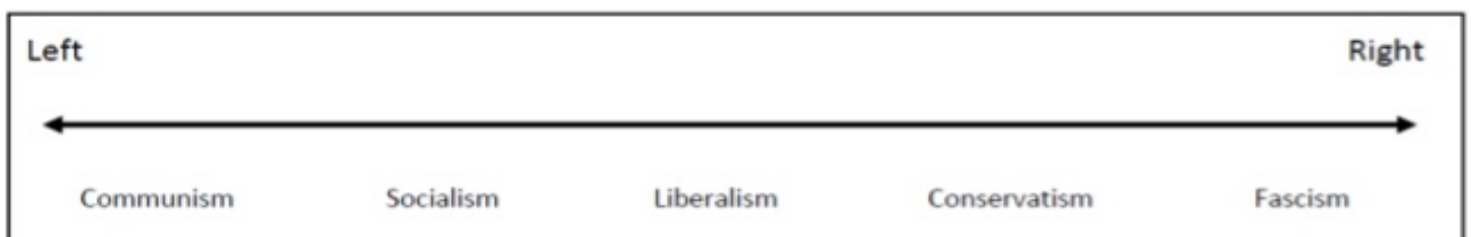
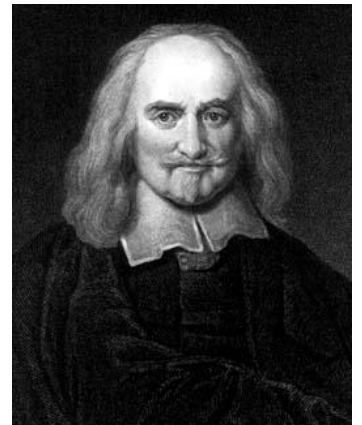
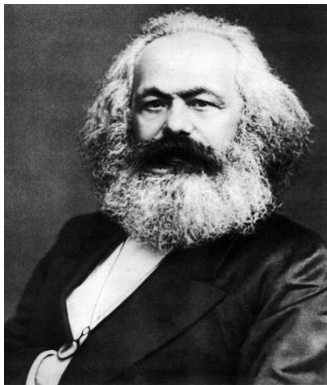


Politics Handbook



Welcome to the study of politics.

You have chosen a subject that, more than any other, explains the society in which we live. Politics is not an abstract academic discipline, remote from everyday life. It is relevant to almost every aspect of the world around us. Politicians are responsible for the public services we use and how they are organised and funded. The decisions that affect our schools and colleges, our health service, transport network and armed forces are all political decisions. Our rights and responsibilities as citizens – the power of the state over us, and our ability to choose and influence those in authority – also form part of politics. How fair and representative is our voting system? How do people organise themselves to put pressure on government? How powerful is Parliament? If you are interested in these and similar questions, then this is the subject for you. To begin with, you will be learning about the processes and institutions at the heart of politics and government in the UK. The A-level specification also gives you an opportunity to examine the key ideas that have influenced modern politics, and then to look beyond the UK – at the working of the US political system.

What might a qualification in politics lead to?

After the A-level course is over, a number of possibilities are open to you. It may be that you decide to extend your knowledge of politics by taking a university degree in the subject, or in a related area such as international relations. This might lead you to become involved in politics in a practical way – by working for a political research organisation or as an assistant to an MP, or possibly even by seeking election to local government or Parliament. Who knows where A-level politics may lead you?

Whether or not you decide to take politics further, you will have learned valuable skills that can be applied to a wide range of situations and disciplines. At A level you will have learned how to select and analyse information, how to discriminate between different viewpoints and to make a case. All of these are essential skills in a great variety of career paths, including law, journalism, the media and the civil service. And of course, you will never look at the news in the same way. You will have a deeper understanding of the stories behind the headlines, and be much better equipped to play your part as an active citizen in the world you are about to enter.

What will be asked of you as a Politics student?

