

Government and Politics

For students preparing to study
AQA A-Level



Introduction

Welcome to A-Level study! You will quickly learn that power is at the heart of politics. It determines who gets what, when, and how. Politics is the struggle over scarce resources and the means through which the struggle is conducted. Events often overtake a politicians plans and frustrate their manifesto pledges.



Debate and disagreement lie at the heart of this subject – even when competing politicians seem to be saying the same thing. It is a subject of rival views and one without any absolute answers, so you need to take on the challenge of considering different viewpoints, perspectives, and opinions – and to think for yourself – so that you can formulate powerful arguments and express them convincingly. Moreover, you will study politics not as a neutral observer but as an active participant, developing your personal opinions as you acquire a strong understanding of the factors shaping both the British and American systems of government and politics. You will also gain insight into some of the great political ideas that have shaped the world we live in.

This booklet is designed to help you to start thinking as an A Level Politics student. You will quickly realise that the most successful students in sixth form are self-motivated and read far beyond the confines of what can be covered in lessons; enabling them to analyse examples in lessons and in their essays that a new to the class.

¹ <https://www.itv.com/news/2020-03-13/what-the-papers-say-march-13/>

² <http://lybio.net/jeremy-corbyn-queens-speech-2017/people/>

“A week is a long time in politics”



Uniquely, Politics is a living subject so you will see much of what you are studying happening in the ‘real world’. It can also be a very fast moving one, as Wilson’s famous quote above indicates. This means that any textbook is, especially at the moment, out of date by the time it is published. This may sound daunting, especially when this is part of your introduction to the subject, but it also provides you with a great opportunity. It is precisely because no book can give you the most up-to-date examples that using recent/current examples effectively will be highly rewarded by examiners. Consequently, you should be keeping an eye on American government and politics during Year 12, when you are studying the UK, and continue to follow what is happening in the UK during Year 13, when the focus of the course is on the USA.

Following politics in the media should, therefore, be a regular part of your independent study throughout the course. First, however, you need to be organised. One large lever arch folder per exam paper (you need three in total) is recommended. Buy or use ‘homemade’ dividers and label them as follows. You will then be able to file your examples in the appropriate section. (*Be aware that some examples will be relevant to two or more topics – more on this later.*) Make a start on this now, establishing a good habit to continue throughout the course. The summer is usually a quiet time in the political world but with Covid-19 and Brexit this is not the case this summer!

The Course is split into three exam papers.

Paper 1

- ***The Government of the UK***
 - The nature and sources of the British Constitution
 - The structure and role of Parliament
 - The Prime Minister and cabinet
 - The judiciary

³ <http://www.quotecounterquote.com/2016/04/a-week-is-long-time-in-politics.html>

- ***The politics of the UK***

- Democracy and participation
- Elections and referendums
- Political parties
- Pressure groups
- The European Union (this part is rapidly diminishing as we exit the EU)

Paper 2 Government and politics of the USA and comparative politics

- ***Government and politics of the USA***

- The constitutional framework of US government
- The legislative branch of government: Congress
- The executive branch of government: President
- The judicial branch of government
- The electoral process and direct democracy
- Political parties
- Pressure groups
- Civil rights

- ***Comparative politics***

- Constitutional arrangements
- The executives
- The judiciaries
- Electoral and party systems
- Pressure groups
- Civil rights

In **Paper 3** you will also study 'Political ideas' – the 'core ideologies' (liberalism, conservatism, and socialism) and one optional ideology (out of anarchism, ecologism, feminism, multiculturalism, or nationalism). You will only need to answer questions on two of the optional ideologies.

You will be given your own textbook for each paper when you start in September.

So where do you start?

The most highly recommended resource of all (because it succeeds so well in providing intelligent analysis which is accessibly written without being at all dumbed down) is

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics>

Try the other reading/listening/watching recommendations below, with the intention of continuing with what you find useful and enjoyable. Few subjects can offer such entertaining homework!

- The following are all quality newspapers which are free to access:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/uk>
 - <https://www.independent.co.uk/>
 - <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/>
 - <https://www.nytimes.com/>
 - <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>
 - <https://www.washingtontimes.com/>
- TV and Radio, which can be accessed, respectively, via <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer> and <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio> and <https://www.itv.com/hub/shows> (Be aware that these programmes are not all available throughout the year and that schedules may change):
- Monday – Friday: *PM Radio* 4 17:00 – 18:00; *Newsnight* BBC2 22:30 – 23:15
 - Tuesday: *The Mash Report* BBC2 22:00
 - Thursday: *Question Time* BBC1 22:45 – 23:45; *This Week* BBC1 23:45 – 00:45
 - Friday: *The News Quiz/The Now Show/Dead Ringers* Radio 4 18:30 – 19:00; *Have I Got News For You* BBC1 21:00 – 21:30; *Tracey Breaks the News* BBC1 21:30 – 22:00; *Mock the Week* BBC2 22:00 – 22:30
 - Saturday: *The Week in Westminster* Radio 4 11:00 – 11:30
 - Sunday: *The Andrew Marr Show* BBC1 09:00 – 10:00; *Pienaar’s Politics* Radio 5 10:00 – 11:00; *Peston on Sunday* ITV 10:00 – 11:00, repeated 22:20 – 23:20

Online (These are currently available, but may change over the coming weeks)

<u>Title</u>	<u>Topics covered</u>	<u>Where to access</u>
Podcast - Today in Parliament	UK Politics, Parliament	BBC Iplayer: Podcasts
Brexitcast	UK & EU	BBC Iplayer: Podcasts
Pod Save America	UK Politics	www.art19.com/shows/pod-save-america
Terminal F: Chasing Edward Snowden	US Politics	Youtube
Time: The Kalief Browder story.	US Politics: Civil Rights	Netflix
House of Cards	US Politics	Netflix

Fed Up	US Politics	Netflix
The Final Year	US Politics	Netflix
The Killings of Tony Blair	UK Politics, Powers of the Prime Minister	Netflix
Saving Capitalism	US Politics/ Neoliberalism	Netflix
The Russian Revolution	Political Ideologies	Netflix
Race for the White House	US Politics	Netflix
Cameron and Farage: ITV Brexit Debate	UK & EU	Youtube
American Anarchist	Anarchism	Netflix

MOOC's and online courses.

<https://www.massolit.io/subjects/government-politics/uk-politics>

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/womens-rights>

Make sure you fill your new folders with what you have learnt!