

Politics

Brief Overview of the Course <i>(for further details, please see our Sixth Form Prospectus https://strschool.co.uk/sixthform/prospectus)</i>	
Exam Board: Edexcel Specification web link: https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/politics-2017.html	
Topics Covered: Year 12 UK Politics: Democracy & participation, <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Political parties,• Electoral systems,• Voting behaviour,• The media. UK Government: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Constitution,• Parliament,• Prime Minister & the Executive,• UK Supreme Court and relationships between the branches of government.	Topics Covered: Year 13 Government and Politics of the USA: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The US constitution,• Federalism,• US congress,• US presidency,• US Supreme Court, and civil rights,• US democracy & participation,• Comparative theories. Core Politics Ideas: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Liberalism,• Conservatism,• Socialism• Nationalism

Please follow the instructions in the boxes below. The aim of these activities is to introduce you to the study of this subject at Advanced Level by:

- reinforcing your core knowledge and understanding of Politics.
- encouraging you to think more deeply about Politics.
- supporting you to develop a deeper understanding of and appreciation for your subject as an academic discipline.

Core Knowledge and Understanding Task

There are elements of core knowledge and understanding that you should have prior to starting the A Level course. Please provide a written answer to each of the following Tasks. There are links below to help you discover the answers.

Task One: Key Political Terminology and Concepts

This aims to help you garner an understanding of what Politics as a subject. Download the link to the booklet produced by Parliament (listed below) to research what the following key terms mean and create a short definition for each *in your own words*.

You are welcome to try to get your families involved in this – they may have some understanding of these concepts already. The most important thing in an A level is *your understanding* – so it is not about having the “right” or “word-perfect” definition.

Category One: What is Politics?

- Politics
- Suffrage
- Political Participation
- Democracy
- Direct Democracy
- Representative Democracy

Category Two: UK Politics

- Parliament
 - Constituency
 - Member of Parliament (MP)
 - General Election
 - Manifesto
 - First-Past-The-Post Voting system (FPTP)
 - By-election
 - Political Party
 - Party Whips
 - Party Rebel
 - Coalition government
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- Pressure Group
 - Lobbying
 - Referendum

Category Three: UK Government

- Constitution
- Uncodified Constitution
- Parliamentary sovereignty
- Legislature
- Executive
- House of Commons
- Frontbencher
- Backbench MP
- The Speaker
- The Opposition

- House of Lords
- Bicameral legislature
- Crossbencher
- Life Peer
- Hereditary Peer

- Select Committee
- Legislative Committee
- Government Bills
- Private Members Bill
- Judiciary Role of Parliament

- Devolution
- Devolved Assemblies

Link to the booklet that you should download to help you with this

<https://assets-learning.parliament.uk/uploads/2019/12/How-it-Works-booklet.pdf>

Task 2: Investigate the role of an MP.

Research your local MP at <https://members.parliament.uk/>

1. Who is he/she; which party do they represent?
2. Which constituency do they represent?

Find your local MP on <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/mps/>

3. How have they voted on issues that matter to you?
4. Have they represented your views?

Investigate the role of an MP by playing the game in the link below.

<https://learning.parliament.uk/resources/mp-for-a-week/#cta-target>

Task 3: Should I have been able to vote in the 2019 election?

This is a much-debated topic. If you lived in Scotland, you would have been able to vote in the independence referendum of 2014. Why not extend this to general elections?

Read the source below:

Using two differently coloured highlighters, indicate:

a.) The arguments in the source that support the view that those aged 16 and 17 should be given the vote

b.) The arguments in the source that support the view that the voting age should remain at 18

On which side of the arguments do you stand? Why?

In the UK, the minimum voting age is 18, except in Scotland, where 16- and 17-year-olds have been given the right to vote in local and Scottish parliamentary elections. By and large, 16-year-olds have not yet entered the world of home ownership, employment, tax or pensions but these economic issues are often at the forefront of election campaigns. The main argument against lowering the voting age is that a lack of experience in these matters prevents young people from making a considered judgement at the ballot box. Opponents also point to the fact that those aged 18 to 24 have the lowest turnout of any age group in elections, reflecting an apparent lack of interest in politics. These critics question whether an even younger generation would be any different. And there are concerns that teenagers who do want to cast their votes would be impressionable and easily influenced by radical politics, or would not fully think things through and would blindly vote for the same party as their parents.

