

Progression - Politics



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1. Thinking of studying A Level Politics at Worcester Sixth Form College?

We teach the **Edexcel** specification

Here is a brief summary of the topics we cover over the two-year course. If you want to find out more about each of these topics, you can find the full specification on the Edexcel website: <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/politics-2017.html>

- **UK Politics**
- **UK Government**
- **The Government and Politics of the USA**
- **Political Ideologies**



2. Tasks to complete before September

In order to prepare for the course, you need to complete the tasks on p4-9.

Before you begin, find a folder to store this Booklet and all the notes that you make on the tasks. **You need to bring in this folder at the start of the course.** Make sure that your notes are neat and well-organised!

What is politics?

Welcome to A Level Politics! 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 that struggle is conducted.



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 and includes tasks which will support you throughout your studies, including assisting you in preparing for your final exams.

"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 This means that any textbook is, to some degree, out of date by the time it is published.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 1, when you are studying the UK, and continue to follow what is happening in the UK during Year 2, 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. To do this, and be successful in A Level Politics:

- First, you need to be organised. One file per component is recommended. Buy or use 'homemade' dividers and label them as follows.
- You will then be able to file notes and handouts in the appropriate section.

Component 1: UK Politics

- Democracy and participation
- Political parties
- Electoral systems
- Voting behaviour and the media

(You will also study the following political ideas: liberalism, conservatism, and socialism)

Component 2: UK Government

- The constitution
- Parliament
- Prime Minister and executive
- Relationships between the branches

(You will also study one of the following political ideas: anarchism, ecologism, feminism, multiculturalism, nationalism)

¹ <http://www.quotecounterquote.com/2016/04/a-week-is-long-time-in-politics.html>

Component 3: Comparative Politics - USA

- The US Constitution and federalism
- US Congress
- US presidency
- US Supreme Court and civil rights
- Democracy and participation
- Comparative theories

Task 1: We will be studying a number of current topics in both UK and US politics. Select **two** of the following topics and create a Fact – File on the case study. This should contain text and relevant images or diagrams.

The UK government's response to the Coronavirus Ensure your fact file contains: <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ What has happened including statistical information.✓ An overview of the key individuals involved.✓ Details of the government's responses.✓ Key areas of controversy and debate.	US Presidential elections and Donald Trump's attempt to get re-elected to the office of the US President in 2024. Ensure your fact file contains: <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ What has happened thus far.✓ An overview of the individuals likely to be involved.✓ Details of how Trump has begun his campaign.✓ Details of how Trump has been responding to the various legal issues he is facing.✓ Key areas of controversy and debate.	The UK government's handling of recent issues such as the cost-of-living crisis and/or BREXIT. Ensure your fact file contains: <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ What has happened.✓ An overview of the individuals involved.✓ Details of how the government's response has developed.✓ Key areas of controversy and debate.
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To research these you will need to use media sources. The most highly recommended resource of all (because it succeeds so well in providing intelligent analysis which is accessibly written) 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/>

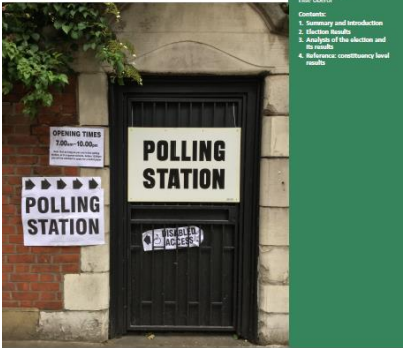
- TV and Radio, which can be accessed, respectively, via <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer> and <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio> and <https://www.itv.com/hub/shows>
(Be aware that these programmes are not all available throughout the year and that schedules may change):
 - *Newsnight*
 - *Question Time*
 - *This Week*
 - *The News Quiz/The Now Show/Dead Ringers*
 - *Have I Got News For You*
 - *Tracey Breaks the News*
 - *The Week in Westminster*
 - *The Laura Kuenssberg Show*
 - *Pienaar's Politics*
 - *Peston on Sunday*

Synoptic thinking

Synoptic can be broken down to *syn-*, meaning together, and *-optic*, meaning view or sight. Politics is a highly synoptic subject and, as the specification advises, “students must identify parallels, connections, similarities and differences between content studied”. This is especially important in Component 3, where comparisons with the UK need to be made when answering exam questions on the USA. Furthermore, thinking synoptically about the topics within Components 1 and 2, as well as making links between the two components, is a very effective way to demonstrate a high level of understanding of Politics at A Level.

