

# **Government and Politics**

## **Gateway: Preparation for Year**

### **12**



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## Introduction

Welcome to A Level study! You will quickly learn that power is at the heart of politics. It determines who gets what, when, and how. Politics is the struggle over scarce resources and the means through which the struggle is conducted.



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Debate and disagreement lie at the heart of this subject – even when competing politicians seem to be saying the same thing, It is a subject of rival views and one without any absolute answers, so you need to take on the challenge of considering different viewpoints, perspectives, and opinions – and to think for yourself – so that you can formulate powerful arguments and express them convincingly. Importantly these arguments need to be supported with Evidence. However, you will study politics not as a neutral observer but as an active participant, developing your personal opinions as you acquire a strong understanding of the factors shaping both the British and American systems of government and politics. You will also gain insight into some of the great political ideas that have shaped the world we live in.

This booklet is designed to help you to start thinking as an A Level Politics student and includes tasks which will support you throughout your studies, including assisting you in preparing for your final exams.

“A week is a long time in politics”



Uniquely, Politics is a living subject so you will see much of what you are studying happening in the ‘real world’. It can also be a very fast moving one, as Wilson’s famous quote above indicates. This means that any textbook is, to some degree, out of date by the time it is published. This may sound daunting, especially when this is part of your introduction to the subject, but it also provides you with a great opportunity. It is precisely because no book can give you the most up-to-date examples that using recent/current examples effectively will be highly rewarded by examiners. Consequently, you should be keeping an eye on American government and politics during Year 1, when you are studying the UK, and continue to follow what is happening in the UK during Year 2, when the focus of the course is on the USA.

Following politics in the media should, therefore, be a regular part of your independent study throughout the course. First, however, you need to be organised. One book per component is recommended. Buy or use ‘homemade’ dividers and label them as follows. You will then be able to file your examples in the appropriate section. (*Be aware that some examples will be relevant to two or more topics – more on this later.*) Make a start on this now, establishing a good habit to continue throughout the course, so that **by the end of the summer you will have filed five examples plus your reflections on each one**. The expectation is that you will have five examples in total i.e. it does not matter which topics they relate to. The summer is usually a quiet time in the political world but Brexit is set to ensure that this is not the case this summer.

### **Component 1 UK Politics**

- o Democracy and participation
- o Political parties
- o Electoral systems
- o Voting behaviour and the media

(You will also study the following political ideas: liberalism, conservatism, and socialism)

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.quotecounterquote.com/2016/04/a-week-is-long-time-in-politics.html>

### **Component 2 UK Government**

- o The constitution
- o Parliament
- o Prime Minister and executive
- o Relationships between the branches

(You will also study one of the following political ideas: anarchism, ecologism, feminism, multiculturalism, nationalism)

### **Component 3 Comparative Politics - USA**

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

The most highly recommended resource of all (because it succeeds so well in providing intelligent analysis which is accessibly written without being at all dumbed down) is

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics>

Try the other reading/listening/watching recommendations below, with the intention of continuing with what you find useful and enjoyable. Few subjects can offer such entertaining homework.

- o The following are all quality newspapers which are free to access:
  - 🔗 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk>
  - 🔗 <https://www.independent.co.uk/>
  - 🔗 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/>
  - 🔗 <https://www.nytimes.com/>
  - 🔗 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>
  - 🔗 <https://www.washingtontimes.com/>
- o TV and Radio, which can be accessed, respectively, via <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer> and <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio> and <https://www.itv.com/hub/shows>  
(Be aware that these programmes are not all available throughout the year and that schedules may change):
  - 🔗 Monday – Friday: *PM* Radio 4 17:00 – 18:00; *Newsnight* BBC2 22:30 – 23:15
  - 🔗 Every Evening at 7.00pm channel 4 news (most in depth news on TV)
  - 🔗 Thursday: *Question Time* BBC1 22:45 – 23:45; *This Week* BBC1 23:45 – 00:45
  - 🔗 Friday: *The News Quiz/The Now Show/Dead Ringers* Radio 4 18:30 – 19:00; *Have I Got News For You* BBC1 21:00 – 21:30; *Tracey Breaks the News* BBC1 21:30 – 22:00; *Mock the Week* BBC2 22:00 – 22:30
  - 🔗 Saturday: *The Week in Westminster* Radio 4 11:00 – 11:30
  - 🔗 Sunday: *The Andrew Marr Show* BBC1 09:00 – 10:00; *Pienaar’s Politics* Radio 5 10:00 – 11:00; *Peston on Sunday* ITV 10:00 – 11:00, repeated 22:20 – 23:20