As with any A-level subject, your teacher and your classroom resources will be vital, providing a firm foundation of knowledge and understanding. You should make sure that you can recall and explain the key concepts that you will encounter throughout the course. Get hold of the specification, the sample questions and mark schemes produced by the examination board. These are essential tools for learning the subject and for understanding what will be expected of you as a student. However, politics is about much more than that. One of the most important things to note is that politics is not a static subject. Of course, certain key ideas and concepts will remain broadly the same, but the way in which they are applied in the real world is constantly changing. For example, the policies of political parties develop in response to new circumstances, such as an election defeat or a change of leadership. It is important, therefore, to keep up to date. Use websites such as those of the BBC, Parliament and Number 10. Read a quality newspaper, either in print or online, and watch news and current affairs programmes such as *Newsnight* and *Question Time* on television. Articles in journals such as *Politics Review*, *Think Tank* and *Total Politics* are other useful resources.

You must have a ring binder for your notes, subdivided into different topic areas. You can add new examples as they occur, in the appropriate section, to create your own bank of up-to-date, relevant examples to support your answers. Some sections of the specification explicitly require knowledge of older examples, such as a study of one prime minister from the period 1945–97 and one since 1997. However, you should also be able to discuss more recent developments and make connections between them and earlier material. A secure basis of knowledge and understanding will enable you to develop the study skills you need. Politics is about discussion and debate, and being able to develop and defend a point of view. From the beginning you will get used to reading about, analysing and evaluating different arguments. In politics there is no right and wrong, but rather different types of opinion. Sometimes these will be sharply opposing positions, held by politicians who profoundly disagree with each other. You will be looking at the ideas and facts on which these competing viewpoints are based. You will also learn how to put forward your own opinion, and to back up the points you make with evidence.

Become familiar with the types of questions asked in the examination as soon as you can. Get used to the command words used by the examiners – such as ‘describe’, ‘explain’, ‘assess’ – and what they are asking of you. Read the question carefully so that you can ensure your answer is relevant, and you do not waste time writing out material which is not helping you to gain marks. Use the mark allocations to decide how much time to spend on a particular part of a question. Make timed question practice a regular part of your preparation for the examination. Be systematic in your learning – make sure that your notes on each topic are complete and well organised, learn the topic, then test yourself by attempting an examination question.

Component 1: UK Politics (*Component code: 9PL0/01)
<p><i>Written examination: 2 hours</i></p> <p><i>33⅓% of the qualification</i></p> <p><i>84 marks</i></p>
<p>Content overview</p> <p>1. Political Participation, students will study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • democracy and participation, political parties, electoral systems, voting behaviour and the media. <p>2. Core Political Ideas, students will study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conservatism, liberalism, socialism.
<p>Assessment overview</p> <p>Section A: Political Participation</p> <p>One 30-mark question from a choice of two (each question uses a source) – students must complete one of these. Plus one 30-mark question from a choice of two – students must complete one of these.</p> <p>All questions assess AO1, AO2 and AO3.</p> <p>Section B: Core Political Ideas</p> <p>One 24-mark question from a choice of two, which assesses AO1, AO2 and AO3.</p>
Component 2: UK Government (*Component code: 9PL0/02)
<p><i>Written examination: 2 hours</i></p> <p><i>33⅓% of the qualification</i></p> <p><i>84 marks</i></p>
<p>Content overview</p> <p>1. UK Government, students will study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the constitution, parliament, Prime Minister and executive, relationships between the branches. <p>2. Non-core political ideas, students will study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one idea from the following: anarchism, ecologism, feminism, multiculturalism, nationalism.
<p>Assessment overview</p> <p>Section A: UK Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One 30-mark question from a choice of two (each question uses a source) – students must complete one of these. Plus one 30-mark question from a choice of two – students must complete one of these. • All questions assess AO1, AO2 and AO3. <p>Section B: Non-core Political Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One 24-mark question from a choice of two, which assesses AO1, AO2 and AO3.
Component 3: Comparative Politics (*Component code: 9PL0/3A or 3B)
<p><i>Written examination: 2 hours</i></p> <p><i>33⅓% of the qualification</i></p> <p><i>84 marks</i></p> <p><i>Students study either USA (9PL0/3A) or Global (9PL0/3B)</i></p>
<p>Content overview</p> <p>For USA (3A), students will study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the US Constitution and federalism, US Congress, US presidency, US Supreme Court and civil rights, democracy and participation, comparative theories.
<p>Assessment overview for 3A and 3B</p> <p>Section A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One 12-mark question from a choice of two, which assesses AO1 and AO2. <p>Section B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One compulsory 12-mark question focused on comparative theories, which assesses AO1 and AO2. <p>Section C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two 30-mark questions from a choice of three, which assess AO1, AO2 and AO3.