But calls to lower the voting age come from a range of sources – adults as well as teenagers themselves, backed up by youth organisations, pressure groups and politicians. Those aged 16 and 17 years in the Isle of Man, Jersey, Guernsey, Brazil, and Austria already have the vote. They can also vote in some elections in Germany, Malta, and Norway. Evidence from the Scottish independence referendum, substantiated by research from Austria and Norway, shows – aided by the encouragement of families and schools – 16 and 17 year-olds have higher rates of turnout than those aged 18 to 24.

For supporters, it is about giving young people a say in matters that directly affect them, such as tuition fees. It is also thought that lowering the limit will encourage civic mindedness at an earlier age and establish an interest in the political system, which will be continued throughout a person's life. Scotland's positive experience of including 16- and 17-year-olds in the 2014 independence referendum led to the lowering of the voting age for local and Holyrood elections.

A study by the University of Edinburgh during the referendum found that some teenagers were initially doubtful of their own abilities to make the right decision, but that this led them to actively seek out information to help inform their judgement. In some cases, teenagers even influenced their parents' voting intentions with their new knowledge.

But as there are no immediate plans for the UK government to debate lowering the voting age for general elections, it is unlikely that all 16-year-olds will get the chance to put that to the test any time soon.

Sources: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/zsbtbk7> and <https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/campaigns/votes-at-16/>

Task 4: The UK political parties

Go to these links for the UK's three major parties:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2019-50524262>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2019-50501411>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2019-50459123>

You might have voted in our mock election at school in December. These links summarise the key manifesto policies of the major parties in the 2019 general election.

Select a few policies of your choice and consider why you support OR do not support that policy.

The Bigger Picture Task

Before you start your Politics course, it is important that you are aware of the following themes and topics so that you can develop an understanding of how they contribute to some of the debates within Politics

- What happens next with Brexit?
- What are civil liberties? Why are they important? To what extent does the current virus threaten our rights?
- Labour have a new leader, Keir Starmer, but what does this mean for the Labour party?
- Is the rise of populist politicians like Donald Trump dangerous? Why has it happened
- Does 'hashtag feminism' make a difference?
- How politically powerful are the media?
- How important is the climate crisis? Is it receiving enough attention from politicians?

Links to support:

- The BBC website Politics section <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics>
- All out Politics- this is the best one with which to start <https://podtail.com/en/podcast/sky-news-all-out-politics/>
- Talking Politics <https://www.talkingpoliticspodcast.com/>

Recommended Reading List and the Department's 'Top Pick' Title

As an A Level student, we want you to value academic endeavour (scholarship) and develop a thirst for learning in your chosen subject. Our curriculum will help you to understand that scholarship is not just about learning facts, it is about nurturing powerful knowledge.

We will help you with this by directing you to resources that will not only deepen your knowledge and strengthen your understanding of the A Level content, but also broaden it beyond that of the exam board specification.

Please find the full subject reading list alongside our prospectus on the Sixth Form section of the STRS website here: <https://strschool.co.uk/sixthform/prospectus>. We would encourage you to explore as many of these titles as you can.

From the published reading list, we recommended you read before September:

WTF? (Robert Peston)

Once you have read the recommended book/chapter/article, consider the following:

- What did you learn from the reading?
- With what unanswered questions has the reading left you?
- Did you agree entirely with what you have read? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Are there any themes or topics that you would like to explore further?

Other Recommended Activities

Please find below a selection of suggested additional activities that the department feel it would be useful for you to explore prior to starting the A Level course in September.

You will benefit from taking an interest in current affairs and political issues.

This will involve:

- Reading a quality newspaper (such as The Times, Guardian, Telegraph or their Sunday equivalent;) or you could do this online, for example, by reading articles on the excellent politics section of the BBC website which contains lots of short and informative clips
- Watching current affairs programmes such as Panorama, Despatches etc, and specific politics programmes such as "A Week in Politics."
- Watching the news or listening to 'Today' on Radio 4.
- Listening to politics podcasts. We recommend, in particular:
 1. All out Politics- this is the best one with which to start
<https://podtail.com/en/podcast/sky-news-all-out-politics/>
 2. Talking Politics <https://www.talkingpoliticspodcast.com/>
 3. Political Thinking with Nick Robinson
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04z203l/episodes/downloads>
 4. The Guardian UK: Politics Weekly
<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/series/politicsweekly>
- Discussing and debating political issues with friends and family