## Synoptic thinking

Synoptic can be broken down to *syn-*, meaning together, and *-optic*, meaning view or sight. Politics is a highly synoptic subject and, as the specification advises, “students must identify parallels, connections, similarities and differences between content studied”. This is especially important in Component 3, where comparisons with the UK need to be made when answering exam questions on the USA. Furthermore, thinking synoptically about the topics within Components 1 and 2, as well as making links between the two components, is a very effective way to demonstrate a high level of understanding of Politics at A Level.

This may well sound daunting but synoptic thinking is a skill that can be mastered with practice and it is also worth emphasising that you are not expected to start the course with any prior knowledge: just the commitment to acquiring it, including through independent study. The tasks below will give you some insight into how this skill can be applied to the most recent major political event in the UK – the general election of 2019. This event is studied, to a greater or lesser degree, in all UK topics. At the time when Boris Johnson decided to call this ‘snap’ election, the Conservatives were in a ‘confidence and supply’ deal with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), whose ten MPs could provide a majority in crucial votes in the Commons – on the budget (*i.e. the supply of money needed for the government to implement its legislative programme*) and on any votes other parties propose to bring the government down (*i.e. a vote of ‘no confidence’ in the government*). Johnson needed to gain a majority of conservative MP’s in the House of Commons in order to pass laws easily especially push through his Brexit deal.

Your work will focus on this election and other elections across the past 50 years to help prepare you for the course.

**Students MUST complete this work to study Government and Politics at Norwood**

**10 key facts to learn for the start of the course**

1. Name the party leader:

Conservatives =

.....  
.....

Labour =

.....  
.....

Liberal Democrats =

.....  
.....

SNP =

.....  
.....

Plaid Cymru =

.....  
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DUP =

.....  
.....

Greens =

.....  
.....

UKIP =

.....  
.....

2. In the 2016 EU referendum, Leave gained .....% of votes compared to Remain's .....%.
  
3. In the 2019 general election the Conservatives won .....% of seats with .....% of the votes.
  
4. In the 2019 general election the Liberal Democrats gained .....% of seats with .....% of the votes.
  
5. Turnout in the 2019 general election (at .....%). How does that compare with other years?
  
6. What percentage of the House of Commons is female?
  
7. What percentage of the House of Commons BAME?
  
8. A hung parliament is a parliament in which ..... Either a minority government or a coalition will then result.
  
9. An electoral ..... is a document produced by a political party at election times, stating what policies it intends to implement if it gains power.
  
10. An electoral ..... refers to the authority to govern granted by voters to the winning party at an election. The ..... suggests that the government may ..... the measures in its election .....

## 2019 Analysis

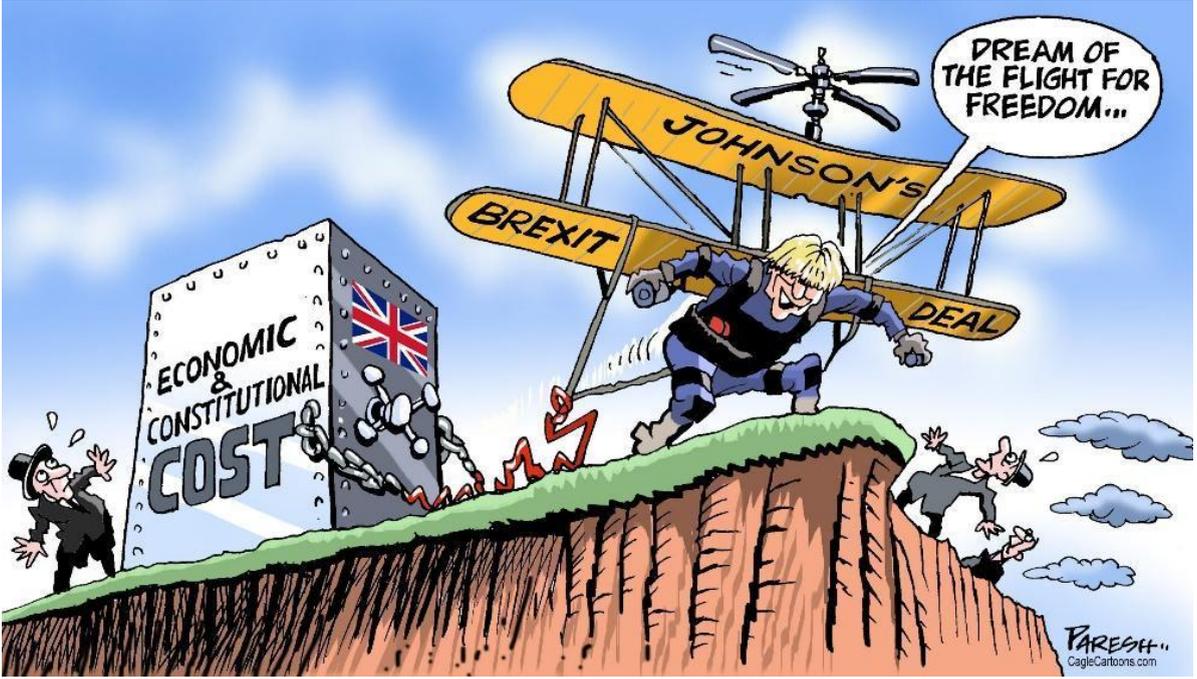
- a) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election/2019/results/england> - Election result and party data.
- b) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2019-50770798> - Election analysis in maps and charts.
- c) <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/dec/13/the-guardian-view-on-the-2019-election-result-a-new-political-landscape> - Guardian Analysis