Component 1: UK Politics and Core Political Ideas

There are two compulsory sections to this component: UK Politics and Core Political Ideas.

UK Politics

This section explores the nature of politics and how people engage in the political process in the UK. Students will investigate in detail how people and politics interact. They will explore the emergence and development of the UK's democratic system and the similarities, differences, connections and parallels between direct and indirect democracy. They will focus on the role and scope of political parties that are so central to contemporary politics, including the significance of the manifestos they publish at election time and their relevance to the mandate of the resulting government.

This section allows students to understand the individual in the political process and their relationship with the state and their fellow citizens. Students will examine how electoral systems in the UK operate and how individuals and groups are influenced in their voting behaviour and political actions. This component will further examine the role of the media in contemporary politics. It will also give students an understanding of voting patterns and voting behaviour.

There are four content areas in UK Politics:

1. Democracy and participation
2. Political parties
3. Electoral systems
4. Voting behaviour and the media.

Core Political Ideas

This section allows students to explore the three traditional political ideas of conservatism, liberalism and socialism. Students will learn about the core ideas and principles and how they apply in practice to human nature, the state, society and the economy, the divisions within each idea and their key thinkers.

There are three content areas in Core Political Ideas:

1. Liberalism
2. Conservatism
3. Socialism.

Skills

- Students must comprehend and interpret political information in relation to areas of UK politics and core political ideas.
- Students must fully understand, and critically analyse and evaluate areas of UK politics and core political ideas.
- Students must identify parallels, connections, similarities and differences between content studied, providing a basis for comparing the UK with the USA and appreciating the UK's position in global politics.
- Students must construct and communicate arguments and explanations with relevance, clarity and coherence, and draw reasoned conclusions about UK politics and core political ideas.
- Students must develop knowledge and understanding of key political concepts.
- Students must use appropriate vocabulary. The content supports this skill by listing key terminology in each content area. The lists are to support teaching of the main content and help students to use appropriate vocabulary in assessment. Students should, therefore, familiarise themselves with the definitions of key terminology for each section

Assessment information

- Assessment date: June 2027.
- The assessment is 2 hours.
- The assessment is out of 84 marks.
- The assessment consists of **two** sections:

Section A – Political Participation: this section is worth 60 marks. Students answer one source question requiring comparative analysis from a choice of two and one non-source question from a choice of two. AO1, AO2 and AO3 are assessed.

Section B – Core Political Ideas: this section is worth 24 marks. Students have a choice of two questions and they answer one. AO1, AO2 and AO3 are assessed. These questions will focus on content areas 1 and 2 and require students to use the key ideas of thinkers (content area 3) in their answers. These questions will cover either one core political idea or two core political ideas.

Sources

AO2 and AO3 require students to study and respond to 'political information'. In this qualification, this is carried out through the questions in Section A that use a source. These sources will be a single written (text) source only or a single source that combines both text and data (pie chart, tables, simple graphs such as a bar chart), all related in some way to UK politics. Sources will be selected to ensure that they give students opportunities to bring in their own knowledge and understanding, to engage in comparative analysis and to evaluate by making judgements and drawing conclusions. For each source, information relating to the context of the source is provided. This information will not be discretely assessed; however, it is provided to help students to engage with the information provided in the source.

