

# From Polarisation to Collaboration: Rethinking Political Culture

Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> – Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023

## Reading List

### Political Culture: from Polarisation to Collaboration – Reading List

With our Political Culture Consultation at St George's House fast approaching, we wanted to offer one or two book recommendations to help whet your appetite. We've deliberately only offered up six books across three broad categories as we felt that an exhaustive list would be more likely to deter than to entice.

#### Politics and the Political System from the structural perspective

**1. Why We Get the Wrong Politicians, Isabel Hardman. 2019. ISBN: 1782399755**

This book was the first of a kind looking at the problems affecting Westminster from a structural perspective. It is split into two parts, the first examining the lifecycle of a politician and the second looking at how our political culture leads to poor policies and laws. Both parts highlight what is wrong with the system and offers ideas for improvement and does so in a very human and relatable way.

[Guardian Review](#)

[Telegraph Review](#)

**2. How Westminster works... and why it doesn't, Ian Dunt. 2023. ISBN: 139960273X**

Achieving a similar aim to Hardman's book, Dunt takes a more thematic approach, with each chapter looking in turn at the various roles and institutions that drive political discourse and the formation of law. Whilst possibly boasting fewer solutions than Hardman, Dunt achieves a greater level of detail on the issues and their causes.

[Guardian Review](#)



COORDINATING STAFF AT ST GEORGE'S HOUSE  
Gary McKeone, Programme Director  
Caroline Biggin, Consultation Coordinator, Tel 01753 848851  
Catherine Morgan, House Manager

## Political Culture up close

### 3. **Held in Contempt, Hannah White. 2022. ISBN 1526156695**

Dr Hannah White is the Director of the Institute for Government and has experienced the machinations of Westminster workings from both the positions of parliamentary clerk in the House of Commons and as Secretary to the Committee on Standards of Public Life in the Cabinet Office. This gives her a unique perspective from which she makes incisive observations about the the House of Commons both in its own right, and in its relationship with Government, Lords and wider political institutions.

[Time Literary Supplement Review](#)

[Review by Karen Bradley MP](#) (Politicshome.com)

### 4. **Code of Conduct, Chris Byant. 2023. ISBN: 1526663597**

Whilst Hardman and Dunt books come from their experience as political journalists, Bryant's narrative has the benefit of being told from the perspective of someone with over twenty years' experience as a parliamentarian – three of which have been spent as the Chair of the Standards and Privileges Committees. This is a very visceral account of some of the problems within parliament, particularly the imbalance between the executive and legislature, and how they ultimately lead to poor political culture.

[Guardian Review](#)

[Telegraph Review](#)

**Comic Relief.** After reading one of the above, you might need some...

### 5. **Trust me, I'm not a politician: a simple guide to saving democracy, Dorothy Bryne. 2019. ISBN: 1780724292**

Small and short, this circa 90-minute read charts the problems of political culture as experienced over a career in television journalism from line reporter to Editor at Large of Channel 4. Bryne's witty commentary quickly and decisively cuts to the heart of British political culture in a way that will keep you page turning until you realise that you have been so engrossed that your tea has gone cold.



COORDINATING STAFF AT ST GEORGE'S HOUSE  
Gary McKeone, Programme Director  
Caroline Biggin, Consultation Coordinator, Tel 01753 848851  
Catherine Morgan, House Manager

**6. Politically Homeless, Matt Forde. 2020. ISBN: 1529412773**

Comedian, political podcaster and former Labour party activist, Matt Forde attacks the issue of political culture from the outside: what does Westminster look like to the British public? Forde discusses tribalism, complacency and the lack of ownership and responsibility in British politics today. He declares that the current state of British Party politics has driven him, and many others, to political homelessness.



COORDINATING STAFF AT ST GEORGE'S HOUSE  
Gary McKeone, Programme Director  
Caroline Biggin, Consultation Coordinator, Tel 01753 848851  
Catherine Morgan, House Manager