

International Summer School 2026

Royals and Rascals: Contemporary Studies in British Journalism (ISSU9J0)

Module description

On this module you will explore how the relationship between the British Royal Family and the UK media - in particular the tabloid press - has evolved and transformed over the course of recent decades under the reign of the longest serving monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, and in the early years of King Charles III. 'Royals and Rascals' looks behind the headlines at the mediation of stories and controversies that have threatened the authority and future of the monarchy itself. You will consider critiques of the news media's Fourth Estate role in relation to the monarchy - exploring how it has, at times, over-celebrified (and uncritically celebrated) the institution, rather than holding the Royal Household to account and promoting transparency. Conversely, it also examines the long tradition of singling out individual figures for criticism, and framing them as rogues, rascals, bounders, and 'black sheep'.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of the module, you should be able to:

1. demonstrate knowledge of the history of the British news media, the concept of the Fourth Estate, the development of the popular tabloid press and the constitutional role of the monarchy
2. develop an understanding of the principles of press freedom, public interest reporting, transparency and accountability, and the tensions between these and the rights of the Royal Family to personal privacy
3. analyse primary points and issues of conflict between the British media and the monarchy, and discuss these with reference to specific examples and case studies
4. evaluate wider debates about privacy versus press freedom, and formulate judgments about the desirable role and extent of statutory or voluntary regulation of the news media

Teaching

2x2 hour seminars a week

Assessment

Assessment Component	Weighting
Essay	40%
Essay	60%

Reading List

Curran, J. and Seaton, J. (2024) *Power without Responsibility: Press, Broadcasting and the Internet in Britain* (9th edition). Abingdon: Routledge.

Morrison, J. (2025) *Essential Public Affairs for Journalists* (9th edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Owens, E. (2019) *The Family Firm: Monarchy, Mass Media and the British Public*. London: University of London Press.