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British Politics

The British Politics Research Cluster is an interdisciplinary group which is based within the Department of Political Science & International Relations but which aims to bring together staff and students from across the College of Social Sciences who have research interests broadly in the area of British government, economy and society.

At present, the Cluster's main activity is based around a monthly working paper series but it is also in the process of developing an MA in British Politics and, in the future, aims to run a series of seminars, workshops and other research initiatives. The cluster also provides a focal point for the development of research collaborations both in terms of publications and research income generation.

The cluster aims to promote a very broad definition of the term 'British Politics' – to incorporate any aspect of change and continuity in political, social and economic relations within the UK and between Britain and the European / international environment. As such, the research cluster aims to forge collaborative projects between a wide range of PhD students and academics across the College, who take Britain as a key area of focus in their research.

The British Politics Research Cluster also has close ties to the **Palgrave journal, British Politics**, which is housed within POLSIS and co-edited by Peter Kerr and Steve Kettell (University of Warwick).

Working Paper Series

At present, the Cluster's activities centre round a monthly working paper seminar series. These seminars usually meet on the last Thursday of the month and involve a member of the Cluster presenting a paper, normally expected to be a work in progress, which is designed for submission to a journal or edited collection, or as a chapter forming part of a PhD thesis. The purpose of the seminar is to provide critical and constructive feedback which can enable the presenter to enhance the quality of their material. In particular, the cluster seeks to encourage the development of theoretically informed work which can contribute to ongoing debates about any aspect of social, political and economic life in the UK.

Past and future papers include:

- Judi Atkins – Moral Argument & the Justification of Policy: New Labour's Case for the New Deals
- Matthew Hall – Exploring and Developing the British Political Tradition
- Stephen Bates & Peter Kerr – David Cameron & the Janus Faced Renewal of the Conservative Party
- Stephen Bates & Laura Jenkins – Female Politicians & the Concept of Feminisation: An Unhappy Marriage of Descriptive & Substantive Representation?

For details of the next seminar, or if you would like to present a working paper, please contact Dr Laura Jenkins (**l.m.jenkins@bham.ac.uk (mailto:l.m.jenkins@bham.ac.uk)**)

Current Affairs Seminar

The Cluster also runs a current affairs seminar for undergraduate and graduate students. This is organised on an ad hoc basis throughout term time and provides a forum for students to discuss important events and trends in British Politics in an informal and collegiate atmosphere. These seminars are advertised through WebCT and the student email lists.

Members

Dr Stephen Bates (/staff/profiles/government-society/bates-stephen.aspx)
Stephen's current research is on the renewal of the Conservative Party, female representation within the UK Parliament, and issues of trust in the regulation of Stem Cell Research. His broader interests lie in the theorisation of power and change and how that can be utilised in the critique of contemporary political and social relations. He lectures on the second year course, Political Analysis, the final year course, Power in Britain, and the MA course, Advanced Political Analysis.

Karin Bottom (/staff/profiles/government-society/bottom-karin.aspx) (INLOGOV)
Karin's research is multi-level and revolves around small parties and non-mainstream politics; party theory; party systems; democracy and political participation. Her work concentrates on British politics but is comparative. Recently she has been researching and writing for publication on issues relating to non-mainstream parties, single issue politics and the British National Party's electability and search for legitimacy. Karin convenes and teaches on various MA modules concerned with democracy, parties, participation (INLOGOV). She also teaches quantitative methods for INLOGOV and The School of Government and Society. Karin is Reviews Editor for the journal Local Government Studies.

