



**PiXL Gateway: Progression**

* **Politics**

For Students Studying Edexcel A Level





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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.



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.

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”

[[1]](#footnote-1)

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 This means that any textbook is, to some degree, out of date by the time it is published.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 file 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 ongoing concerns over Brexit and the Covid pandemic will ensure that this is not the case this summer.

***Component 1 UK Politics***

* Democracy and participation
* Political parties
* Electoral systems
* Voting behaviour and the media

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

***Component 2 UK Government***

* The constitution
* Parliament
* Prime Minister and executive
* Relationships between the branches

(You will also study feminism as your optional ideology)

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

* The US Constitution and federalism
* US Congress
* US presidency
* US Supreme Court and civil rights
* Democracy and participation
* 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>

We also have a school subscription to **Pre-chewed Politics** which you can access with the following login details:-

Username = [bowent@fulford.york.sch.uk](mailto:bowent@fulford.york.sch.uk)

Password = Congress2020

Pre-chewed has video content about each part of the course which you can start to watch if you wish. They also have regular updates and case studies that it will be useful for you to read.

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.

* 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/>
* 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
* 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

‘PM on Radio 4’ every day and ‘The Week in Westminster’ also on Radio 4 are the most invaluable programmes to start to listen to. ‘Today in Parliament’ is also useful and is on late in the evening every day that Parliament is in session. If you can get into a habit of listening to Radio 4 daily you will find your study of Politics becomes a real joy because the examples will just start to come naturally to you! The various comedy shows above are also a fun way to engage with current affairs but do always be aware of bias when watching or listening to these shows.

# 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.

**The 2019 Election**

The most recent election is always one that you will need to know in detail. Find out about the 2019 Election and try to answer the following questions:-

* Why did the Conservatives win this election and by how much?
* How many seats were won by each party?
* What were the manifesto pledges of the main parties (Conservative, Labour, Lib Dems, SNP, Green) in 2019?
* Find out about First Past the Post. How did this help the Conservative Party to win the election?
* How did people of different classes, and different ages vote in the election?
* How did people with different levels of education vote in the election?
* What was the ‘Red Wall’ and why was it a significant factor in this election?
* What was the ‘turnout’ for the 2019 election?
* What are the factors that mean that some people choose not to vote?

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

1. Name the party leader:

* Conservatives = ………………………………………………………………………………………………………….
* Labour = …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….
* Liberal Democrats = ……………………………………………………………………………………………………
* SNP = ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….
* PC = ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
* DUP = …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
* Greens = …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

1. In the 2016 EU referendum, Leave gained …..…..% of votes compared to Remain’s …..…..%.
2. ‘Initiatives’ occur in ……………………..………… and some US states, where citizens gather signatures on a petition for a public vote on a proposed new law. These are similar to a referendum but they are ……………………..………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

1. In the 2017 general election the Conservatives won …..…..% of seats with …..…..% of the votes.
2. In the 2017 general election the Liberal Democrats gained …..…..% of seats with …..…..% of the votes.
3. Turnout in the 2017 general election (at …..…..%) was the highest in …..….. years.
4. For every ten years older a voter was, their chance of voting Tory in 2017 increased by around …..….. points and the chance of them voting Labour decreased by …..….. points. The tipping point, that is the age at which a voter was more likely to have voted Conservative than Labour, was …..…...
5. A hung parliament is a parliament in which …..………………………………………………………………. Either a minority government or a coalition will then result.
6. An electoral ……………………..………… is a document produced by a political party at election times, stating what policies it intends to implement if it gains power.
7. 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 ……………………..…….

# 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 test 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:

* Conservatives = Boris Johnson
* Labour = Keir Starmer
* Liberal Democrats = Sir Ed Davey
* SNP = Nicola Sturgeon
* Plaid Cymru = Adam Price
* DUP = Edwin Poots (Arlene Foster on her way out)
* Greens = Jonathan Bartley and Siân Berry

1. In the 2016 EU referendum, Leave gained 52% of votes compared to Remain’s 48%.
2. ‘Initiatives’ occur in Switzerland and some US states, where citizens gather signatures on a petition for a public vote on a proposed new law. These are similar to a referendum but they are initiated (started) by citizens, not by a national or a regional/state government.
3. In the 2017 general election the Conservatives won 49% of seats with 42% of the votes.
4. In the 2017 general election the Liberal Democrats gained 1.8% of seats with 7.4% of the votes.
5. Turnout in the 2017 general election (at 69%) was the highest in 25 years.
6. For every ten years older a voter was, their chance of voting Tory in 2017 increased by around nine points and the chance of their voting Labour decreased by nine points. The tipping point, that is the age at which a voter was more likely to have voted Conservative than Labour, was 47.
7. A hung parliament is a parliament in which no single party has majority control. Either a minority government or a coalition will then result.
8. 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.
9. 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.



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1. <http://www.quotecounterquote.com/2016/04/a-week-is-long-time-in-politics.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)