



Boston University International Programs
London

Boston University British Programmes
Current British Legal Issues
CAS IP 400 C (*Elective B*)
Spring 2009

Instructor Information

A. Name	Paul Cousins and Terry Sullivan
B. Day and Time	Fridays, 9am-1pm
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G. Office hours	By appointment

Course Overview

This course will discuss some of the most important and controversial issues in contemporary British law. It is not a law course as such, but rather seeks to place the issues in their social, political and ethical context. Comparisons will be made throughout with wider European legal issues and those of the USA. It will focus on the origins of these issues and will analyse the diverse methodological and theoretical positions taken in explaining and understanding them. It will also draw on empirical illustration of the various issues from the current events. Furthermore, it will investigate the main agents and actors involved in the chosen topics.

The choice of topics has been based on issues that raise interesting and topical concerns. Despite the diversity of topics, the course is designed to enable students to achieve a critical understanding of different approaches to the study of law together with knowledge of, and sensitivity to, the complexity and diversity of law in different societies.

On successful completion of the course students should be able to demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of some of the vocabulary of British law and the languages of jurisprudential debate and confrontation. They should be able to analyse critically a range of theories, concepts, and methods employed in the legal and associated disciplines and evidence judged by these perspectives. They should, in addition, be able to engage in an informed assessment and criticism of these positions. Above all, they should be able to adopt an independent, critical and reflective approach to a number of important current issues confronting contemporary societies.

Programme Topics

- February 26** An overview of the sources of law in Britain, analysis of the courts system; introduction to visit to House of Lords.
- February 27 11am** Visit to the House of Lords Records Office
- March 6** The Constitutional Reform Act 2005 and its consequences.
- March 13** The Law on War, and recent international conflicts.
- March 20** Judicial Behaviour and Theories of Punishment.
- March 27** The Right to Know in Britain – The Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- April 3** Ethical Controversies and The Law.
- April 10** **No class (Good Friday)**
- April 17** The impact of the European Union on British Law.
- April 21** Review and Revision.
- April 23** **Final Examination**
Exam times and locations will be posted on the BU London website and in the Student Newsletter two weeks before exam dates.

Methodology

There will be lectures, short documentary films and specialist talks by expert guest lecturers. Students will be encouraged to participate in interactive discussions during lectures as well as delivering a formal presentation. In most lectures detailed handouts will be distributed so that more time can be devoted to listening and discussing and less to writing.

Assessment

There are three elements to the assessment. Each student will be required to write a 3000-word paper on an agreed subject, worth 40% of the final grade. There will be a two-hour final examination worth 50% and 10% will be allocated for participation and attendance.

Your grades will be based on the following criteria: the relevance of your answer to the topic chosen, clarity of expression and continuity, explicit evidence of having read the main information and arguments in the required and supplementary reading. In addition, extra credit will be given for the strategic use of up-to-date illustrative material from the press or other media that you may have gathered during the course.

Grading

Please refer to the Academic Handbook for detailed grading criteria and information on plagiarism: <http://www.bu-london.co.uk/files/images/ACADEMICHANDBOOKSP09.pdf>.

Readings

The readings for each topic will be indicated weekly. For information on the British legal system, students should refer to:

Slapper & Kelly *The English Legal System*

Other useful reference works are:

Wade & Bradley *Constitutional and Administrative Law*

Hall *The Magic Mirror: Law in American History*

Weir *Unequal Britain*

Coxall & Robbins *Contemporary British Politics*

Dunleavy *Developments in British Politics*

All students should read a 'serious' newspaper regularly (i.e. The Times, Guardian or Independent etc.), and be aware of current issues in the other media.

Additional readings may be posted on the course webpage:

<http://www.bu-london.co.uk/academic/ip400c> (you must be logged in to view materials).

We hope that you find the course both stimulating and interesting.

Paul Cousins

Terry Sullivan

February 2009