

A level Politics

Introduction – an outline of the course

Politics is a broad term which describes the processes and ideas involved in running a state, in our case Britain. The study of politics therefore involves the study of a wide range of issues which effect the government of our country. These issues include looking at the fundamental principles of British democracy and the structure of the British state and constitution; the study of political parties, what these parties stand for and how they operate; the examination of voting behaviour and why people vote for the parties they do; the 'art' of politics and how politicians operate.

The A level Politics course is split into the following units, each of which is examined on a separate paper:

Paper one: The politics of the UK.

This paper looks at how the UK is governed, and examines the nature of democracy in the UK. In the first instance we will look at the workings of British government, examining the strengths and weaknesses of the offices and institutions that govern Britain. We will then look at the nature of British democracy, looking at how people participate in politics through political parties and pressure groups, and examining the workings of our electoral systems and examining why people vote in the way that they do.

Paper two: The politics of the USA.

This paper looks at the workings of the US constitution and examines the way that government operates in the USA, before turning to look at the nature of US democracy. The paper mirrors the topics and themes of the first paper, and looks to compare the nature of democracy in the USA with that of the UK.

Paper three: Ideologies

This paper looks into the thinkers and ideas that form the core of our main political ideologies. We will examine what Liberals, Socialists and Conservatives think, and explore the different branches of these ideologies. We will then examine other ideologies such as Anarchism, Feminism and Nationalism.

What will we be studying in the first half term?

In the first half term we will look into the respective natures of the constitutions of the USA and UK, examining the key differences between them, and weighing up which system works best.

What can I do that will help me prepare for A level politics?

Read. Especially a quality newspaper.

Recommended reading is as follows:

There is a huge amount of reading that you could do for Politics. This is a constantly evolving subject so new books on new topics are being published all of the time.

Highly recommend course companions:

- Who Governs Britain? Antony King (Pelican Books). A very readable and up to date book that covers all of the issues of the British course.
- American Politics and Society: [David McKay](#). A good detailed overview of general themes in American politics.
- Political Ideologies: An Introduction. Andrew Heyward

Other books that you might find interesting.

British Politics:

- The Political Animal: Jeremy Paxman
- How Britain Really Works: Understanding the Ideas and Institutions of a Nation Paperback by Stig Abell
- A History of Modern Britain Paperback by Andrew Marr

American Politics

- Fire and Fury by Michael Wolff
- Siege: Trump Under Fire by Michael Wolff
- Trumpocracy: The Corruption of the American Republic by David Frum

Ideologies

- National Populism: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy (Pelican Books): Eatwell Roger
- Marx and Marxism (Pelican Books): Gregory Claeys
- Reflections on the Revolution in France. Edmund Burke
- Das Kapital: Marx and Engels
- The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists: Robert Tressell
- On Liberty: John Stuart Mill

Other reads:

- The Establishment: Owen Jones
- WTF: Robert Peston
- Inside Story: Politics, Intrigue and Treachery from Thatcher to Brexit: Phillip Webster
- All Out War: The Full Story of How Brexit Sank Britain's Political Class Kindle Edition by Tim Shipman

Also:

- QUALITY broadsheet newspapers.
- Politics Review (In the Library)
- The Spectator
- The New Statesman

Summer Gap Task and where to find this

The best way to prepare for your A level History is to complete the summer gap task that has been set. On the [school website](#), if you click on Sixth Form and follow the list until you see Year 11 into 12 Gap Tasks. Click on this and find the History task.

This will ask you to research key terms so that you are able to start the course with an understanding of basic politics.

Also, please bring with you three 'political news stories' that you have read over the holidays for discussion.