

A-Level Government & Politics

Starting September 2026





Why are you here?

- **Hopefully because you are genuinely interested in Politics!**
- **Government and Politics** affects us all. Understanding the structure, process and theories which our elected officials use to govern us has an intrinsic value
- The **Edexcel A-Level** specification we use seeks to provide a deep understanding of these political systems, whilst allowing students to develop a wide range of analytical and evaluative skills
- It is a **respected, valued qualification** which demonstrates academic potential whilst also providing students with a range of marketable assets
- **Results:**
 - University is the most common next step for our Politics students
 - With thorough engagement hitting the top 3 grades is achievable

A-Level Politics – the basics

- 5 hours per week for 2 years – face to face teaching
- Delivered through a **broad mix** of lecture style information cascade, focussed classroom tasks and independent research
- **It requires:**
 - An appetite for reading, and a **passion for understanding** politics through a wide range of media is essential: news, documentaries / podcasts, film & TV. Be interested!
 - An ability to **collate thoughts** and **form opinions**. To write efficiently and with clarity addressing questions of varying lengths and complexity – all assessed work is essay based
- The course is split into three **equally weighted** themes, which we deliver as distinct but linked modules
- Being able to forge **synoptic links** between the different aspects of the course is a high-end skill – this sometimes takes a little while to get the hang of, and you kind of need the content in order to be effective

A-Level Politics – the content

y12



1. UK Politics

- Political Participation:
 - democracy and participation, political parties, electoral systems, voting behaviour and the media
- Core Political Ideas:
 - conservatism, liberalism, socialism

2. UK Government

- The constitution, parliament, Prime Minister and executive, relationships between the different branches
- And **one** non-core modern political idea selected from anarchism, ecologism, feminism, multiculturalism, & nationalism

3. US government and politics

- The constitution, federalism, congress, presidency, Supreme Court, civil rights, democracy and participation, and comparative theories (different ways of looking at the US v UK).

A-Level Politics – covering the content

- Plan is that I will cover the majority of UK and US Government and Politics – so you'll see me for at least 3 hours per week
- **Mr Cuthbert** will cover all of Political Ideas – “*the isms*” content and some of the UK and US Government and Politics spec – you'll see him for 2 hours per week
- There is always room for debate and conversation
- We'll quickly have you tackling essays geared towards building your skills with one eye on your final A-Level exams
- This year we finished the content early April – which left us a good month for revision before the first exam

A-Level Politics – the exams

- For you the “real thing” will be May / June 2028
- You’ll sit 3 equally weighted papers (2 hours each):
 1. UK Politics and Core Political Ideas
 2. UK Government and Non-core Political Ideas
 3. Comparative Politics – USA
- Throughout each paper there is an element of choice in terms of which questions you answer – so that’s good. Your responses to the questions set will be essays – you need to get comfortable with writing lengthy answers!
- For the UK elements of Papers 1 and 2 you are given sources and asked to engage with them to “evaluate the view that...”
- For the Political Ideas sections of Papers 1 and 2 you are asked questions “to what extent...”
- For the US paper, you’ll be asked questions which require you to compare aspects of the US and UK systems, as well as an “evaluate the view that...” question. The US paper is not source based
- A-Level is different to GCSE – good essay writing isn’t so formulaic – but we’ll help you to fine tune your style throughout. You’ll also have end of Year 12, and Year 13 Mock exams to help with this development

Trips and Speakers

Over the last couple of years:

Houses of Parliament

Downing Street

Alistair Campbell

Lord Ravensdale

Pauline Latham MP

Jonathan Davies MP

We will be running a Westminster trip (Houses of Parliament, UK Supreme Court, Downing Street) we are signed up to conferences, and we already have plans to have guest speakers visit us including Lord Ravensdale and Jonathan Davies MP

Independent engagement with politics

- There's the Pearson EdExcel specification – that gives us all the content we need to work through the course
- We have supporting textbooks and we'll provide other articles and texts as we progress through the course
- But to really thrive, and to enjoy the course – you need to **engage with British and American Politics**. If you take an interest and know who is doing what, then the systems, government, and politics surrounding it all starts to make more sense – it makes it much easier – your evidence and examples become things you know rather than things you have to learn
- For example, let's start with...



