Can the United Kingdom survive as a Union After its Departure from the European Union?

Tuesday, June 8; 10:00am - 11:30am

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N Ireland riots ‘worst in years’
Learning Objectives

• To introduce the possible constitutional implications for the United Kingdom of its decision to leave the European Union (Brexit) with a particular focus on Scotland and Northern Ireland

• To introduce important relevant concepts of political economy

• To introduce the growing importance and understanding of issues regarding ‘place’ and how they effect governance

• To discuss collectively other comparative places where similar forces appear to be evident
Kevin Richardson: Background & Declaration

- Newcastle, England (close to border with Scotland)
- Underground coal miner (’80-'91) including terms as youngest ever trade union Branch President
- District Councillor (Labour Party) (’87-'94)
- University North Texas ’91/92’ as International Exchange Student of Political Science
- B.A. (Hons.) Government & Public Policy ’93 (as First Generation Student)
- Visiting Fellow: CURDS: Newcastle University (’13-present): Russell Group Research Intensive
- Local Growth Expert: UK Research and Innovation (’14-present)
- Declaration: Passionate advocate for EU and devolved government. Voted remain in ’16 Brexit referendum

My TX credentials!
The United Kingdom and the European Union

• A complicated and barely understood history, political economy / geography

• Acts of Union 1707 (after several previous failed attempts): issues of religion, monarchy, legal systems, empire, colonies, industrialisation etc) develops through time into a highly centralised single state

• 1921: Separation of island of Ireland into an independent Republic (Eire) and Northern Ireland (which remains in the UK)

• 1973: Both UK and Eire join the European Communities as additional members (late) on the same day

• 1975: UK voted in a referendum to remain in the European Community but no settled consensus

• 2016: UK votes in a single referendum to leave EU (58%/42%)

• 2020: UK finally ‘leaves’ EU with a ‘Withdrawal Agreement’
Brexit and Place

Which places voted to Remain in the EU?

• All 32 electoral districts in Scotland
• A majority of places in Northern Ireland
• Almost all of London
• Many big (university) cities (Leeds, Bristol, Manchester, Liverpool, Oxford, Cambridge, Cardiff, Exeter, Leicester, Newcastle)

Which places voted to Leave the EU?

• Rural places
• Coastal places
• Former industrial places
• Towns and small cities

A proven lie.
Scotland and Brexit

• ’97: 75% vote Yes to devolution and Scottish Parliament. Devolved powers include economy, education, health, justice, rural affairs, housing, environment, equal opportunities, transport and taxation

• ’14: Failed independence referendum (55%/45%). Key unionist argument against independence = continued membership of EU

• ’16: Scotland votes 62% (every single district) to remain in EU

• ’21 Scottish National Party re-elected again with overall majority on new commitments on a new independence referendum and re-entry to European Union

All 32 electoral districts voted to remain
N Ireland and Brexit

- N Ireland votes 55% to remain in EU but wide sectarian divisions (88% Irish nationalists: 34% of unionists)

- Consensus that no physical border should be implemented. Free movement of people, goods, services and capital continues across the border.

- A (legally) contested temporary Northern Ireland Protocol as an annex to the Withdrawal Agreement. A de facto border for goods in the North Sea.

- N Ireland remains subject to many EU laws, to EU Court of Justice, and in the EU Single Market for goods and electricity.

- Perceptions amongst many unionists that the (Irish) nationalists are ‘winning.’ Rioting by unionist youths.

The new ‘border’ in the North Sea
Scholarly Issues

Issues of Political Science

Traditional / continuing issues of imperialism, nationalism, protectionism, xenophobia, racism, populism, migration, demography e.g. ageing etc.

Globalisation of trade and capital, the efficacy of borders, what future role for the ‘nation state’ and devolution to the local state?

Issues of Economic Geography

The ‘creative class’ (Richard Florida) and New Economic Geography (Krugman et al) and the growing agglomeration of big cities.

Widening economic disparities (see McCann)

The ‘electoral revenge’ of ‘places left behind’ and that ‘don’t matter’ (Andres Rodriquez Pose, LSE)

The civic role of universities in their place (Goddard et al)