Answer the following questions using PEEL Paragraphs

1. The Conservatives' have a large majority in the House of Commons why is that so important?
2. Explain in a PEEL paragraph why Brexit was so important to the 2019 election.
3. Explain why Labour did so badly in the election.
4. What is the Red Wall and why did it matter in this election?
5. Explain why the SNP poses a problem to Boris Johnson.

6. In terms of demographics (gender, race, class etc) how far does Parliament represent the UK? Is that important?
7. Political cartoonists typically craft their creations with great attention to detail and can produce work which offers considerable insight. Look very closely at the two examples below and explain what can be learnt about each cartoonist's view of the 2017 general election.





## Students SHOULD complete this work to study Government and Politics at Norwood

<https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers/clement-attlee>

Use the Government website and other sources to create a timeline of all the Prime ministers in the UK since 1945. Include as many of the following as you can:

- Name
- Party
- How long they were in power for
- Summary of achievements
- Summary of criticisms/ challenges
- Why they won/ lost each election

General election	Winner	Party	Achievements	Criticisms	Why they won/lost
1945	Attlee	Lab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Created NHS</li> <li>● Welfare state</li> <li>● Expanded council housing</li> <li>● Free education for everyone under 16</li> <li>● Nationalised key industries for example rail coal steel</li> <li>● Negotiated independence of India</li> <li>● Dealt with the beginning of the cold war for example Korean war and Berlin Blockade</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Not as charismatic as Churchill</li> <li>● Disunity in his party</li> </ul>	He beat Churchill because of the popularity of his socialist policies and because he was seen by many as a more conciliatory peace time leader than Churchill
1951	Churchill				

## Students COULD complete this work to study Government and Politics at Norwood

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/m0008kk7/the-cameron-years>

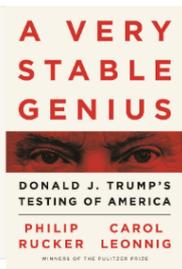
Watch the Documentary above. How far can we blame David Cameron for the situation UK politics has found itself in today?

If you have finished that then return to the politics curiosity sheet and continue to develop your politics knowledge –

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1TQipT0cSRmJbbuupPNvu1S7bFQrCRiWB-j8VjWWMFvg/ed1t#slide=id.g8407ef2a43\\_0\\_0](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1TQipT0cSRmJbbuupPNvu1S7bFQrCRiWB-j8VjWWMFvg/ed1t#slide=id.g8407ef2a43_0_0)

## Curious about.... Government and Politics?

### 1. READ THE NEWS then Books



### 3. Podcasts

- Guardian Politics Weekly  
<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/series/politicsweekly>
- NYT The Daily  
<https://www.nytimes.com/column/the-daily>



### 4. Radio Show-

- BBC Radio 4- The Today Show Every morning



### 3. Films - All on Netflix



### 5. Social?

@realdonaldtrump  
@borisjohnson  
@BBCpolitics  
@skynewspolitics