

2021-2022

# TCOLC Sixth Form

Yr11 – 12 Transition Activities

Subject: Politics



THE CITY OF LEICESTER COLLEGE

# UK Government and Politics: an overview

## What will you be studying?

There are three main sections to the course. Some you will study in Year 12 (UK Politics) and some in Year 13 (US Politics and Ideologies)

<b>UK Government and Politics</b>	<b>Unit One: People and Politics</b> Democracy and Participation Political Parties Electoral Systems Voting Behaviour and the Media <b>Unit Two: UK Government</b> UK Constitution Parliament Prime Minister and the Executive Relations between the branches (Supreme Court and EU)
<b>US Government and Politics</b> <b>Comparative Politics (comparing the UK and US systems)</b>	US Constitution and Federalism US Congress US Presidency US Supreme Court and civil rights US Democracy and Participation (elections, parties and interest groups) Comparison to UK political system
<b>Political Ideologies</b>	Conservatism Liberalism Socialism Nationalism

## Course textbook

We will provide you with all of the information you need, including access to the course textbook. However, if you do want to purchase your own copy, the core textbook is:

This is currently the only book available that covers all three modules (UK Politics, US Politics and Ideologies).

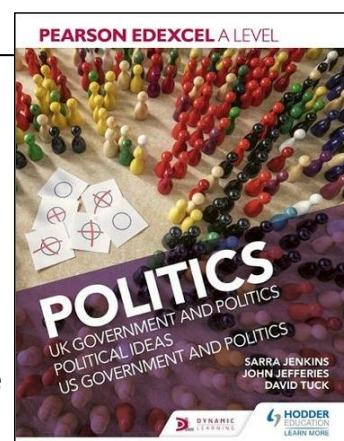
Pearson Edexcel A Level Politics

Authors: Sarah Jenkins, John Jefferies and David Tuck

Publisher: Hodder Education

ISBN: 978-1-5104-4922-0

**There is no need to purchase this book unless you want to. The best political resource available to you is a quality news programme and newspaper (printed or online).**



## **Read and Watch the news!**

*Politics is always changing so it is essential that you watch and/or read the news every day.*

Try different newspapers and channels – you will notice that each reports on the same story in a slightly different way. There is also now social media – what impact do you think this has had on politics and how politicians interact with the public?



## **The Media and Politics activity**

Over the next few weeks, read and watch the news regularly.

Try to find:

- An example of the media reporting on the government in a POSITIVE way.
- An example of the media reporting on the government in a NEGATIVE way.
- An example of social media having an impact on politics.
- An example of Donald Trump being stupid on social media.
- An example of the same story/event being reported in different ways.
- 10 Questions you want to ask about POLITICAL news stories you have seen.

### **Notes on the news:**

## **How does the British Political System Work?**

In order to get the most from the Politics course, it is good to have a good understanding of the basics of our political system. This booklet aims to cover all of the key points about British politics, from how the government works to how you can be involved.

**Use the information booklet *How it Works* and your own research to complete these activities.**

Remember to note down any questions you have as you go through – these will be good to start class discussions.

### **CORONA VIRUS UPDATE!!**

As you go through, consider how the international pandemic might impact on British politics – will it or should it change any of the existing systems?

Remember – Politics is always changing to adapt to events that happen. This is why it is so important that you read and watch the news every day.

## **The Road to Democracy:**

*Why does Britain have the political system that it does?*

Britain is a democracy – this means that people have a lot (?) of power in the political system. In theory, the people decide what happens through elections and free speech.

However, it was not always this way. Historically, the monarch had a lot of power. Over time, this has changed and the monarchy is now largely ceremonial and symbolic with very little actual power.

***But how did this happen? Read through the information in the section *The Road to Democracy* and complete the timeline table with a brief description of each event.***

<b>Britain's Road to Democracy</b>
1215
1265
1430
1689
1832
1838
1866
1889
1918
1928
1969
1997

## **Democracy:**

### ***What is democracy?***

Britain is described as a democratic country because of the rights and freedoms that people in Britain enjoy – our government does not control every aspect of our lives. However, one of the key debates in politics is about HOW democratic Britain is. Is our political system really free and fair? Do people really have the power in the UK?

***Read the section on democracy and complete the following:***

Define the following key terms:

Politics
Suffrage
Democratic Participation
Democracy

**The five principles of a liberal democracy:** can you think of any examples for each one in Britain?

Factor	What this means	Example
Checks and balances		
Freedoms of speech and association		
Free and fair elections		
Transparency and openness		
Active participation by the public		

**Types of democracy:** direct vs representative democracy

Write a brief definition of each term

Direct democracy
Representative democracy
Delegate theory
Mandate theory
Burkean theory

***Qs. What are the advantages of Britain having a representative system of democracy? Why is direct democracy not used in many countries?***

## **Elections and Voting:**

*Are there any changes we could make to create a better, fairer and more democratic system?*

In Britain, we hold regular elections that are free and fair. However, many people criticise our electoral system and would like to see it changed.

