POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

Monarchs, Parliament, and Common Law
MONARCHY IN THE UK

(That's a Sex Pistols reference which I don’t think any of you will get.)
• British isles subject to **repeated invasions and migrations**: Celts, Romans, Germanic groups, Vikings, Normans
  • Evidence of degree of conquest (or lack thereof) in languages, culture
• **Norman invasion** → French invade into England, replace Germanic ruling class in **1066 CE**
• Establish **feudalism** → reciprocal relationship of mutual obligation
  • Mutual obligation places limitations on monarch?
HISTORY OF THE ROYAL FAMILY
Magna Carta, Parliament, and Common Law

- **Magna Carta** (1215 CE) → limits the power of the king → no long-term absolutism in UK
- Creation of **Parliament** → feudal lords + power shored up by Magna Carta
  - Parliament formalized by 1265 in England → called to meet by the monarch
- **Common law** → law based on local customs, traditions, and precedent rather than written statutes
- **Religious conflicts** → major disputes between the Crown and the Catholic Church (Henry VIII) led to England’s break with the Church
  - Anglican Church headed by the monarch, not the Pope
  - **Act of Supremacy** → strengthened Parliament
UNIFICATION, WAR, AND EMPIRE

Civil war, the Irish question, and imperialism.
THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR

- **Unification of England and Scotland** in 1603 under James I (VI of Scotland)
  - **James I** did not **respect Parliament**, raised taxes without Parliament’s consent
  - **Charles I** did the same → Parliament rebelled → **English Civil War** (1642-51), execution of Charles I in 1649
- Interregnum with **Oliver Cromwell** as **Lord Protector** of England → military dictatorship
- Restoration under **Charles II** → no legitimate heirs
  - **James II** was feared to be Catholic → replaced by daughter Mary and husband William (Protestants)
  - Establishment of **Bill of Rights** (1689), granting Parliament political supremacy over the monarch
UK’s monarchy was less independent than other European monarchies by the 18th c.

- Parliament moved to adopt the Hanover family as monarchs in 1714 → George I spoke little English, relied on his cabinet and prime minister for guidance

- Modern prime minister established between 1721 and 1742 by Sir Robert Walpole

- Following the loss of the American colonies under George III, prime ministers and the cabinet were chosen by the Parliament, NOT the monarch
• Norman lords began controlled some land in Ireland by the 12th c. → vassals of the English king
  • The Crown did not directly rule; local rulers persisted and Ireland had its own Parliament
• Irish lords were unreliable allies for the Tudors → Henry VIII invaded Ireland in 1536
  • English and Scottish Protestant colonization as a result
  • Tensions between Irish Catholics and English Protestant increased over the following three centuries
• Wars against English colonization and increasing loss of local control erupted throughout the 17th and 18th centuries (especially under Cromwell)
THE IRISH QUESTION

• **Irish Rebellion** in 1789 → British and Irish Parliaments enact **Acts of Union**
  • Created the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland** beginning in 1801
  • **Abolished the Irish Parliament**

• Nationalist movements in the 19th century influence Irish attempts to gain independence

• **Great Irish Famine** (1845-1849) → population dropped from 8 million to 4.4 million by 1911

• **Home Rule** → Promised in 1914, but suspended during WWI
  • Leads to **Easter Rising** in 1916
  • **Irish War of Independence** (1919-1921) → Irish Free State
POBLAIGHT NA H EIREANN
THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT
OF THE
IRISH REPUBLIC
TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself she now seizes that moment, and supported by her exiled children in America...
MODERNIZING POLITICS

- **Party system** developed in 18th century (Whigs v. Tories)

- Expansion of *suffrage* → Industrial Revolution and **Chartist Movement** in the 19th century
  - **Reform Act of 1832** doubled the size of the British electorate (but 90% of British adults were still excluded)
  - Women granted the right to vote in 1928

- Increased size of electorate brought new focus to party politics, new demands
  - Returning soldiers from WWII supported Labour Party candidates → development of welfare state
CONSENSUS TO CRISIS

- **Collectivist consensus** $\rightarrow$ both Labour and Conservative parties supported the establishment of supportive government programs following WWII
  - Creation of **National Health Service** (NHS)
- Economic stagnation and crisis in the 1970s $\rightarrow$ criticism of perceived over-involvement of the state in economics
  - **PM Margaret Thatcher** (1979 - 1991) $\rightarrow$ push back against “nanny state,” adoption of neoliberal economic policies
  - Privatization of some state services (housing, mass transit)
  - **SNL punk rock video... 😊**