



A Level Politics

Why study Politics?

We are living in a world that is rapidly and constantly changing. Politics and the role of Government underpins much of this change, from the implementation of new laws, giving or limiting rights and freedoms, to the complete upheaval of entire political systems. By exploring the fundamental structure of our own government and the government of America as well as discovering the ideologies that form the foundation of political theory, we can understand the complex nature and impact of these changes in to the 21st century.

What is the course structure?

We will be following the AQA syllabus from 2017.

Paper 1

The Government of the UK

Students will develop an understanding of the workings of British politics, ranging from the role of the Government, how parliament operates and the various aspects of creating laws and policies and their implementation. Students will address some of the most important controversies surrounding politics in the UK such as whether Lords should be elected, how much power the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish parliaments should have and just how effective the opposition can be when they are in crisis.

The Politics of the UK

When considering the political landscape of the UK, it is vital to look beyond the 'nuts and bolts' of government and policy. Students will explore the concept of democracy, the different factors that affect our voting behaviour as well as the various ways we elect representatives in the UK. Students will develop an understanding of the origins, organisation and ideologies of the main political parties in the UK. They will also appreciate the relative importance of minor parties in modern British politics. Students will also explore the influence of external forces on British politics including pressure groups and the evolving role of the EU.

Assessment:

Written exam: A Level – 2 hours (combined with unit 1)

At A Level, students are required to answer a combination of mid length and extended written answers worth 77 marks. The unit is worth 33.3% of the total A Level.

Skill tested:

Students will be required to develop an understanding of key political themes and concepts and be able to address them critically. They will be expected to compare and contrast political institutions and theories. Students will be required to address important controversies in British politics and be able to explore differing views to create their own analysis.

The unit is worth 33.3% of the total A Level.

Paper 2

Government and Politics of the USA

This unit focuses on the workings of American politics, looking at the structure and role of the political system, the ideological values of the main political parties and the changing nature of

democracy in the USA. Students will explore the origins and importance of the Constitution, the role of the media and the various branches of the government in the development of policies and laws. Students will address the key issues surrounding the election, functions and powers of representatives to the Senate, Congress and office of President. This unit is a comparative study; students will need to utilise their studies in other units to allow this comparison.

Assessment:

Written exam: 2 hours

Students will be required to answer a combination of mid length and extended written answers worth 77 marks in total.

Skill tested:

Students will be expected to demonstrate their understanding of key political concepts whilst comparing them to politics in the UK. Students will need to explore the similarities and differences between the structures and systems in the USA and the UK to allow their analysis to address the relative values of each political institution.

The unit is worth 33.3 % of the total A Level.

Paper 3

Political Ideologies

Students will develop an understanding of the key ideologies that influence political thought and theory including socialism, liberalism, conservatism and nationalism. For each ideology, students will explore the origins, core values, differing viewpoints and their influence on the past and political climate. Students will need to study the work of key thinkers such as Karl Marx, John Locke and Mary Wollstonecraft.

Assessment:

Written exam: 2 hours

Students will be required to answer a combination of mid length and extended written answers worth 77 marks in total.

Skills tested:

Students will be required demonstrate their understanding of the ideologies, explaining the core values and analysing their relative presence in politics in practice. They will be expected to be able to evaluate the differing viewpoints within one ideology as well as comparing key concepts between ideologies.

The unit is worth 33.3% of the total A Level.

Which activities will I be engaged in during the course?

The aim of the course is to engage pupils and promote lively, and informed, debate and interest. The course will be conducted through a variety of activities, all of which require pupils to take ownership of their own learning through research and preparation for lessons. We strongly believe this allows pupils to greatly enhance their learning skills in preparation for Higher Education and the world of employment.

Activities include:

- **Debate and discussion:** you can select controversies and conflicts in politics to debate and discuss; decide on points of view to research and present; challenge your own thinking!
- **Presentations:** independent and collaborative; researching areas of your own interest; creation of resources to accompany presentation; exploring presentation styles beyond 'death by PowerPoint'!

- Visits: political institutions such as Westminster and beyond; interaction with political figures, both locally and nationally, Higher Education institutions.
- Research: independent and collaborative; further developing your skills in effective research.
- Preparing articles and notes for others: responsibility given to you to create resources to be used by others on particular topics; ownership given to you to design the resources and establish learning relationships with your class mates.
- Engaging with the media e.g. newspapers, blogs, news apps: Use the media to find a political story that captures your interest or imagination; explore the different opinions and motivations of others; download media apps to get the latest information. Keeping up to date with the world of Politics is vital and an incredibly important part of being a Politics student.
- Pre-reading: Knowledge and understanding before the lesson has even begun.
- Participating in social media discussions e.g. Twitter: create open forums to discuss and debate; follow key political figures; analyse how social media impacts political issues.

How can I prepare for the course?

Worth noting - The exam boards write exam papers in May, which means your exam for June 2020 will be prepared in the May of 2019. Keep up to date with what is happening at the moment e.g. BREXIT, the US Midterm Congressional elections as these events/ changes can form part of the focus of the papers.

There are many ways that students can prepare for the course that are interesting and accessible.

These might include:

- Read newspapers – both tabloid and broadsheet. Keep clippings and articles as well as recording the name of the source, the date written/ published and the author.
- Watch the news – BBC, Sky News, FOX, Al Jazeera, CNN. Download news apps to phones or tablets/ iPads.
- Read the selected articles provided by the department prior to the course starting. Keep organised notes and be prepared to discuss key aspects of the reading.
- Follow a particular political story – note down different views or points of progression as the story unfolds.
- Watch current affairs programmes e.g. Panorama, Question Time and Channel 4 Dispatches.
- Explore online political journals and websites. Keep a record of this information, particularly website addresses and journal references.

For further information please contact Jo Mackintosh, Head of Politics, via the History Department.