**Read the section on Elections and Voting and complete the following definitions and questions**

General Elections
Devolved assembly/Parliament Elections
Local Elections
By-elections
Referendums
What is the key difference between elections and referendums?
Majoritarian
Proportional
Manifesto

**Election turnout:** look at the table showing turnout to general elections in Britain.

Q. What pattern does this data show about election turnout?

Research: can you find out the election turnout for the 2019 General Election?



**Types of voting system:** in UK General Elections, the First Past the Post system is used. This is sometimes described as a “winner takes all” system (there is only one “seat” so there can only be one winner)

This means that to win, you only need one vote more than any other candidate.

***Your opinion: do you think this is a fair voting system? Why? Why not?***

Read through the descriptions of the other systems. Do you think any of these would be a better way to select our representatives? Which one? Why?

***Note down your opinions and thoughts here ready for a class discussion***

## **Referendums:**

We have recently had several referendums. However, they are not the usual way that we make political decisions in Britain.

Read through the information on referendums and the details of the 2016 EU referendum.

### **Debate!**

**Do you think a referendum was the right way to make the decision about leaving the European Union?**

Consider:

- How complicated the issue was
- Why we have elected representatives (Burkean Theory)
- The turnout
- The result

Explain your opinion...

## **The Constitution of the UK**

In the United States, they have a codified constitution. This means that all of their rules about how their government works is written down in one document. In Britain, we have an uncodified constitution. Our system has evolved over time (think back to the Road to Democracy timeline)

***Key Question: should the UK change to a codified constitution?***

***Read through the information about Constitutions and complete the definitions below.***

Uncodified
Parliamentary sovereignty
Legislature
Executive

### **Devolution:**

What areas of the UK have their own Parliaments?

What areas of law are still made by the central Parliament at Westminster?

What are the advantages of allowing these areas to make their own laws and decisions?

**Parliament:** briefly describe the three main roles of Parliament?

Legislation

Scrutiny

Representation

## The House of Commons

Explain each of the following in relation to the House of Commons

MP
Representation
Scrutiny
Debate
Ministers
Speaker
Opposition benches
Government benches
Backbenchers

## The House of Lords

Explain each of the following in relation to the House of Lords

Government
Government Front Bench
Lord Speaker
Crossbenchers
Opposition
Life Peers
Archbishops and bishops
Elected hereditary members

**Q. a lot of countries criticise Britain for having an unelected chamber. It is considered to be undemocratic. Why do you think Britain has chosen to keep the House of Lords? What are the advantages of an unelected chamber?**

## Committees and Legislation

Read through the sections on committees and how laws are made.

Our laws are made by elected politicians in the House of Commons and members of the House of Lords. However, **the final stage is Royal Assent** – they have to be signed by the monarch.

Q. Why do you think we still have this stage? What do you think would happen if the monarch refused to sign the law?

## Political Parties

*There are many political parties in Britain and they offer voters a choice about who they want to represent them.*

*Read the section on political parties and complete the definitions for the following key terms:*

Whips
Party rebel
Coalition government
Partisan
Partisan dealignment
Sociological model of voting
Rational choice model of voting
Party identification model of voting

Take the test below to find out which political party you would be most likely to vote for:

<https://uk.isidewith.com/political-quiz>

Record your result:

## **Campaigning**

**Pressure Groups and Protest Movements: what happens if you don't agree with the government? How can you influence the government to change laws?**

One of the features of a liberal democracy is that people have the rights of free speech and free assembly. This has led to the growth of pressure groups – groups of people who campaign for issues which concern them.

Read the section on campaigning and complete the following definitions:

Causal pressure group
Sectional pressure group
Insider pressure group
Outsider pressure group
Petition
Direct action
Lobbying
Non-governmental organisation

## **10 Ways to Get Involved**

Read through the 10 Ways to get involved in Politics.

### **Do one of them!!**

For example, you could:

- Find out who your MP is and write to them about a local issue that concerns you:  
[www.parliament.uk/findyourmp](http://www.parliament.uk/findyourmp)
- Look up the petitions on [petition.parliament.uk](http://petition.parliament.uk) and find a petition that you feel you want to support – sign it! If there is not one that you think is important – start one!
- Investigate the Youth Parliament – until you are 18 you can't stand as an MP yourself, but that does not mean you can't be involved in politics.