



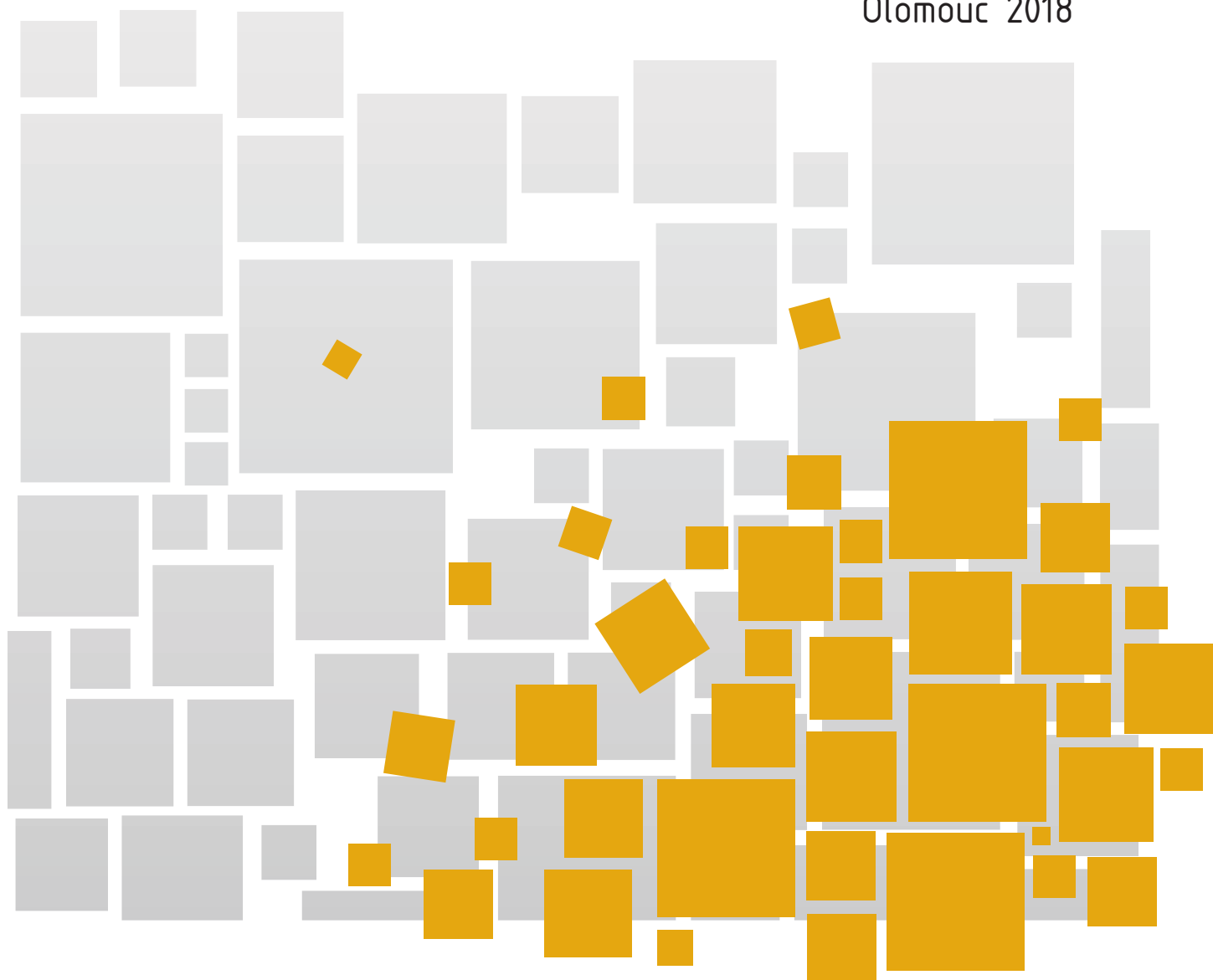
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UK AND US BACKGROUND STUDIES: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE UK AND BRITISH STUDIES, AND TO THE US AND AMERICAN STUDIES

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Olomouc 2018



Palacký University Olomouc

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and to the US and American Studies

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Foreword

This book aims to provide general knowledge about various aspects of the United Kingdom and the United States of America at present. After reading this book, you should have an understanding of how each country works, what it means to come from that country, and what it is like to live there.

