

A-Level Government and Politics

Entry Requirements: 5 in an GCSE English Language.

Exam Board: Edexcel

Subject Leader: Mr A Boutle aboutle@taptonschoool.co.uk

Main Syllabus Area:

This is a highly relevant course which deals with issues which affect everyone. The course is broken down into three main areas:

UK Politics

Students will gain an insight into the ways in which the British political system works and how politics affects all aspects of our daily lives.

Areas of study include:

- Parliament – is it just a lot of shouting?
- Prime Minister and Cabinet – who runs the country?
- Elections – do they really change anything?
- Constitutional Reform – does the system need changing?
- Participation – why do (or don't) people vote?
- Political parties – what do they believe in?
- Democracy – is it important?
- The United Kingdom – how united is it?

American Politics

Students will gain an insight into how the US political system operates. This will enable students to make a direct comparison with the UK political system.

- Congress – what's the difference between the House and the Senate?
- The President – how powerful is he?
- The Supreme Court – will it abolish the death penalty?
- Elections – why did Trump win and Clinton lose?
- US Civil Rights – how well protected are the rights of US citizens?
- Constitution and Federalism – what powers do the States have?
- Pressure Groups – enhancing or destroying democracy?
- Political Parties – do they mean anything in the USA?

Political Ideas

Students will explore the three traditional political ideas of conservatism, liberalism, socialism and feminism. 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.

Method of Assessment

A-Level – three exam papers

1. UK Politics and Core Political Ideas (2 hours)
2. UK Government and Optional Political Ideas (2 hours)
3. Comparative Politics – USA (2 hours)

Qualities Required

Students do not need to have studied politics before but an interest in current affairs is essential. Students also need to be willing to join in discussion and to keep up to date with contemporary political developments.

Links with other subjects

Politics complements and combines well with History, English, Sociology, Economics, Geography and Psychology but many students also choose it to provide a contrast to A-Levels in Mathematics and Science.

Career Prospects

Politics develops the skills of enquiry and analysis as well as the ability to debate an issue and construct a balanced argument. These skills provide an excellent foundation for a wide range of careers, for example law, journalism, the media, administration and management.

Extension and Enrichment Opportunities

- Political Hustings.
- Debating Opportunities and competitions with other schools
- Workshops with University of Sheffield's Department of Politics
- Trip to Houses of Parliament.

Reading List

There isn't an easy set of reading suggestions, as Government and Politics changes rapidly and things become out of date straight away. If you want an overview of all of the topics we cover, the Edexcel textbook from 2019 is an excellent overview of the knowledge you need: **"Pearson Edexcel A-Level Politics", edited by Sarra Jenkins, John Jeffries and David Tuck.**

If you want to really go above and beyond, here are a few suggested titles to read around different areas of politics we study or may interest you:

UK Politics:

How Westminster Works (and why it doesn't) by Ian Dunt

Why Politics Fails by Ben Ansell

Held in Contempt by Hannah White

The Prime Ministers edited by Iain Dale

Code of Conduct by Chris Bryant MP

Politics on the Edge by Rory Stewart

The Prime Ministers: Reflections on Leadership from Wilson to May - Steve Richards

The Making of Modern Britain - Andrew Marr

US Politics:

American Caesars - Nigel Hamilton

The People's History of the United States - Howard Zinn

The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court - Jeffrey Toobin

Political Ideas:

The Communist Manifesto - Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

Reflections on the Revolution in France - Edmund Burke

On Liberty - J S Mill

World Politics:

State of Africa – Martin Meredith

Prisoners of Geography – Tim Marshall

Guns, Germs and Steel – Jared Diamond

Modern China: A Very Short Introduction – Rana Mitter

TV and Film Recommendations:

The West Wing

Madam Secretary

Designated Survivor

Yes Minister/Yes Prime Minister

The Thick of It

In the Loop

House of Cards

Last Week Tonight with John Oliver

Have I Got News for You

The Mash Report

Scandal

All the President's Men

Independent Study

Below are some of my recommendations for ways to keep up to date with politics:

Websites	Podcasts	Email updates
News apps – BBC, Sky and Guardian all have excellent free news apps. Broadsheet newspapers are all worth reading regularly – Times, Telegraph, Guardian, Independent, New York Times (some have paywalls). There are also good news websites from political magazines, like the New Statesman, the Spectator, the Atlantic and Foreign Affairs. There are some other good news websites, like Buzzfeed, Huffington Post or Slate. All of these are also available in print form.	The Rest is Politics Electoral Disfunction Not Another One New Statesman Politics Times Red Box Inside Briefing The Edition (Spectator Radio) Guardian Politics Pod Save America SlowBurn Throughline Political Thinking Today in Focus	There are a number of places where you can sign up to email newsletters – these are an excellent way of following the news. They will give you a summary of the key news, along with links to some of the best writing that day. My personal favourites are: London Playbook by Politico Morning Call by the New Statesman Evening Blend by the Spectator On Politics by the New York Times Atlantic Daily by the Atlantic Red Box by the Times Inews Daily by The i Paper. There are also a number of excellent political substacks available, such as Political Calculus, Comment is Freed or The Swingometer.