

Politics Transition work

Introduction

Welcome, year 11!

This pack is designed to give you a flavour of what A level Politics is all about. The pack will introduce you to some core political concepts and events, to aid your understanding of politics ready for sixth form. There are also independent research tasks to give you a sense of the independent nature of A Level. The work in these packs will take a long time, so you can break it up. You do not have to complete it all at once, you do not have to complete all of the tasks but I strongly recommend you have a good go!

If you want to write on the documents in this pack then you will need to download your own version.



POLITICS WILL SUIT STUDENTS WHO...

- Have an interest in the world around them: who want to know more about the society they live in, how it works and how it could work.
- Enjoy debate, discussion and argument: who are comfortable with the fact that in Politics there are no simple 'rights' or 'wrongs'.
- Like to think for themselves: who want to develop their own views, rather than accept the views of others.
- Politics will be a new subject to the majority of you and therefore you may see it as an opportunity to do something fresh and new, an enriching experience in itself.
- It is particularly important that you have an enquiring mind, a desire to learn about how the political system works and its impact on you, the citizen.

THE SKILLS YOU WILL DEVELOP STUDYING POLITICS...

- **Knowledge and understanding** of basic political ideas, concepts, structures and processes, the relationship between them and how they work at different levels.
- An ability to **analyse** political information in various forms and from various sources, and to apply a range of political ideas, concepts and theories.
- An ability to **evaluate** arguments, theories, values and ideologies to explain political behaviour and suggest solutions to controversial issues.
- The skills to **organise and present an argument with relevance, clarity and coherence using good English.**

Task One: What is Politics?

“Politics is the study of how a people, a nation or a state is governed.”

When most people think of politics, they think of old, wealthy men (only sometimes women, and only sometimes ethnic minorities) in offices, making deals and agreements that will affect millions of people, just for personal gain. And it’s true that some decisions are made that way, but politics is much more than that.

Politics is about power, about people, equality, war, conflict, debate, cooperation, freedom, money, etc. – it’s about the relationship between the state (the government) and its citizens, or the state and other states. It governs everything we can and will do in our lives.

One of the reasons politics is so exciting is that it changes every single day based on the actions of individuals. Less than 500 people (in a country of 330 million) decided the result of the 2000 presidential election that made George Bush president. In 2001 he invaded Afghanistan and in 2003 he invaded Iraq. These two things have changed the Middle East and global politics, perhaps forever. Closer to home, if just one out of every 50 people who voted to leave the EU had voted differently, we wouldn’t have left. Each individual vote is vital, and yet 28% of all the people who could vote and registered to vote in that referendum didn’t turn out on June 23rd. It would take just a small number of them to change the result.

Your first task is to help you garner an understanding of what Politics is really all about. Use the internet (e.g. Wikipedia, YouTube and other sources) to research and understand 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’s not about having the “right” or “word-perfect” definition, it’s about you understanding what a concept means 😊

Term	Explanation
Power	
Authority	
Legitimacy	
Government	
Politics	
Civil society	

Executive branch	
Prime minister	
Cabinet	
Legislative branch	
Parliament	
House of Commons	
House of Lords	
Judicial branch	
Supreme Court (UK – not US!)	
Rule of Law	
Westminster Model	
Elective dictatorship	
Direct democracy	
Representative democracy	
Sovereignty	
Parliamentary sovereignty	
Referendum (UK – not US!)	
Constitutional monarchy	
Fusion of powers	
Separation of powers	
Devolution	
Labour Party	
Conservative Party	

Liberal Democrats	
Brexit Party	
Presidency (USA)	
Congress (USA)	
Constitution (USA)	
Checks & Balances (USA)	
Supreme Court (USA)	
Republican Party (USA)	
Democratic Party (USA)	
Liberalism (Ideology)	
Conservatism (Ideology)	
Socialism (Ideology)	
Nationalism (Ideology)	

Task Two: British Politics

Go to these links here 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>

These links summarise their key manifesto policies in the 2019 general election, which you may remember voting in at school. I would like you to choose a few policies of your choose and explain below why you support OR do not support that policy. You must choose at least 1 policy from each manifesto to discuss your agreement to or opposition to (therefore compulsory is to do 3) – if you want to extend yourself and go further, you can do more than 3 by copying and pasting the spaces I have provided.