Linking Donald Trump to the US government & politics module is obviously easy...

- We cover 7 strands in the US Government and Policy spec
- Donald Trump – his first term as #45, his impeachments, his legal problems and his successful run at re-election in 2024 to become #47 are interwoven with all of these strands:
 - Constitution
 - Congress
 - Presidency
 - Elections
 - Supreme Court
 - Civil Rights and Liberties
 - Political Parties and Interest Groups
- Ergo, engaging with what's going on in real-world US politics helps you understand the seemingly abstract nature of content
- You have the gift of the relatively recent British General Election and the current Labour Government right now, and over two years left of the 2nd term for Donald Trump in the US along with the looming mid-terms... the news cycle and political discourse are jam packed with content

Then there was...



For Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson, it was similar but different...

- His route to become Prime Minister was circuitous – Eton, classics at Oxford, media profile, London Mayor, MP, Brexiteer, Foreign Secretary, Backbencher...
- He was compelled to resign as PM by Tory ministers in summer 2022 (following another scandal)
- He was investigated by the MET and issued with FPNs for the Downing Street parties during COVID
- He was then found to have deliberately misled Parliament (this is a red line in British Politics) about these and was going to be suspended for 90 days by Commons vote following Privileges Committee investigation
- So he resigned as an MP on the same day as his honours list was agreed by Rishi Sunak – coincidence?
- He then took a columnist role in a leading UK daily publication: the Daily Mail
- Which brought us, via Liz Truss and a slowly decomposing lettuce to...



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So, you can see the direct relationship between the news cycle and the course...

- Democracy and Participation
- Political Parties
- Electoral Systems
- Voting behaviour and the Media
- The UK Constitution
- Parliament
- PM and the Executive
- Relations between the branches



Political parties have
principled policies



It's a matter of principle



Real world evidence and examples are key to success with this course. Take a look at a recent EdExcel A-Level exam question:

Evaluate the view that the policies of the Conservative and Labour parties no longer resemble the ideologies and principles on which they were founded [30]

This is a **typical** A-Level Paper 1 question

Task – Use the cards provided to test this idea – in groups of three or four, sort the cards out into whether you think they were **Conservative** or **Labour** policies. Also, whilst you're at it try to put them in chronological order