Component 2: UK Government and Non-core Political Ideas

There are two sections within this component, UK Government and Political Ideas. Students study UK Government and one political idea from a choice of five from the Political Ideas section.

Overview

Politics is ultimately about people, but most political decisions are made by a branch of government whose roles and powers are determined by a set of rules: the constitution. This component is fundamental to understanding the nature of UK government, since it enables students to understand where, how and by whom political decisions are made. The component also gives students a base of comparison to other political systems.

The component introduces students to the set of rules governing politics in the UK, the UK constitution, which is different in nature from most of the rest of the world. It further introduces students to the specific roles and powers of the different major branches of the government – legislative, executive, and judiciary – as well as the relationships and balance of power between them, and considers where sovereignty now lies within this system.

Students will explore the following key themes: the relative powers of the different branches of UK government; the extent to which the constitution has changed in recent years; the desirability of further change; and the current location of sovereignty within the UK political system.

UK Government

There are four content areas:

1. The constitution
2. Parliament
3. Prime Minister and executive
4. Relationships between the branches.

Non-core Political Ideas

This section allows students to explore **one** additional political idea. Students will learn about the core ideas and principles, the effects of this idea, the divisions within the idea and its key thinkers.

Of the five additional ideas, you will learn about **Nationalism.**

Skills

Students must comprehend and interpret political information in relation to areas of UK government and one non-core political idea.

- Students must fully understand, and critically analyse and evaluate areas of UK government and one non-core political idea.
- Students must identify parallels, connections, similarities and differences between content studied, providing a basis for comparing the UK with the USA and appreciating the UK's position in global politics.
- Students must construct and communicate arguments and explanations with relevance, clarity and coherence and draw reasoned conclusions about UK government and one non-core political idea.
- Students must develop knowledge and understanding of key political concepts.
- Students must use appropriate vocabulary. The content supports this skill by listing key terminology in each content area. The lists are to support teaching of the main content and help students to use appropriate vocabulary in assessment. Students should, therefore, familiarise themselves with the definitions of key terminology for each section

Assessment information

- Assessment date: June 2027.
- The assessment is 2 hours.
- The assessment is out of 84 marks.
- The assessment consists of **two** sections.

o Section A – UK Government: this section is worth 60 marks. Students answer one source question requiring comparative analysis from a choice of two and one non-source question from a choice of two. AO1, AO2 and AO3 are assessed.

o Section B – Non-core Political Ideas: this section is worth 24 marks. Students have a choice of two questions from the non-core idea they have studied and they answer one. AO1, AO2 and AO3 are assessed. These questions will focus on content areas 1 and 2 and require students to use the key ideas of thinkers (content area 3) in their answers.

Sources

AO2 and AO3 require students to study and respond to 'political information'. In this qualification, this is carried out through the questions in Section A that use a source. These sources will be a single written (text) source only or a single source that combines both text and data (pie chart, tables, simple graphs such as a bar chart), all related in some way to UK government.

Sources will be selected to ensure that they give students opportunities to bring in their own knowledge and understanding, to engage in comparative analysis and to evaluate by making judgements and drawing conclusions. For each source, information relating to the context of the source is provided. This information will not be discretely assessed; however, it is provided to assist students in engaging with the information provided in the source.

*****Synoptic assessment*****

Synoptic assessment requires students to work across different parts of a qualification and to show their accumulated knowledge and understanding of a topic or subject area. Synoptic assessment enables students to show their ability to combine their skills, knowledge and understanding with breadth and depth of the subject.

This paper assesses synopticity in Section A in the non-source questions, which require students to draw on relevant knowledge and understanding from Component 1: UK politics and core political ideas.

Government and Politics of the USA

Overview

The USA has been considered by some to be a 'beacon of democracy'. As a world power, understanding the nature of US democracy, and the debates surrounding it, is crucial given the considerable impact that the USA has on UK, European and global politics. Students will explore the US Constitution and the arguments surrounding this guiding document of US democracy.

