The Political System of the United Kingdom

An introduction to the politics and parties of Great Britain

Microteaching
Tuesday February 23rd, 2016

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Link to today’s slides, activities

http://j.mp/UKPolitics
The United Kingdom

• England
• Scotland
• Wales
• Northern Ireland
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- Parliament handles matters that pertain to England or whole UK
Parliament

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• Continued by Simon De Montfort in 1265
  • Included commoners for the first time
  • Commoners and lords held separate advisory roles
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  2. The House of Lords
  3. The House of Commons
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The Regent

- Descendant of the Kings of medieval England
- Through royal prerogative:
  - Signs all legislation
  - Is the sole person who can declare War or Peace
  - Calls on majority party in the House of Commons to form a government in his or her name.
House of Lords

- Successors of the Barons, Earls, Dukes, and Marquesses of medieval England and Scotland
- Members are called “Peers”
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House of Lords

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  • Since 2009, that responsibility has fallen to the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, which is not a part of Parliament
House of Commons

- Elected Representatives of the People of the UK
  - Elected through a “First past the post” electoral system – the person with the most votes wins… even if he or she does not have a majority.
- Responsible for day-to-day legislation and governance
- 650 constituencies with around 70,000 people in each constituency
- The majority party, or coalition of minority parties equivalent to a majority in number has the responsibility for governing.
  - This party is said to be “in government”
House of Commons

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• Maintaining a government can be difficult
  • In 2010, no party had an overall majority of the seats in the House of Commons
    • The Center-Right Conservatives and Centrist Liberal Democrats joined together to form a coalition government
  • In 2015, the Conservative Party won an outright majority.
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- The Loyal Opposition gets the opportunity to ask questions of the Prime Minister every week on important policy issues.
  - It can become raucous and exciting.
  - [CHECK PMQS LINK ON WEBSITE]
House of Commons

• The Benches… again?

• Like the House of Lords there are benches in the House of Commons
  • Leaders of government and opposition sit on the front of the benches, facing each other
  • Party members who are not in the leadership sit in the back benches
  • Frontbenchers vs. Backbenchers
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Activity: Political Parties

Wrapping Up