This may well sound daunting but synoptic thinking is a skill that can be mastered with practice and it is also worth emphasising that you are not expected to start the course with any prior knowledge: just the commitment to acquiring it, including through independent study. The tasks below will give you some insight into how this skill can be applied to a major political event in the UK – the general election of 2017. This event and the 2019 General Election are studied, to a greater or lesser degree, in all UK topics.

At the time when Theresa May decided to call this ‘snap’ election, the Conservatives had 331 MPs and a small majority of twelve. May began the campaign with an opinion poll lead in double figures but afterwards had to do a ‘confidence and supply’ deal with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), whose ten MPs could provide a majority in crucial votes in the Commons – on the budget (*i.e. the supply of money needed for the government to implement its legislative programme*) and on any votes other parties propose to bring the government down (*i.e. a vote of ‘no confidence’ in the government*).



www.parliament.uk/commons/library | intranet.parliament.uk/commons/library | papers@parliament.uk | @commonslibrary

The 2017 UK Parliamentary general election was held on Thursday 8th June. The election was called early, under Section 2(1) of the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011, after the Prime Minister announced her intention on 18th April for an election to be held. Voting was held in all 650 constituencies across the UK: 533 in England, 59 in Scotland, 40 in Wales and 18 in Northern Ireland.

The election resulted in a hung Parliament, with no single party winning an overall majority. The Conservative Party, led by Prime Minister Theresa May, won the largest number of seats and votes, taking 317 seats and 42.3% of the vote across the UK. The Conservatives gained 20 seats but lost 33, leaving them with 317, 13 fewer than they won in 2015.

2

The Labour Party, led by Jeremy Corbyn, won 262 seats, and 40.0% of the vote, up from 232 seats and 30.4% of the vote in 2015. The Conservatives' share of the vote is the highest for any single party since the 43.2% won by Labour in 1997, and their total of 13.6 million votes is the second highest total in UK electoral history.

<file:///C:/Users/kingo/Downloads/CBP-8749.pdf>

Answer the questions below

1. The Conservatives' share of the vote was the highest for any single party since the 43.2% won by Labour in 1997, and their total of 13.6 million votes was the second highest total in UK electoral history. Why, then, was the 2017 general election result seen as such a poor outcome for the Conservatives in general and May in particular?
2. May began the general election campaign with an opinion poll lead in double figures. What does the outcome of the election suggest about the importance of the conduct of their respective campaigns by the Conservatives and Labour and the nature of the policies they offered to the electorate? *Note: ensure that your answer reflects the actual outcome of the election i.e. that the Conservatives won more votes and seats than Labour.*
3. How certain could May be that she would be able to win votes and so be able to implement her legislative programme (on matters other than 'confidence and supply')? How successful was she in this regard?
4. Undertake an independent research task and write short explanations of the terms 'hard Brexit' and 'soft Brexit', which could be understood by typical Year 10 students.
5. The 'confidence and supply' agreement with the DUP would only succeed if Conservative MPs supported the party line. Use the internet to research whether Conservative MPs

² <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7979/CBP-7979.pdf>

did so and if not, what reasons were there for their willingness to vote against their own leader and government,

6. Collective ministerial responsibility is a convention (*i.e. a principle of expected practice*) that members of the cabinet must publicly support all governmental decisions made in cabinet, even if they do not privately agree with them. If they do not do so, it is expected that they either resign from the government or are sacked by the Prime Minister. Use the internet to research which prominent cabinet ministers resigned from May's government and what reasons they gave. Record the details in a table (see below).

Name and government post held	Resignation date and reason given.

7. What was the outcome of the 2019 General Election and why was Boris Johnson able to do what Theresa May had not been able to do, and get a BREXIT Withdrawal Agreement through the Houses of Parliament?



10 key questions to know the answers to for the start of the course

1. Name the party leader:
 - Conservatives =
 - Labour =
 - Liberal Democrats =
 - SNP =
 - PC =
 - DUP =
 - Greens =
 - UKIP =
2. In the 2016 EU referendum, Leave gained% of votes compared to Remains'%.
3. A Referendum is a
4. In the 2019 general election the Conservatives won% of seats with% of the votes.
5. In the 2019 general election the Liberal Democrats gained% of seats with% of the votes.
6. Turnout in the 2019 general election (at%) was the highest in years.
7. A hung parliament is a parliament in which
Either a minority government or a coalition will then result.

8. An electoral is a document produced by a political party at election times, stating what policies it intends to implement if it gains power.
9. An electoral refers to the authority to govern granted by voters to the winning party at an election. The suggests that the government may the measures in its election
10. Using the briefing document found here <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8749/>, explain what happened to the Labour party in the 2019 election.
11. Using the briefing document, what impact did BREXIT have on the result of the 2019 General Election?