In learning about the key institutions of government in the USA and analysing the manner in which they achieve this power and exercise it over their citizens, students will judge ultimately whether 'liberty and justice for all' has been achieved in the USA. Students will be expected to highlight the debates on the nature of democracy in the USA and evaluate the extent to which it remains an issue.

The impact of the US government on the world beyond its borders is increasingly a feature of international politics. Students will begin to engage with this interaction by comparing and contrasting politics and institutions in the US with those in the UK. This will develop a wider understanding of politics as a discipline, underpinned by the theoretical concepts of comparative politics.

Content

There are six content areas:

1. The US Constitution and federalism
2. US Congress
3. US presidency
4. US Supreme Court and US civil rights
5. US democracy and participation
6. Comparative theories.

Skills

- Students must comprehend and interpret political information in relation to areas of US politics.
- Students must fully understand and critically analyse and evaluate areas of US politics.
- Students must identify parallels, connections, similarities and differences between content studied, providing a basis for comparing the UK with the US.
- Students must construct and communicate arguments and explanations with relevance, clarity and coherence and draw reasoned conclusions about US politics.
- Students must develop knowledge and understanding of key political concepts. The content supports these skills by presenting the main content for learning in the righthand side of the content tables.
- Students must use appropriate vocabulary. The content supports this skill by listing key terminology in each content area. The lists are to support teaching of the main content and help students to use appropriate vocabulary in assessment. Students should, therefore, familiarise themselves with the definitions of key terminology for each section,

Assessment information

- Assessment date: June 2027.
- The assessment is 2 hours.
- The assessment is out of 84 marks.
- The assessment consists of **three** sections.

o Section A: this section is worth 12 marks. Students answer one question from a choice of two. AO1 and AO2 are assessed.

o Section B: this section is worth 12 marks. Students answer one compulsory question, which will focus on topics from the comparative theories section. AO1 and AO2 are assessed.

o Section C: this section is worth 60 marks. Students answer two questions worth 30 marks each from a choice of three. AO1, AO2 and AO3 are assessed.

*******Synopsis assessment*******

Synoptic assessment requires students to work across different parts of a qualification and to show their accumulated knowledge and understanding of a topic or subject area. Synoptic assessment enables students to show their ability to combine their skills, knowledge and understanding with breadth and depth of the subject.

This paper assesses synopticity in Papers 3A and 3B. In Paper 3A, this is assessed in Sections A and B as students are required to draw on relevant knowledge and understanding from Component 1: UK politics and Component 2: UK government. In Paper 3B, this is assessed in Section B as students are required to draw on relevant knowledge and understanding of core political ideas from Component 1

Assessment Objectives

		% Of A-Level
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of political institutions, processes, concepts, theories and issues	35
AO2	Analyse aspects of politics and political information, including in relation to parallels, connections, similarities and differences	35
AO3	Evaluate aspects of politics and political information, including to construct arguments, make substantiated judgements and draw conclusions	30
Total		100

Breakdown of Assessment Objectives

	Assessment Objectives			
	AO1%	AO2%	AO3%	Total
Component 1: UK Politics	11.1	11.1	11.1	33.3
Component 2: UK Government	11.1	11.1	11.1	33.3
Component 3 (YEAR 13): Comparative Politics (Government & Politics of the USA)	12.7	12.7	7.9	33.3
Total for A-Level	35	35	30	100

Exam Paper Command Words

Command Word	Definition
Evaluate	To review ideas, issues and/or information and make substantiated judgements and draw conclusions
To What Extent	To review political ideas and make substantiated judgements and draw conclusions
Analyse	To deconstruct ideas, issues and/or information in detail in order to find connections, similarities and/or differences and provide evidence of reasoned thinking
Examine	To consider an idea/concept carefully and in detail to identify what the idea/concept is and why it exists and compare ideas/concepts