The book is not intended to present intricate details about all parts of both countries. However, after reading this book, you should be able to better comprehend these intricacies should you choose to research them further.

The topics in this book have been chosen according to a short survey on what people may want to know about the life and institutions of foreign countries, especially those with such storied histories and current fame as the UK and USA. Completed in early 2018, the book also includes a brief discussion of the reasons behind two rather exceptional recent events, Brexit and the election of Donald Trump as American president.

To follow the book and find the desired piece of information as easily as possible, the chapters are split into sub-chapters. This allows you to find the information more conveniently and to understand how it relates to the rest of the chapter. Charts and maps from various acknowledged sources were added whenever they were considered useful for further illustration of the issues discussed in the text. The text follows the conventions of British English unless indicated otherwise.

We, the authors, hope you will enjoy your usage of this book.

Pierce Mountney and Petr Anténe
2018

Table of Contents

UK Background Studies: An Introduction to the UK and British Studies.....	11
Introduction to the UK.....	11
• Name.....	11
• Flag.....	11
• Political structure.....	11
• National anthem.....	11
• Currency.....	11
• Time zone.....	11
Polity.....	12
• GB versus UK versus England.....	12
• Major cities.....	13
• North/South divide.....	13
• Regions.....	14
• Counties.....	14
Geography.....	14
• Statistics.....	14
• Weather.....	15
• Landscapes.....	19
• National parks.....	20
• Areas of outstanding natural beauty.....	20
• Traditional holidays.....	21
Tourism.....	21
• Statistics.....	21
• By region.....	21
• Places of interest.....	21
Infrastructure.....	21
• Housing.....	21
• Emergency services.....	22
• Transport.....	23
• Town planning.....	23
People.....	24
• Statistics.....	24
• The British identity.....	24
• Geographical identity.....	25
• Multiculturalism.....	26
• Faith.....	27
• Family.....	27
• Class.....	28
• Gender.....	28
• Tradition.....	28
• Privacy.....	28
• Formality.....	28
Monarchy.....	29
• Family tree.....	29
• The Queen.....	29
• Funding.....	30
• Attitude of the public.....	30
• Future.....	30

Politics	31
• Summary	31
• Structure.....	31
• Political parties	34
• Elections.....	35
• Attitudes to politics in the UK	37
Law	38
• Culture	38
• Police	38
• Statistics.....	38
• Criminal Court.....	39
• Civil Court	39
• Red tape	39
• The law making process	40
• A few odd laws.....	40
• Military	40
International Relations.....	40
• UK & the world	40
• UK & US	42
• UK & Europe.....	42
• UK & UK.....	43
Economy	43
• Statistics.....	43
• Industry.....	43
• Welfare.....	45
• NHS	45
• Working Life.....	46
• Taxation.....	47
• National holidays	48
Education	48
• History	48
• Modern attitudes	48
• Public versus private schools.....	49
• Qualifications	49
• Typical schedule/school life.....	50
• Further education	50
Religion.....	52
• Official	52
• Identity/attitude.....	52
• Statistics.....	52
• A brief history of British Christianity	53
• Anglicanism	53
Media	53
• National versus local.....	53
• Newspaper	53
• Television.....	53
• Radio.....	54
• BBC	54
• Advertising.....	54
• Communication networks.....	55
Culture	55
• The Arts.....	55
• Food	56

