 1998)
- Nick J. Crowson et al., *NGOs in contemporary Britain: non-state actors in society and politics since 1945* (Palgrave, 2009).
**WEEK 14**

**Tues., November 20**

"The Special Relationship with the U.S."

Questions for Presentations:

1. When did the 'special relationship' start? What are its particular features?

2. Is it still justified to talk of a 'special relationship' between Britain and the U.S. today? Answer these questions with respect to the post-1990 world.

Required Reading (select c. 60-70pp.):


Two student presentations. Discussion of weekly topic & discussion of the subject of the two presentations.

**NO CLASS on Thursday, Nov. 22 (Thanksgiving break)**
### WEEK 15

**Tues/Thur., November 27/29**

#### “Britain and Europe”

**Questions for Presentations:**

1. Did Britain miss the "European bus" in the 1950s and has been trying to catch up ever since?

2. Why is Britain still such an 'awkward partner' regarding the European integration process? Assess with reference to the policies pursued from Thatcher to Cameron.

**Required Reading (select c.60-70pp.):**


Two student presentations. Discussion of weekly topic & discussion of the subject of the two presentations.

#### FINAL two sessions of this course