

A-Level Government and Politics

Course overview

Component 1: UK Politics	Component 2: UK Government	Component 3: Comparative Politics (USA)
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Democracy and participation.2. Political parties.3. Electoral systems.4. Voting behaviour and the media.5. Core Political ideas.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The constitution.2. Parliament.3. Prime Minister and executive.4. Relationships between the branches.5. None core political ideas.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The US Constitution and federalism2. US Congress3. US presidency4. US Supreme Court and civil rights5. Democracy and participation.6. Comparative theories.

Component 1 – UK Politics

This section explores the nature of politics and how people engage in the political process in the UK. Students will explore the emergence and development of the UK's democratic system and the similarities, differences, connections and parallels between direct and indirect democracy. Students will focus on the role and scope of political parties that are so central to contemporary politics, including the significance of the manifestos they publish at election time and their relevance to the mandate of the resulting government.

This section allows students to understand the individual in the political process and their relationship with the state and their fellow citizens. Students will examine how electoral systems in the UK operate and how individuals and groups are influenced in their voting behaviour and political actions. This component will further examine the role of the media in contemporary politics. It will also give students an understanding of voting patterns and voting behaviour.

The section on core political ideas allows students to explore the three traditional political ideas of conservatism, liberalism and socialism. 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.

Component 2 – UK Government

Politics is ultimately about people, but most political decisions are made by a branch of government whose roles and powers are determined by a set of rules: the constitution. This component is fundamental to understanding the nature of UK government, since it enables students to understand where, how and by whom political decisions are made.

The component also gives students a base of comparison to other political systems. The component introduces students to the set of rules governing politics in the UK, the UK constitution, which is different in nature from most of the rest of the world. It further introduces students to the specific roles and powers of the different major branches of the government - legislative, executive, and judiciary - as well as the relationships and balance of power between them, and considers where sovereignty now lies within this system.

Students will explore the following key themes: the relative powers of the different branches of UK government; the extent to which the constitution has changed in recent years; the desirability of further change; and the current location of sovereignty within the UK political system.

This section on non-core political ideas allows students to explore one of five additional political ideas. Students will learn about one of these non-core ideas and principles, the effects of this idea, the divisions within this idea and its key thinkers.

Component 3 - Comparative Politics (USA)

The USA has been considered by some to be a 'beacon of democracy'. As a world power, understanding the nature of US democracy, and the debates surrounding it, is crucial given the considerable impact that the USA has on UK, European and global politics.

Students will explore the US Constitution and the arguments surrounding this guiding document of US democracy. In learning about the key institutions of government in the USA and analysing the manner in which they achieve this power and exercise it over their citizens, students will judge ultimately whether 'liberty and justice for all' has been achieved in the USA. Students will be expected to highlight the debates on the nature of democracy in the USA and evaluate the extent to which it remains an issue.

The impact of the US government on the world beyond its borders is increasingly a feature of international politics. Students will begin to engage with this interaction by comparing and contrasting politics and institutions in the US with those in the UK. This will develop a wider understanding of politics as a discipline, underpinned by the theoretical concepts of comparative politics.