• Events.....	58
• Sport.....	58
Language.....	60
• Official	60
• Comparison with American English.....	60
• Example slang.....	61
• Accents.....	61
Current Issues	61
• The EU referendum	61
• Nationalism.....	63
Humour.....	64
• British versus American humour	64
• Humour in the face of adversity	64
• Pub humour.....	64
• Stand-up comedy	65
• Comedy TV.....	65
US Background Studies: An Introduction to the US and to American Studies	66
Introduction to the US	66
• Name.....	66
• Flag	66
• National anthem.....	66
• Motto.....	66
• Currency.....	66
• Time zones	67
Polity.....	67
• Political structure	67
• States.....	67
• Major cities	68
• Regions	69
• Other notable US areas	69
Geography.....	71
• Statistics.....	71
• Weather	73
• Land types.....	77
• National parks.....	79
• Natural landmarks.....	80
Tourism	80
• Statistics.....	80
• Places of interest.....	80
Infrastructure.....	81
• Housing.....	81
• Emergency services	82
• Security	82
• Transport.....	83
• Grid network.....	83
People	84
• Statistics.....	84
• The American identity	84
• Geographical identity.....	85
• Multiculturalism.....	86
• Faith	86
• Family	87

• The home	87
• Gender.....	87
• Tradition.....	88
• Conversation	88
• Work.....	88
Politics	88
• Overview.....	88
• Structure.....	89
• Parties.....	93
• Elections.....	94
Law	96
• State versus Federal	96
• Law making process	96
• Executive orders	97
• Police	97
• Crime figures.....	97
• Court	98
• A few odd laws.....	98
International Relations.....	98
• US & the World	98
• US & North America	98
• US & the EU.....	99
• US & China.....	99
• US & Russia	99
• Compact of Free Associations	100
• US Military	100
Economy	100
• Statistics.....	100
• Industry	100
• Welfare.....	101
• Working life	102
• Tax.....	103
• Spending trends.....	104
• National holidays	104
Education	105
• School progression.....	105
• Qualifications	105
• Organisation.....	106
• School life.....	106
• Further education	106
Religion.....	107
• Official	107
• Statistics.....	108
• Culture	110
• Protestantism.....	110
• Catholicism.....	110
• Mormonism.....	110
Media	111
• National versus local.....	111
• Ownership.....	111
• Bias	111
• TV	111
• Advertising.....	112

• Newspaper	112
• Magazines	112
• Censorship	112
• Communication networks	112
Culture	113
• The Arts	113
• Food	116
• Events	117
• Sport	117
Language	119
• Official	119
• Regional dialects	119
• Example slang	119
Current Issues	120
• Politics	120
• Racism	120
• Mass shootings	120
• Distribution of Wealth	121
American humour	121
• Recent trends	121
• Stand-up	121
Conclusion	123
Bibliography	124

UK Background Studies:

An Introduction to the UK and British Studies

Introduction to the UK

↳ Name

Although it is often shortened, the official name of the UK is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

↳ Flag

The flag of the United Kingdom is the Union flag. It is more commonly known as the Union Jack, but this is an old colloquial name from the Navy (Nicolls 2018).

| ↳ Design

The flag design is created by overlaying the crosses of St George, St Andrew and St Patrick (Bartram 2018). Many people presume that the flag is symmetrical, but it is in fact possible to fly the Union flag upside down.

↳ Political structure

The UK is a constitutional monarchy with two legislative houses. The head of state in 2018 is Queen Elizabeth II and the head of government is Theresa May (Britannica 2018a).

↳ National anthem

The national anthem of the United Kingdom is *God Save the Queen*; however Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland occasionally use different anthems at sporting events if they are playing as separate teams.

↳ Currency

The currency of the UK is Pounds Sterling (£). One pound is equal to 100 pence (p). A very common nickname for £1 is a quid.

| ↳ Denominations

Notes cover £50, £20, £10 and £5 (Bank of England, 2018). Coins cover £2, £1, 50p, 20p, 10p, 5p, 2p and 1p. 1p coins are called pennies. There is also a £5 coin, but it is very, very rare and is usually for collectors (Royal Mint 2018).

