



Weekend Courses 2024-25

Picture This: the impact of images in British politics

Start date: 25 April 2025 **End date:** 27 April 2025

Venue: Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge
CB23 8AQ

Tutor: Dr Graham McCann **Course Code:** 2425NRX037

Tutor biography

Graham's academic background includes a first-class BA degree and Doctorate in Political Theory from the University of Cambridge. He also holds a fellowship and lectureship in Political Theory for King's College, Cambridge as well as being a Founding Director of the University of Cambridge's first MPhil degree programme in Social and Political Theory. He currently runs an annual course at Cambridge on The History of British Political Thought.

Graham is the author of 19 books so far and numerous published essays. He is a contributor to many publications including *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, *Sunday Times*, *the Observer*, *London Evening Standard*, *Washington Post*, *Times Literary Supplement*, *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, *The Modern Review*, *The Cambridge Review*, *Sight and Sound*, *New Society*, *Marxism Today*, *Radical Philosophy* and *The New Statesman*. He has also been television critic of the *Financial Times* and continues to be a regular contributor to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

His academic writing can be found in various journals and collections including the article 'Biographical Boundaries' in M Featherstone, M Hepworth & B Turner (eds), *The Body: social process and cultural theory* (SAGE Publications, 1991).

Summary of content

The course will cover the rise and impact of caricature and cartoonists; of photography and its impact upon political communication, the public evaluation of character and events; the use and abuse of television as a medium by broadcasters and politicians; the increased emphasis on, and exploitation of, image in the age of spin; and the new challenges, and opportunities, presented by the rise of social media and the growing use of AI technology.

Aims

This course aims to:

- provide an overview of the modern history of the image in British politics
- explain some of the most notable theories pertaining to, and incidents in, this process
- encourage a more critically-informed assessment of contemporary issues relating to the relationship between image and politics

Course sessions

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	Introduction: Bagehot, Barthes, Boorstin & the era of Image
22:00	Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast (for residents only)
09:00 – 10:30	Maliciously perceived truth: 18th-century caricature
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Snap judgements: 19th-century photography
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free time
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Boxed into the corner: The challenge of television
18:00 – 18:30	Free time
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Spinning image: Heath, Thatcher and Saatchi & Saatchi
21:30	Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast (for residents only)
09:00 – 10:30	The Bacon Sandwich & the Dancing Queen: Images & social media
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Conclusion: AI, Deep Fakes & the Future
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Presentation of the course

The course will consist of conventional lectures, but will also allow for, and encourage, discussion during each session. Some visual and audio content will be included when relevant and practicable.

Learning outcomes

As a result of the course, you will gain a greater understanding of the subject and you should be able to:

- discuss the topic with greater knowledge and assurance
- reflect on the history of the subject with a surer sense of the key figures, events and theorists
- pursue further research into the subject which can build on the body of knowledge you have acquired

Reading and resources list

There are no compulsory readings for this course.

However, you may find the below recommended reading list of interest to supplement your course.

Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (1867), chapter 2 (OUP, 2009)

Marco Bohr and Basia Sliwinska, editors, *The Evolution of the Image: Political Action and the Digital Self*, (Routledge 2018), chapter 7

Robert Chesney and Danielle K. Citron, 'Disinformation on Steroids: The Threat of Deep Fakes,' *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2018

Maria Grabe and Erik Page Bucy, *Image Bite Politics: News and the Visual Framing of Elections* (Oxford Academic, 2010)

A D. Hernandez, (2023) 'Bell Pottinger: Pre-Digital Fake News During the Rise of Neoliberalism,' *Class, Race and Corporate Power*, 11(1).
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/48722374> (You will receive downloaded copies of the material via email)

Joe Moran, (2008). 'Mass-Observation, Market Research, and the Birth of the Focus Group, 1937-1997,' *Journal of British Studies*, 47(4), 827–851. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25482894> (You will receive downloaded copies of the material via email)

Neil Postman: *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (1985) (Methuen, 1987)

Hannah Smith and Katherine Mansted, 'Weaponised Deep Fakes,' *Weaponised Deep Fakes: National Security and Democracy*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2020, pp. 11–14.

Mustafa Suleyman, *The Coming Wave: A.I., Power and the Twenty-First Century's Greatest Dilemma* (Vintage, 2024)

David Francis Taylor, *The Politics of Parody: A Literary History of Caricature, 1760-1830* (Yale, 2018)

Note: Institute of Continuing Education (ICE) students are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current ICE course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

(Information correct as of April 2024)