

SIXTH FORM BRIDGING WORK & YEAR 11 DISCOVERY

Get Ready for *Politics*

Subject mind-set and BIG picture thinking & links...

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. 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. Moreover, 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.

Please explore the following tasks:

Work to complete

If you do not already watch / read the news you need to start to. (There are some recommendations below).

The students who do best in Politics are those who follow what is happening in the news. The better read and more up to date you are, the more examples you will have at your disposal to write about.

Start reading around; consider these questions- they are designed to give you some basic knowledge to help you follow the news.

1. What are the main political parties represented in the House of Commons?
2. What are the differences between the House of Commons and the House of Lords?
3. What is a referendum? Describe three occasions when a referendum has happened in the UK.
4. What are Civil Liberties? Find two examples of UK court cases which involved civil liberties or human rights.
5. Research two UK pressure groups and what they campaign for.
6. List the current members of the cabinet and their positions/
7. Keep a record of three political news stories over the summer holidays to present when you return.
8. Follow the progress of the stories over time and keep a record of what happens.
9. Define and explain the following - two sentences: • codified • uncodified • statute • common law • conventions • authoritative opinions • the royal prerogative • rule of law • parliamentary sovereignty • individual and collective rights 2.
10. Explain the following developments in British constitutional history – three to four sentences: • Magna Carta (1215) • Bill of Rights (1689) • Act of Settlement (1701) • Parliament Acts (1911 and 1949) • European Communities Act (1972)

Be prepared to talk and discuss these concepts in the first lesson of Year 12!

10 key facts to learn for the start of the course

As with any A Level course, there are key facts that it is very useful to learn because they can be examples that illustrate the points you want to make and provide the basis from which you can develop explanation and evaluation. You will need to learn the following key facts, ready for a quiz in September. The test will replicate the information below – except there will be gaps in which you will need to write what is highlighted here.

1. Name the party leader:

- o Conservatives = Kemi Badenoch
- o Labour = Andy Burnham
- o Liberal Democrats = Ed Davey
- o SNP = John Swinney
- o Plaid Cymru = Rhun ap Iorwerth
- o DUP = Arlene Foster
- o Greens = Zach Polanski
- o Reform- Nigel Farage

2. In the 2016 EU referendum, Leave gained 52% of votes compared to Remain's 48%.

3. In the UK, each constituency elects an MP- Member of Parliament. They represent their "Seat". There are 650 seats/MPs. Whichever party has a majority (more than half) of the seats creates a government and its leader becomes the Prime Minister.

4. In the 2024 UK general election, the Labour Party won 412 seats with 33.7% of the vote, while the Conservative Party won 121 seats with 23.7% of the vote. This represented a landslide victory for Labour and the Conservatives' worst general election result in their history.

5. The 2024 UK general election saw Labour gain 412 seats with 33.7% of the vote, compared with the Conservatives' 121 seats and 23.7% of the vote. Although Labour's vote share increased by only a small amount compared with 2019, it translated into a much larger number of parliamentary seats.

6. Turnout in the 2024 UK general election was 59.7%, down from 67.3% in the 2019 general election, making it the lowest turnout at a UK general election since 2001.

7. For every ten years older a voter was, their chance of voting Tory in 2019 increased by around nine points and the chance of their voting Labour decreased by eight points. The tipping point, that is the age at which a voter was more likely to have voted Conservative than Labour, was 39 (this has reduced from age 47 in the 2017 election).

8. A hung parliament is a parliament in which no single party has majority control. Either a minority government or a coalition will then result.

9. An electoral manifesto 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 mandate refers to the authority to govern granted to the winning party at an election by voters. The mandate suggests that the government may implement the measures in its election manifesto.

Core texts; Please note; EDEXCEL is the exam board, and we are following the US Government and Politics option.

Textbook and revision guide; These can be bought ahead of time, or at the beginning of the year.



News programs and websites.

Try the other reading/listening/watching recommendations below, with the intention of continuing with what you find useful and enjoyable. Find the ones you like and make them part of your routines- reading with breakfast, listening to a podcast at the gym, etc. Few subjects can offer such entertaining homework. Just remember we are focusing on *political* stories, relating to the United Kingdom and United States.

I recommend that you first get into the habit of browsing the news online; the best place to start is the BBC;
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics>

The following are all quality newspapers which are free to access:

- 📄 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk>
- 📄 <https://www.nytimes.com/>
- 📄 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>
- 📄 <https://www.washingtontimes.com/>

You may find other websites useful; if you are unsure about their salience, please do ask.

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>

TV programs, including but not limited to (be aware the times might change);

- Newsnight, BBC 2, every night at 22;30.

- Question time, BBC1, Thursday, 21;00
- Sunday with Laura Kuenessberg, Sundays, 9am.

Even comedy programs like *Have I Got News For You* can provide good political literacy- if you understand the jokes, it demonstrates being well informed. Your Mileage may vary.

Another good way to keep up to date are podcasts. There are too many of these to list; you will have to do some experimentation. The ones below should be available in whatever your preferred podcast platform is. No doubt the algorithm will spit out some suggestions, but here are some big ones to start;

- The Rest is Politics
- Politics Joe (Sometimes gets a bit silly, but that might appeal).
- Political Currency
- Politics weekly (The guardian)
- Page 94; The Private Eye Podcast
- The New Statesman.
- The Fourcast (Channel 4)
- Global News Podcast (BBC News)
- TLDR news ("Starmergeddon" is the most politics focused feed).
- The New Stateman Politics.

These are just suggestions- there are lots to try, so if it isn't your speed, move straight on to an alternative.

- <https://www.hoddereducation.co.uk/magazines/magazines-extras/politics-reviewextras>
- this is an excellent supply of current opinion about topics

Related magazines- Try an issue, subscribe at your discretion.

- *Politics Review* – published by Philip Allan Updates four times in each annual volume (September, November, January and April) is the most widely used journal for students of AS and A-level Politics.
- *Economist* – many useful articles can be found in more mainstream publications, such as *The Economist*.
- *The Private Eye*- One of the last truly investigative periodicals in the UK
- *TLDR News* is a YouTube channel that now offers a very information periodical

Other recommended reading

These extra texts are good for a summer read, and most can be gotten in previous/ used editions for very cheaply.

- *State and Society; a social and political history of Britain since 1870, Martin Pugh* (goes back farther than our course, but is a good breadth study if you have the time. Also useful for History).
- *British Politics; A very Short Introduction, Tony Wright*.
- *Essentials of UK Politics, Andrew Heywood*.

Teachers contact for questions and more information

Mr J Voss jack.voss@shoreham-academy.org