

A LEVEL POLITICS

Exam Board: Pearson Edexcel

Syllabus Code: 9PLO

Entry Requirement

Grade 6 at IGCSE/GCSE History or English.

Introduction

What is Politics? Is the UK political system in need of radical reform? How can a minority government survive? Is the American President a liar? Do the Republicans deserve to be called a political party and why are the Democrats so obsessed about identity politics? Do you trust the news? Can you be a 'citizen of nowhere'? What does it mean to 'take back control' and are referendums a good idea? Will Britain survive as a unitary state? Are our judges really 'enemies of the people'? Why is there a Women's Equality Party and what is it likely to achieve? Is UKIP still relevant? Could a left-wing party win a general election? Should we pay MPs more? Does anyone really understand the British Constitution? What are British values? Has social media and the decline of deference made political leadership impossible? Why are there demagogues everywhere? Do you need a safe space? Should you pay for university education? Do you live in an echo chamber? Would Theresa May be more popular if she cried in public? Did Hillary Clinton lose in 2008 because she cried in public? Why are men and women watching *The Handmaid's Tale* in separate rooms? Can feminists enjoy *Wonder Woman*? Where is Mar-a-Lago anyway?

Politics is everywhere and A level Politics is a dynamic course in which what happens today is directly relevant to the examination. Pupils are expected to read about political events and current affairs in Britain, Europe and the USA and to be prepared to debate and discuss them

in the classroom. If politics exists because people disagree, studying politics must mean studying how, why and when people disagree and taking an interest in these disagreements. What is more, we study these things not as neutral observers but as active participants. The Department maintains that everyone should study politics in some form. A healthy society is a society in which many people participate in political activity and do so with insight and understanding.

Syllabus Content

The new A level Politics Specification reflects the demands of a truly modern and evolving political environment in the UK and around the world. This course is excellent preparation for anyone considering a degree course in the humanities or social sciences.

Component One: UK Politics

- **UK Politics: Democracy and participation; Political parties; Electoral systems; Voting behaviour and the media**

This section explores the nature of politics and how people engage in the political process in the UK. Students will investigate in detail how people and politics interact. They will explore the emergence and development of the UK's democratic system and the similarities, differences, connections and parallels between direct and indirect democracy. They will focus on the role and scope of political parties that are so central to contemporary politics, including the significance of the manifestos they publish at election time and their relevance to the mandate of the resulting government. Students will also consider the individual in the political process and their relationship with the state and their fellow citizens. Students will examine how electoral systems in the UK operate and how individuals and groups are

influenced in their voting behaviour and political actions. This component will further examine the role of the media, voting patterns and voting behaviour in contemporary politics.

- **Core Political Ideas: Conservatism; Liberalism; Socialism**

Students will learn about the core ideas and principles and how they apply in practice to human nature, the state, society and the economy, the divisions within each idea and their key thinkers.

Component Two: UK Government and Non-core Political Ideas

- **UK Government: The constitution; Parliament; Prime Minister and executive; Relationships between the branches**

Politics is about people but most political decisions are made by a branch of government whose roles and powers are determined by a set of rules: the constitution. This component is fundamental to understanding the nature of UK government, since it enables students to understand where, how and by whom political decisions are made. The component also gives students a base of comparison to other political systems. The component introduces students to the set of rules governing politics in the UK, the UK constitution, which is different in nature from most of the rest of the world. It further introduces students to the specific roles and powers of the different major branches of the government – legislative, executive, and judiciary – as well as the relationships and balance of power between them, and considers where sovereignty now lies within this system.

- **Non-core Political Ideas: Feminism**

Feminism is an ideology based on the belief that society is characterised by

unequal gender power and status. All forms of feminism are committed to advancing the social role of women, ensuring that the disadvantages they face can and should be overthrown.

Component Three: Comparative Politics

The USA has been considered by some to be a 'beacon of democracy', although rather less so now in the era of President Trump. As a world power, understanding the nature of US democracy is crucial given the considerable impact that the USA has on UK, European and global politics. Students will explore the US Constitution and the arguments surrounding this foundational document. In learning about the key institutions of government in the USA and analysing the manner in which they achieve this power and exercise it over their citizens, students will judge ultimately whether 'liberty and justice for all' has been achieved. Students will be expected to highlight the debates on the nature of democracy in the USA and evaluate the extent to which it remains an issue. The impact of the US government on the world beyond its borders is increasingly a feature of international politics. Students will begin to engage with this interaction by comparing and contrasting politics and institutions in the US with those in the UK. This will develop a wider understanding of politics as a discipline, underpinned by the theory of comparative politics.

There are six content areas:

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

Assessment

The course is assessed via three two-hour exams, each worth one third of the overall

mark. Assessment takes place according to a number of mostly extended response or essay- style questions, some of which also have a source component. Politics is predominantly an essay-based subject, ideal for students who enjoy reading widely and writing in an extended form. It is vital that students also have a strong interest in current affairs, frequently reading newspapers and other sources of contemporary political comment and analysis.