



Sixth Form Handbook  
Politics

# Contents

Contents .....	2
About the course .....	3
Why study A-Level Government and Politics? .....	3
Topics include:.....	3
Which students do well at A-Level Government and Politics?.....	3
What you will study and how it is assessed .....	4
Second year study.....	4
Course Reading List & Materials .....	5
Books & Publications.....	5
Useful websites .....	5
Who can I contact for help?.....	6

# About the course

## Why study A-Level Government and Politics?

We don't always like politicians and the things that governments do... but the business of politics touches every aspect of our lives. And whilst we might criticise governments for some of their policies, it has to be better than having no government at all. Society just wouldn't function without an elected body to decide, say, what taxes will be levied, how those taxes will be spent on things like health and education or how the country will be defended. But no matter whether government makes you feel angry or reassured, it's worth having knowledge of how the whole process of an elected government works. Knowledge is power and this popular A Level gives you the knowledge to understand how government works, particularly in the UK, but also in other countries. If you want to work in local or national government and make a difference to society, this course is a valuable first step. There are other career options too such as; Law, research, banking, journalism, PR, economics and teaching. We have even had one student go on to stand for her local council in Southampton. As government touches on literally every aspect of society, this course has universal appeal.

The course gives students a foundation of political knowledge on which to develop skills for citizenship and further study. With an emphasis on contemporary politics and current areas of constitutional concern, it puts the UK in the context of the EU and the wider world. A Level Government & Politics complements most other A Levels and is highly regarded by many universities.

## Topics include:

- Component 1: UK Politics
- Component 2: UK Government
- Component 3: Comparative Politics - USA

## Which students do well at A-Level Government and Politics?

- ...those who have an interest in news and current affairs.
- ...those that wish to learn how our government is run and how to make a difference.
- ...those that wish to challenge our system by looking at alternatives
- ...those that want to understand the law-making process.
- ...those who want to develop their essay writing skills further using evidence to support arguments and develop their critical thinking skills.
- ...those who have an appreciation of the global changes in the world today and would like to develop this knowledge further.

# What you will study and how it is assessed

In the first year, you will study:

## Component 1: UK Politics

33 1/3% of the qualification

84 Marks

Written examination 2 hours

Content summary:

1. Political participation: democracy and participation, political parties, electoral systems, voting behavior and the media
2. Core political ideas: conservatism, liberalism, socialism

At the end of year 2 students will be required to answer two 30 mark questions and a 24 mark question for this component.

Each question will assess AO1, AO2 and AO3.

## Component 2: UK Government

33 1/3% of the qualification

84 Marks

Written examination 2 hours

Content summary:

1. UK Government: the constitution, parliament, Prime Minister and executive, relationships between the branches.
2. Non-core political ideas: one from the following: anarchism, ecology, feminism, multiculturalism, nationalism

At the end of year 2 students will be required to answer two 30 mark questions and a 24 mark question for this component.

Each question will assess AO1, AO2 and AO3.

## Second year study

### Component 3: Comparative politics

33 1/3% of the qualification

84 Marks

Written examination 2 hours

Content summary:

USA: the US constitution and federalism, US Congress, US presidency, US Supreme Court and civil rights, democracy and participation, comparative theories

Assessment overview for Component 3:

Section A: One 12 mark question from a choice of 2 which assess AO1 and AO2

Section B: One compulsory 12 mark question focused on comparative theories, which assess AO1 and AO2

Section C: Two 30 mark questions from a choice of three, which assess AO1, AO2 and AO3

# Course Reading List & Materials

## Books & Publications

- The Independent, The Guardian, The Times
- Politics Review
- The New Statesman
- Edexcel Government and Politics for A Level Ideologies
- Edexcel Government and Politics for AS 4th Edition
- Edexcel AS Government and Politics Course Companion for Edexcel Unit 2 Governing the UK
- US Government & Politics by Anthony J. Bennett
- American Politics and Society by David McKay
- Understanding American Government & Politics by Duncan Watts

## Useful websites

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/politics-2017.html>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/parliaments>

<http://alevelpolitics.com/>

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk/commentisfree>

<http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/>

<http://www.economist.com/blogs>

<http://conservativehome.blogs.com/>

<http://www.leftfootforward.org/>

[www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

[www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)

[www.washingtontimes.com](http://www.washingtontimes.com)

[www.realclearpolitics.com](http://www.realclearpolitics.com)

[www.politics1.com](http://www.politics1.com)

[www.democrats.org](http://www.democrats.org)

[www.rnc.org](http://www.rnc.org)

## Tasks before September

### TASK 1: Key words

Research the key words and write their definitions; entrenched, codified, unentrenched, uncoded

### TASK 2: BIG debates

Pick one of the following questions to answer. You are required to give your own opinion. Whilst both sides of the argument would be a good show of debate skills, it is not necessary. Answers should be between 300-500 words long. It is advised that you research your answer and use examples and real statistics where possible.

Answer as if it were an exam question – avoid using ‘I think’, and be formal in your tone.

- The United Kingdom is right to leave the EU
- Parliament should NOT invite Donald Trump to visit the UK
- The monarch should end, and the United Kingdom should become a Republic
- Scotland should have independence
- The UK should enter into Syria and provide military support

### **EXAMPLE: ‘Britain should end its nuclear program’**

**RESPONSE:** The idea of ending Britain’s nuclear programme has been at the forefront of UK politics with the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn on the side of Labour. Corbyn is an advocate for Nuclear disarmament and it has been a discussion point since his election to the leadership in 2015. Most other Labour members and Conservatives support keeping the nuclear program.

It can be argued that Britain should end its nuclear program. It was created during the Cold War, which was a period of deep instability. At that time, the nuclear program was needed because Britain needed to look powerful on the world stage. The USA and the USSR both had vast numbers of nuclear weapons, and Britain felt it needed weapons to protect itself. Since then increasingly more countries have got nuclear weapons. For example, India, Pakistan, France, China and North Korea. This means that should a nuclear war occur, there would be many powers that could activate their nuclear weapons. This makes the owning of nuclear weapons less valuable. Additionally, it costs an estimated £5 billion to continue the nuclear program, so living in a country with increased levels of poverty, it could be said that this is not a good use of government money.

However, the world is becoming increasingly hostile and with countries like North Korea developing nuclear weapons, it is more important than ever that Britain keep their nuclear weapons. Since coming to power, Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un have swung from friends to enemy making some people think that a nuclear war is possible. It is important that Britain is able to defend itself should this happen. If we were to get rid of our nuclear program Britain would risk looking weak in the eyes of other countries. With leaving the EU, it is important that Britain can play on the larger international stage.

**WORDS:** 309

## Who can I contact for help?

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