Tony Bovaird (/staff/profiles/government-society/bovaird-tony.aspx) (INLOGOV)
Tony worked in the UK Civil Service (DoE) and several universities before moving to back to the University of Birmingham in 2006. He was a member of the OECD e-Governance Task Force. He chaired the Evaluation Partnership, set up by the UK government to co-ordinate evaluation of the Local Government Modernisation Agenda from 2002 – 2007 and is a member of the CLG Expert Panel on Local Governance and Partnerships. He undertook evaluation case studies of the Civil Service Reform Programme, commissioned by the Cabinet Office and recently led the UK contribution to an EU project on user and community co-production of public services in five European countries. He also acted as an advisor to CLG's Councillor Commission. He helps to organise the European Public Sector Award and is on the Strategy Board of the Local Authorities Research Council Initiative. Author of Public Management and Governance (2nd ed., London: Routledge, 2009). He is currently working with Cabinet and Scrutiny in Sunderland on new ways of using scrutiny in the council and the Sunderland partnership.

Professor Peter Burnham (/staff/profiles/government-society/burnham-peter.aspx)

Dr Emma Foster (/staff/profiles/government-society/foster-emma.aspx)
Emma's main research interests are in poststructuralism, gender identities, and behaviours and sexualities in relation to environmental politics and sustainable development. She has published on sustainable development policy in Britain and her current research applies Michel Foucault's work on governmentality to environmental policy activity. She lectures on issues of gender and sexuality and gender and development.

Chris Game (INLOGOV) (http://www.inlogov.bham.ac.uk/staff/Game.shtml)
Chris Game's academic interests are in the politics of (primarily British) local/sub-central government: political leadership, local political management, electoral systems and behaviour, political parties and representation. More specifically, his recent work has derived from his research for the Councillors Commission on the electoral barriers to the representation of minorities, particularly women, and from the latest structural reorganisation of English local government. He lectures on these topics, and also co-convenes a graduate module on Comparative Local Government.

Dr Laura Jenkins (/staff/profiles/government-society/jenkins-laura.aspx)
Laura's main research interests are in contemporary political analysis & theory, strategies for & forms of politicisation, power relations in contemporary Britain, and the politics of the body. Her current research is on female representation within the UK Parliament, and discourses surrounding female circumcision. She lectures on the second year course, British Politics.

Dr Peter Kerr (/staff/profiles/government-society/kerr-peter.aspx)
Peter's broad research interests lie in applying theories of social and political change to explain trends in British politics. His current work focuses upon processes of party modernisation and changing patterns of democracy, citizenship and political participation in the UK. He is the co-editor of the journal, British Politics, and his publications include Postwar British Politics: From Conflict to Consensus (London: Routledge, 2001). He lectures on the first year course, Foundation of Politics, and on the final year course, Topics in British Politics.

Dr Will Leggett (Sociology) (/staff/profiles/government-society/leggett-will.aspx)
Will's research interests are in political sociology, social theory and political strategy. His publications include The Third Way and Beyond: Criticisms, Futures, Alternatives (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004, co-edited with Sarah Hale & Luke Martell), and After New Labour: Social Theory and Centre-Left Politics (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). His current research explores the role of ideology and culture in constructing political identities and their part in both reproducing and challenging the social and political order. He lectures on the second year course, Contemporary Social Theory, and the third year course, Political Sociology.

Professor Colin Thain (/staff/profiles/government-society/thain-colin.aspx)
Colin's current research focuses on the power, role and impact of the UK Treasury since 1997 set in its global, historical and ideological contexts, in an ESRC funded project on the Treasury under New Labour. The study has involved a series of elite actor interviews with key officials, ministers, advisers and journalists. The research design involves a framework using historical institutionalist, network, core executive and policy transfer literatures. The project looks at the Treasury as a five-headed institution: central department, ministry of finance, economics ministry, policy actor, and foreign economic policy agency. In doing so it charts how the Treasury has changed structurally, the impact of operational independence for the Bank of England, public spending planning and control, and case studies on such topics as policy reviews, the decision on the EURO and debt relief. He has a long standing interest in the politics and implementation of economic policy, public expenditure politics, and the role of Central Banks. Colin is planning successor research projects looking at the role of the Bank of England, and the politics of UK tax policymaking.

Associate Members

Judi Atkins (Research Fellow, Swansea University)

For further information about the British politics research group contact:
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