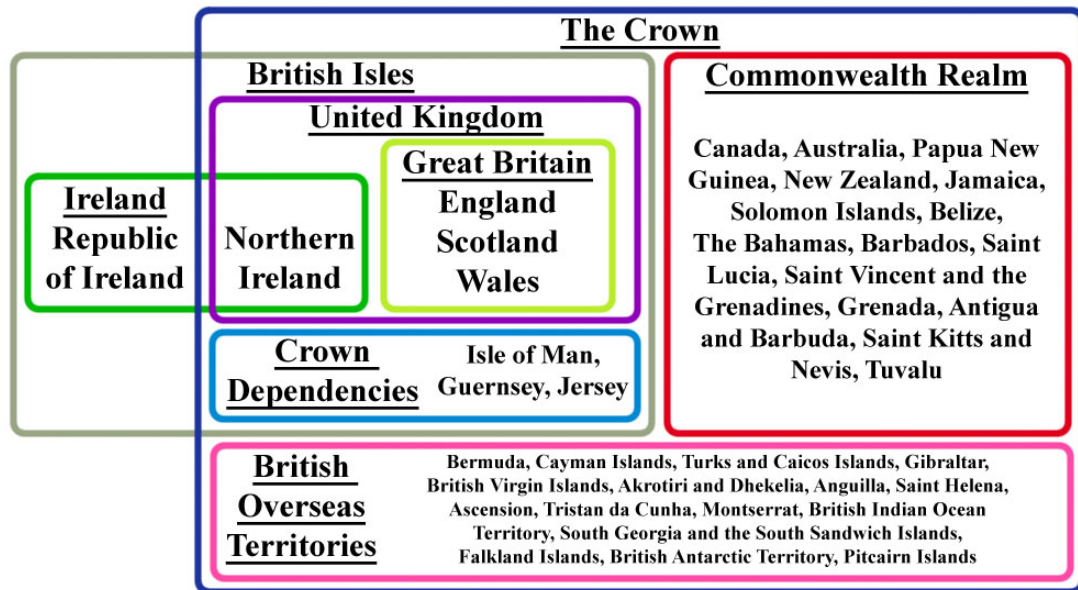
↳ Time zone

The UK uses UTC+00:00 for most of the year, calling it Greenwich Mean Time. During Daylight Saving Time, they switch to British Summer Time, which is UTC+01:00.

GMT is the time shown on the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, London. Therefore, this clock shows the exact time which it is on the Prime Meridian. It was originally established as such to help British sailors tell the time no matter where they were in the world.

Polity

↳ GB versus UK versus England



(CGP Grey 2011a)

| ↳ **The United Kingdom**

The United Kingdom is a “country of countries” (CGP Grey 2011a). Whilst the UK is the recognised sovereign state (nation or country), it is made up of four countries. This may be confusing, but it is how they are referred to as they do fit the dictionary definition of a country. Usually, during international interaction, the country referred to would be the UK. The capital of the UK is London, but each country within has their own capital city too.

| | ↳ **England**

England is the largest and most populous country within the UK. Their parliament is the UK parliament, as England has no England-specific parliament. The capital is London.

| | ↳ **Scotland**

Scotland is the northernmost country within the UK and for a long time was its own sovereign state (no longer). It has its own parliament, but the British parliament can overrule it if need be. The capital is Edinburgh. Scotland also has its own version of Pounds Sterling, which is tied to the British Pound Sterling but is not legally recognised everywhere.

| | ↳ **Northern Ireland**

Northern Ireland is commonly called a country (similar to England or Scotland), but is also recognised by the International Organization for Standardization as a province (ISO 2011). It has its own parliament which can be overruled by the British parliament. The capital is Belfast. Northern Ireland born citizens also have the right to apply for an Irish passport. Northern Ireland also has its own version of Pounds Sterling, which is tied to the British Pound Sterling but is not legally recognised everywhere.

| | ↳ **Wales**

Wales is somewhat more confusing. In 2011, it was recognised by the International Organization for Standardization as a country on par with England or Scotland (ISO 2011). However, the last official records show that Wales is part of England. This is not really recognised any more. It is sometimes referred to by its historical status as a principality, but this is incorrect and is mostly used just to annoy the Welsh. The Welsh have a parliament called the Welsh Assembly, which can again be overruled by the British parliament. The capital city is Cardiff.