



## Weekend Courses 2024-25

### The UK and the European Union: an awkward partnership?

**Start date:** 15 August 2025

**End date:** 17 August 2025

**Venue:** Madingley Hall  
Madingley  
Cambridge  
CB23 8AQ

**Tutor:** Dr Christopher Huggins

**Course Code:** 2425NRX059

---

#### Tutor biography

Dr Christopher Huggins is Associate Teaching Professor and Director of Academic Programmes at the University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education. His research focuses on European Union politics, in particular the UK–EU relationship, the Europeanisation of subnational politics and the pedagogy of European politics.

Christopher obtained his PhD from the University of Portsmouth where he investigates the transnational networking undertaken by local authorities in England and France and how this activity was used to influence and shape European Union policy. Following his PhD Christopher held research positions at the University of Aberdeen and the University of the West of Scotland where he investigated the impact of Brexit on UK fisheries policy and governance, and the impact of this on intergovernmental constitutional politics within the UK.

Christopher is passionate about learning and teaching and has developed a specialism in teaching European Union politics, recently co-editing a book on *Teaching European Union Politics* (Edward Elgar, 2024).

## **Summary of content**

The UK is often dubbed an 'awkward partner' in its relationship with the EU. Its reluctance to participate in post-War integration, the frequent disagreements between London and Brussels and the passage of Brexit all suggest a difficult partnership. But the 'awkward' characterisation is simplistic and even unfair as the UK was, and remains, a driver of European integration. This course charts the history of UK-EU relations from the end of the Second World War to the present, unpicking the political factors which have shaped the trajectory of the UK's relationship with the EU, and which continue to shape their partnership after Brexit.

## **Aims**

This course aims to:

- introduce the history of the UK–EU relationship
- explore the domestic and international political factors which have shaped the UK's engagement with European integration
- assess the narrative that the UK has been an 'awkward' or 'reluctant' partner in the European Union

---

## 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
<b>20:30 – 22:00</b>	<b>Introduction: the UK and the ‘awkward partner’ narrative</b>
22:00	Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

### Saturday

07:30	Breakfast (for residents only)
<b>09:00 – 10:30</b>	<b>The UK and the early years of European integration</b>
10:30	Coffee
<b>11:00 – 12:30</b>	<b>Into Europe: the 1973 accession and 1975 referendum</b>
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free time
16:00	Tea
<b>16:30 – 18:00</b>	<b>Enthusiastic European? Driving and shaping Europe from within</b>
18:00 – 18:30	Free time
18:30	Dinner
<b>20:00 – 21:30</b>	<b>Awkward European? Disputes and rising Euroscepticism</b>
21:30	Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

### Sunday

07:30	Breakfast (for residents only)
<b>09:00 – 10:30</b>	<b>Awkwardness epitomised: Brexit</b>
10:30	Coffee
<b>11:00 – 12:30</b>	<b>Looking to the future: an ongoing partnership</b>
12:45	Lunch

**The course will disperse after lunch**

**Presentation of the course**

This course takes the form of interactive seminar-style sessions. PowerPoint slides are used to illustrate and guide participants through course content. Class discussion, drawing on participants' own knowledge and reflections, will be actively encouraged.

**Learning outcomes:**

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

- identify key moments in the history of the UK–EU relationship from the end of the Second World War to present
- identify and evaluate the ways in which the UK has contributed to the development of the European Union and wider European integration
- identify and evaluate tensions in the relationship between the UK and the EU
- critically evaluate the UK's characterisation as an 'awkward partner' in the European integration project

---

## 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.

Daddow, O & Oliver, T *A not so awkward partner: the UK has been a champion of many causes in the EU* (2016)

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2016/04/15/a-not-so-awkward-partner-the-uk-has-been-a-champion-of-many-causes-in-the-eu/>

Evans, G & Menon, A *Brexit and British Politics* (Polity Press 2017)

George, S *An Awkward Partner: Britain in the European Community* (Oxford University Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1998)

Ludlow, N P The Historical Roots of the 'Awkward Partner' Narrative. *Contemporary European History*, Volume 28, issue 1, pages 35-38, 2019

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777318000759>

Menon, A & Salter, J P Britain's Influence in the EU, *National Institute Economic Review*, 236, p7-13, 2016

Oliver, T *Understanding Brexit: A Concise Introduction* (Policy Press, 2018)

Saunders, R *Yes to Europe! The 1975 Referendum and Seventies Britain*, (Cambridge University Press 2018)

UK in a Changing Europe, *Where Next? The Future of the UK-EU Relationship*, (2023)

<https://ukandeu.ac.uk/reports/where-next-the-future-of-the-uk-eu-relationship/>

Warlouzet, L Britain at the Centre of European Co-operation (1948-2016) *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 56, issue 4, pages 955-970, 2018

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jcms.12701>

**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)*