- **Introducing Prescription Charges to the NHS (1951)**
 - **Government:** Labour (Clement Attlee)
 - **The Crossover:** To fund the Korean War, Labour compromised the foundational principle of an NHS "entirely free at the point of use," triggering the resignation of left-wing icon Nye Bevan. []
- **First Application to Join the European Common Market / EEC (1967)**
 - **Government:** Labour (Harold Wilson)
 - **The Crossover:** At the time, the Left viewed the EEC as a capitalist club designed to protect big business, yet a Labour Prime Minister made the official bid to join.
- **Introducing University Tuition Fees (1998)**
 - **Government:** Labour (Tony Blair)
 - **The Crossover:** Shifted the financial burden of higher education from the state to the individual, introducing a market-style mechanism into university funding.
- **Independence of the Bank of England (1997)**
 - **Government:** Labour (Tony Blair / Gordon Brown)
 - **The Crossover:** Handed control of interest rates to unelected central bankers, a neo-liberal economic move designed to reassure big businesses and the City of London.
- **Anti-Social Behaviour Orders / ASBOs (1998)**
 - **Government:** Labour (Tony Blair)
 - **The Crossover:** Part of Blair's "tough on crime" agenda, these civil orders cracked down heavily on public behaviour, aligning closely with traditional Right-wing authoritarianism.
- **The Introduction of Academy Schools (2000)**
 - **Government:** Labour (Tony Blair)
 - **The Crossover:** Traditional Left-wing educational ideology heavily favors comprehensive schools tightly controlled by local state authorities. New Labour broke this mold by introducing Academies—state-funded schools that operate independently of local councils, run by private trusts, with the freedom to set their own curriculum and term times, bringing market-style competition into public education.
- **Introduction of the National Minimum Wage (1998)**
 - **Government:** Labour (Tony Blair)
 - **The Ideology:** Traditional Left-wing market intervention to protect workers from exploitation by employers.
- **The Windfall Tax on Privatised Utilities (1997)**
 - **Government:** Labour (Tony Blair)
 - **The Ideology:** Left-wing redistribution; taxing the "excess profits" of private companies to fund public youth employment schemes.
- **Creation of the National Health Service (1946/1948)**
 - **Government:** Labour (Clement Attlee)
- **Mass Expansion of Council Housing (1951)**
 - **Government:** Conservative (Winston Churchill)
 - **The Crossover:** Despite favoring private property, the Tories built over 300,000 state-funded council houses a year to meet post-war demand, beating Labour's previous building rates.
- **The Clean Air Act (1956)**
 - **Government:** Conservative (Anthony Eden)
 - **The Crossover:** Introduce strict state environmental regulations on businesses and households to curb London's "Great Smog," overriding pure free-market freedom.
- **Banning Handguns (1997)**
 - **Government:** Conservative (John Major)
 - **The Crossover:** Following the Dunblane massacre, this heavily restricted individual liberty and firearm ownership, a move traditionally resisted by libertarians or the right.
- **Legalisation of Same-Sex Marriage (2013)**
 - **Government:** Conservative-led Coalition (David Cameron)
 - **The Crossover:** Achieved a massive milestone for social progressivism, traditionally championed by the Left, despite significant backlash from traditionalist Right-wing backbenchers.
- **The Furlough Scheme / Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (2020)**
 - **Government:** Conservative (Boris Johnson)
 - **The Crossover:** The largest peacetime state intervention in the British economy, where the government directly paid the wages of private-sector workers.
- **The Windfall Tax on Oil and Gas Companies (The Energy Profits Levy) (2022)**
 - **Government:** Conservative (Boris Johnson / Rishi Sunak)
 - **The Crossover:** Despite fiercely championing free markets and low corporate taxation, a Conservative government introduced a temporary 25% (later raised to 35%) tax on the "extraordinary" profits of energy giants to directly fund state subsidies for household energy bills. Students will note this mirrors Tony Blair's 1997 tax, yet was enacted by the Right.
- **The Right to Buy Scheme (1980)**
 - **Government:** Conservative (Margaret Thatcher)
 - **The Ideology:** Pure Right-wing neoliberalism; selling state-owned council houses to tenants to promote private property ownership.
- **Privatisation of British Rail (1993)**
 - **Government:** Conservative (John Major)
 - **The Ideology:** Pure Right-wing free-market economics; breaking up state monopolies to introduce private competition.

Your jobs this Summer

1. Engage with Political Culture:

- Watch documentaries and Current Affairs shows - BBC iPlayer is a good starting point, Channel 4, Sky and Netflix have content too
- Read news sites and traditional print newspapers – follow the psychodrama of the Labour leadership and delve into the daily news cycle at the White House
- Listen to or watch podcasts (try **The Rest is Politics**, The News Agents, Page 94, The Trawl..)
- Engage with Social Media (follow news outlets and different political commentators – try to avoid the echo chamber – beat the algorithm)
- Read books! Rory Stewart, James O’Brien, Iain Dale...
- Watch films, TV Shows (Veep, The Thick of it, In the loop, White House Plumbers, The Unknown Known, This England, Vice...) & documentaries

2. First week back we’ll also talk about what’s happened in British and American Politics during the summer – **everyone should come armed with at least a full side summary (A4) summarising what’s been going on** and a willingness to discuss it with the group

3. On the school website – you’ll notice there are a couple of case studies – for Boris Johnson and Donald Trump – these are optional extras – take a look if you’re at a loose end!

Questions?

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**Politicians
and diapers
should
be changed
frequently
and all for the
same reason.**

José Maria de Eça de Queiroz

RESPIRARE