

**German Association for British Studies
Annual Conference**

**19-20 May 2023
Centre for British Studies
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin**



Political Culture and Culture Politics in the UK:

Practices, Ideologies and Imaginaries

Call for Paper

Liberal democracies are in the midst of a transformation, as social and cultural fragmentation undermine their stability. Due to globalisation and the erosion of traditional alignments with welfare states, class, parties, family and religion, people perceive a loss of stability and orientation, and need to adapt constantly to a changing environment. Feelings of uncertainty are rooted as much in culture as in material well-being and have been compounded by an emotionalisation and radicalisation in over-heated political climate. Cultural practices, narratives and symbols have been a key battleground for political campaigners to gain acceptance, reputation and legitimacy for their actions. The spreading of fake news and misinformation has steered conflict between people and shifted hegemonic discourses in democratic states. Under notions of a proclaimed 'culture war' or a 'cancel culture' populist, nationalists and conspiracy theorists have aimed to repress critical engagement with established cultural, political and social practices and institutions. Matters which would be conventionally seen as material conditions are framed in specifically cultural terms.

In the UK, the grounds on which politics is negotiated and fought over are manifold and include history, national identity, sovereignty, British heritage, values, immigration, climate change, human rights, security, welfare, gender and LGBTQ+ policies. Brexit has certainly exacerbated these developments and provided a defining context for these issues and been used to (re-)evoke, provoke and manipulate imaginaries and affects of 'the people' and national sovereignty. As it is primarily in England where these issues seem to dominate the political debates, in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland notions of culture, values and identity are mobilised in distinct ways.

In light of these developments, the conference explores the mutual relation between culture and politics. As communication, mass media, consumption, arts, popular culture and lifestyle has profoundly changed over time, political attitudes and representation have become increasingly complex, making it more difficult to disentangle the interdependencies of political, cultural and social practices. Political culture consists of expectations of and attitudes towards the rules, institutions and performance of a political system, as well as of wider cultural practices, discourses and symbols through which politics is perceived and performed. Culture politics then refers to deliberate strategies and actions to mobilise culture for political purposes.

The conference therefore focuses on the nature and causes for transformations in political culture, as well as how culture informs political opinions, attitudes, identities and practices and how politics has shaped and transformed the cultural norms, thinking, narratives and discourses, including arts,

literature, music and comedy For this purpose, we welcome contributions from political and social science, cultural and media studies, and history dealing with issues related to political, social and cultural

- Activism, participation, representation, movements and communication
- Identity, diversity, fragmentation and polarisation
- Narratives, ideologies and imaginaries
- Rights and policies
- Perspectives from Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England
- Comparative perspectives from Germany

We strongly encourage PhD students and early career researcher to submit paper abstracts for this conference. If you are currently working on your PhD thesis or you completed your PhD in 2022 but you do not have access to institutional support, we will provide financial assistance to cover your travel expenses.

If you are interested in participating at this year's annual conference of the German Association for British Studies, please send your abstract (about 300w) by 31 January 2023 to Kirsten.Forkert@bcu.ac.uk and marius.guderjan@hu-berlin.de

We are looking forward to an exciting event and stimulating discussions.