Harold Wilson,
*The Relevance of British Socialism* (London, 1964)

HS1APH
Approaches, 2012-13

Matthew Broad

*Introduction*

Harold Wilson photographed by Brian Duffy
Harold Wilson was one of the foremost politicians of the latter twentieth century. The period of his first two terms in office, between 1964 and 1970, saw rapid political, economic and social change both in Britain and the wider world. The purpose of our seminars is to examine Wilson and the Labour Party in this period. It uses Wilson’s *The Relevance of British Socialism* as a springboard from which we can consider, through various themes and policy areas, the success or otherwise of both Wilson as Prime Minister and Labour as a governing party.

Seminar days/times: Monday, 2:00 – 3:00 pm
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Office hours:

**Course Programme**

**Week 1: Introduction**
Our introductory session will provide an overview of the course and a brief outline of the set text.

**Week 2: The Labour Party and British Politics, 1945-1964**
Who were the key figures in the post-war Labour movement?
What were the policies and practices of the Labour Party during this period?


**Week 3: Harold Wilson – His life and work**
What was Wilson’s background and why was this important?
What did he promise to achieve in *The Relevance of British Socialism*? What did he fail to mention?
What was meant by terms such as the ‘white heat of revolution’, technology as the ‘new socialism’ as well as the role of Clause IV in Wilson’s administration?

Wilson, *The Relevance of British Socialism*
**Week 4: Domestic Policy I - The Economy, Technology and Education**

What was the economic environment in Britain before Labour’s election in 1964?
What was Labour’s economic policy and was it successful?
What role would technology, science and education play in economic policy?

Chilis, Britain since 1945: A Political History, Chapter 6
Marquand, D., The Progressive Dilemma: From Lloyd George to Blair (London, 1999), chapter 14
Wilson, A Personal Record (see index for relevant pages)
Wilson, The Relevance of British Socialism

**Week 5: Domestic Policy II - Social Policies and ‘Swinging Sixties’**

What is the ‘permissive society’?
What role did Labour play in the ‘Swinging Sixties’?
To what extent can Wilson be personally accredited with the success of these changes?

Marquand, D., The Progressive Dilemma: From Lloyd George to Blair (London, 1999), chapter 14
Wilson, The Relevance of British Socialism
Wilson, The Labour Government, chapters 5, 35

**Week 6: Foreign Policy I - European Economic Community**

What is the history of Britain’s relations with the EEC?
How did Wilson’s own position towards the question of EEC membership change?
How successfully did Wilson manage the Labour Party on the European question?

In addition to below also see the articles in the special issue of Contemporary British History, vol. 20, no. 2 (2006)

Week 7: Foreign Policy II - Beyond Europe

What was Wilson's relationship like with Johnson and the United States?

What did the Labour Government do with regards to the Commonwealth, including Rhodesia and South Africa?

How did Britain's military and defence policies change during the years 1964-70?


Young, J., 'International Factors and the 1964 Election', *Contemporary British History*, vol. 21, no. 3 (September 2007), pp. 351-371
**Week 8: The Legacy of Wilson and the advent of New Labour**

To what extent can Wilson be blamed for problems in the Labour Party between 1976 and 1983?

How far did Wilson set the stage for the Thatcherite revolution or the 1980s?

In what was did Wilson's time in office influence the advent of 'New' Labour?

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Marquand, D., The Progressive Dilemma: From Lloyd George to Blair (London, 1999), chapter 14


ESSAYS ARE DUE IN WEEK 8

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**Week 9: Group Debate**

In this session groups of students will each be involved in a debate. A separate sheet will be given during the course with instructions.

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**Week 10: Essay Return**

Essay Questions

You need to answer ONE question, for submission in Week 8. For details see your History handbook.

1. How central were economic factors to the Labour Party in the period 1964-70?
2. Was Labour’s European policy a success?
3. To what extent were the policies spelt out in The Relevance of British Socialism achieved by 1970?

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**General Bibliography**

In addition to the select bibliography mentioned above, the more general works below may be of interest. This is by no means exhaustive so search Enterprise on the Library website or Amazon for other works.

**Other works by Wilson:**


Wilson, H., The Governance of Britain (London, 1976)

**Autobiographies/memoirs of Wilson’s key colleagues:**


Brown, G., In My Way (Harmondsworth, 1971)


Callaghan, J., Time and Change (London, 1988)


Falkender, M., *Downing Street in Perspective* (London, 1983)


Jenkins, R., *A Life at the Centre* (London, 1991)

In addition to these, there is a collection of Labour Party General Election Manifestos since 1945 available from Keele University: [http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/area/uk/man.htm](http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/area/uk/man.htm). Another useful resource is Hansard, the record of every Parliamentary session. It is now digitised (and searchable) and can be accessed here: [http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/sittings/C20](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/sittings/C20).
# Harold Wilson: Presentation topics

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<th>Week</th>
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            | What role would technology, science and education play in economic policy? |
| **Week 5:**| What is the ‘permissive society’?                                      
            | What role did Labour play in the ‘Swinging Sixties’?                    
            | To what extent can Wilson be personally accredited with the success of these changes? |
| **Week 6:**| What is the history of Britain’s relations with the EEC?                
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