Party: _____

Manifesto policy:

Agree/disagree & why:

Party: _____

Manifesto policy:

Agree/disagree & why:

Party: _____

Manifesto policy:

Agree/disagree & why:

Next I want you to conduct some research into the role of your local MP.

I would like you to find out who your local MP is and the following details about them:

MP's name:

Political party:

Constituency (the area they represent):

Areas they have a particular interest in:

And finally, look at their voting record (found here <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/> by clicking 'voting record') and jot down some ways in which they've voted in parliament. For example, my MP when I was at university, Julian Sturdy (Conservative) voted against laws to promote same-sex marriage, and voted for increasing VAT rates.

Task Three: Making a Case

Now I would like you to make a case for and against a particular issue. Politics at A level will require you to make judgements about issues. You need to create a for/against case for the issue of: *should we lower the voting age from 18 to 16?*

This will require you to write at least three paragraphs (approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 full typed A4 page – but if you like you can write more). You can use websites like this:

<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2012/02/15/and-against-lowering-voting-age> or Google search “for and against [issue]” to get more information about the issue at hand. I’ve written a sample paragraph below – I’m interested in you ARGUING your case with evidence!

Some who think we should extend the vote to 16- and 17-year-olds say that it may lead them to understand political issues more if they have to research them. If under 18s have to make choices on issues like taxes, the NHS and the size of the army, they would have to research them, so this will improve their understanding and they will make good choices. However, this argument doesn't hold water because over-18s as it is rarely research political issues – if we don't have adults researching taxes, the NHS or the size of the army before elections why would we expect children to? Therefore, this is not a good argument for extending the vote to 16- and 17-year-olds.

Task Four: News and elections

Politics is a subject which cannot be unplugged from news and current affairs. Twitter is seen by some to be the future of Politics – it is used by journalists, politicians and politicians alike to share news and information as well as discuss political issues. I would advise (but obviously cannot enforce) that you create yourselves Twitter accounts as soon as possible and follow the below users for Political information and news:

@Britainelects (for news and updates on all things electoral in the UK)

@BBCNews / @SkyNews (or any other news station of your choice – or even more than one!)

@bbcquestiontime (the UK's most-watched political talk-show: BBC Question Time)

@BorisJohnson (prime minister)

@POTUS (the president of the United States of America)

@DExUgov (The Department for Exiting the European Union)

And a range of political journalists like Julia Hartley-Brewer, Owen Jones, etc...

Your second task is to keep an eye on these Twitter accounts (as well as wider sources – the news and shows on TV, newspapers and others) over the Summer holidays and make a note of any particularly interesting news that is relevant to Politics in the UK. You may even find some stories which are interesting internationally, particularly if you choose to follow Donald Trump...

Task Five – British Political History

You need to create an A3 or A4 Political History timeline for the UK. On your timeline you should include a number of features such as (but not necessarily ONLY these – and for an A grade extension, include the dates at which major UK political parties were founded):

The signing of the Magna Carta, the opening of the House of Commons, the introduction of the Bill of Rights, the Act of Union, Representation of the People Acts and European Communities Act. This will be the focus of the first topic we will study next year.

Task Six – Parties and Issues

To start, you should quickly research the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties. What do they stand for? Then, use the internet, textbooks and your imagination to create your own political party which will stand at the next election. You should include the party's name, some points as to what the party stands for and three key policies your party will introduce if they are elected including **why** you would introduce them. These policies will cost money - will people have to pay more tax or would you make savings elsewhere? You have to **justify** your decisions. Some topics to consider might be:

Health

Crime

The European Union

Housing

Education

Task Seven-USA Research Task

Your research task is to choose one of the following parties: Republican Party or Democratic Party.

You need to research the history of the party, their ideology and policy beliefs (including their most recent election platform), their electoral performance (Is the current President from that party? Do they have a majority in Congress? How well did they do at the last elections (Nov 2016 for the President and Nov 2018 for Congress)?) and finally key figures in that party (include photos and descriptions of who they are). This should be about one A4 page of typed work. You need to turn this into some sort of leaflet/flyer about that party including pictures, not just a set of notes.

Wikipedia is an excellent resource for this task (as a general rule, you shouldn't rely on Wikipedia – but it IS a really good source of useful information!) but you should use more than one source to complete this work.

