

The Great Prime Ministers

Start date 19 November 2021 **End date** 21 November 2021

Venue Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge
CB23 8AQ

Tutor **Dr Sean Lang** **Course code** 2122NRX069

Director of ISP and LL Sarah Ormrod

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Tutor biography

Dr Sean Lang is Senior Lecturer in History at Anglia Ruskin University, where he specialises in the history the British Empire. He has also lectured for many years for Cambridge University Institute for Continuing Education, covering a wide range of topics including modern European and imperial history. He is a regular broadcaster on radio and television, both in the UK and abroad, commenting on history and on current affairs. He was Head of History at Hills Road Sixth Form College and worked with government and with the Council of Europe on policy relating to history in schools. He has spoken frequently for the Institute of Ideas and recently on the 'Break The Rules' podcast stream. He is an award-winning playwright, and his productions have been staged in Cambridge, Oxford, London, Norwich and at the Edinburgh Fringe. He is the author of *British History for Dummies* and three other history titles in the 'for Dummies' series.

Course programme

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the Terrace Bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	Parliament and the Robinocracy
22:00	Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	The King's Minister
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Victorian Titans
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free time
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Prime Ministers in a world at war
18:00 – 18:30	Free time
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Prime Ministers on film
21:30	Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	The Thatcher Years
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Blair, Brown, Brexit and Boris
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

The course will introduce students to:

- 1) The way the office of prime minister has developed in Britain from the 18th century to the present day;
- 2) Some of the political and constitutional issues which the office of prime minister has thrown up and their consequences in the present day.

Content:

The development of 'Cabinet' government under the supervision of a 'prime' minister was a characteristic that set 18th-century Britain apart from other European countries. Sir Robert Walpole established the role as a form of parliamentary manager, though no prime minister could ignore the important role of the monarch, as the ministers of George III were to learn to their cost. The Victorian period was the 'golden age' of parliament, dominated by such titans as Sir Robert Peel, Gladstone, Disraeli and Lord Salisbury. The world wars of the 20th century helped shape the role still further, in the hands of Lloyd George and Churchill, while Attlee built on the war to rebuild the country in a very different image. Margaret Thatcher was a revolutionary premier, and not just as the first woman to hold the office, reshaping politics and providing the basis for Tony Blair's New Labour and the Brexit-dominated political landscape of our own day.

Presentation of the course:

The course will involve illustrated lectures, group discussion and the study of documents and images from the period.

As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

- 1) Talk with confidence and knowledge about the historical development of the office of prime minister.
- 2) Discuss with insight the relationship between the premiership and the wider shape of British politics.
- 3) Relate recent developments at the top of British political life to their historical antecedents and context.

Reading and resources list

Listed below are texts that might be of interest should you wish to supplement your learning on the course. Any essential reading is marked with an asterisk *

Author	Title	Publisher and date
*Iain Dale	<i>The Prime Ministers: three hundred years of political leadership</i>	Hodder & Stoughton, 2020
*Anthony Seldon	<i>The Impossible Office? The history of the British prime minister</i>	Cambridge UP, 2021
*Martin Loughlin	<i>The British Constitution: a very short introduction</i>	Oxford UP, 2013
William Hague	<i>William Pitt the Younger</i>	HarperCollins, 2005
Richard Aldous	<i>The Lion and the Unicorn: Gladstone vs Disraeli</i>	Pimlico, 2007
Paul Addison	<i>Churchill: the unexpected hero</i>	Oxford UP, 2006
Margaret Thatcher	<i>Margaret Thatcher: the Downing Street Years</i>	HarperPress 2012

Website addresses:

Office of the Prime Minister: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/prime-ministers-office-10-downing-street>

Brief biographies of prime ministers: <https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers>

UK Parliament site: <https://www.parliament.uk/site-information/glossary/prime-minister/>

Chronologies of prime ministers:

<https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Prime-Ministers-of-Britain/>

https://www.historytoday.com/archive/british_prime_ministers