



## ***Fourth Lecture / British Cultural Features (02)***

### ***1. Political Life***

In the UK, scandals like “fiddling” expenses make headlines, and politicians are seen as dishonest and doubtful. The community is largely uninterested in politics, and many people are not aware of the important political figures or their local MPs. The once-controversial topic of political discourse is now perceived as boring, with little interest in radical change. Despite political criticism of satirical shows like “Yes, Prime Minister”, there are no significant public calls for reform. The perception of politics as a “necessary evil” often leads politicians to understate their ambition, depicting themselves as selfless public servants.

Britain is a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy where the monarch holds little power. It does not have a single written constitution like most other nations do. Instead, it is based on laws, court rulings, and long-standing practices. Practice, not written legislation, determines the prime minister's authority. Some rights are codified, while others, like protection against discrimination based on religion or political views, are understood to be part of the constitution without being formally written down (laws and rules are not codified in a single, written document).

### ***2. Religious Life***

With the majority of people not going to church and many not having any affiliation with organised religion, traditional Christianity has become less prevalent in modern UK. Furthermore, religious holidays like Easter are not well known, and civil ceremonies are preferred over religious ones. Even though the number of British Christian missionaries has decreased, South American and African missionaries are currently working on spreading Christianity to Britain. Today's Britain is largely considered secular. There is a gap between religious identification and practice, according to the 2001 census. Despite low religious participation, the monarchy's religious ties remain accepted, and religion still influences politics.

### ***3. Educational System***

In Britain, full-time education is compulsory until the middle teenage years, with the academic year beginning at the end of summer. While compulsory education is free, parents can opt for private schooling. The education system is divided into primary (up to age 11 or 12) and secondary stages, with the latter often consisting of larger schools. Nursery education has been slow to develop, but now all children are guaranteed a free, part-time early education place before reaching the compulsory school age of 5. School days typically run from 9 a.m. to 3-4 p.m., with a lunch break, and the school year is shorter than in many other European countries. Teaching methods include a combination of formal lessons and group activities, with primary school children often taught by a single teacher. National tests in English, mathematics, and science are taken at ages 7 and 11, while secondary education involves different teachers for each subject and regular homework. As students age, they are often grouped by ability, though some schools use mixed-ability classes, with ongoing debates over the social and educational implications of streaming.

### ***4. Food and Drink Culture in the UK***

Particularly in low-cost restaurants and institutional settings, British cuisine is sometimes criticised for being bland and of poor quality. The nation lacks a powerful “restaurant culture”, and eating is primarily done for health and convenience rather than pleasure. There has been opposition to initiatives to raise the quality of food, such as Jamie Oliver’s 2005 school meal program. For British people, a sandwich, a can of carbonated drink, and an industrially made chocolate bar represent a “meal”. Historically, the urbanisation and simple diets of the ruling classes have shaped British ideas about food, creating a disconnection from the roots of food. The general quality of ordinary food is still low, despite shifting views and an increase in international influences, as evidenced by the rise in popularity of dishes like chicken tikka masala.

### **References**

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- Seriot, J. (2006). *Elements of Civilisation: Britain, Ireland, and the British Empire*.