Course Content

This course will examine the state of modern Britain, looking at issues that have confronted governments over the past thirty years. These have been turbulent times, with the identities of the two main political parties being shaped very much by the personalities and ideas of two key politicians: Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair. Whilst Britain experienced rising prosperity, it also had to contend with war in Europe and the Middle East, with international terrorism, the challenges of seeking a peace in Northern Ireland and resolving its relationship with Europe. How have governments responded to these issues and have civil liberties such as freedom of the press been undermined by the need for greater public security?

Crises have also struck at the very heart of Britain’s constitution with the image of the monarchy shaken by the break-up of royal marriages and the death of Princess Diana. Has the monarchy succeeded in saving its future by modernising and embracing the energy of its younger royals? We will explore the current politics and conflicts facing British government today, concluding with the question of Britain’s future as a nation, as it responds to the rise of nationalist aspirations within its very own borders.

Weekly Outline

1. The state of Britain: government and politics
2. The monarchy in modern day Britain
3. The rise and fall of Margaret Thatcher.
4. New Labour and Tony Blair
5. Britain and Northern Ireland: peace at last?
6. The press versus government: what role for the media today?
7. The challenges of government today: consensus and discord, Left versus Right
8. The disunited Kingdom: what future for Britain?

Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course you should have:

- a knowledge and understanding of contemporary British politics and government
- a critical awareness of the personalities and key developments that have shaped the face of British politics
- the ability to critically select, evaluate and use a range of relevant historical evidence both primary and secondary