

Carshalton High School for Girls

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Government and Politics Exam Board: AQA (7152)

Summer Bridging Work



What You Need to Have Done by September

- □ Bring two A4 ring binders and a set of dividers
- □ Complete all four summer preparation tasks:
 - □ Task 1: What is Politics?
 - □ Task 2: Understanding the UK Constitution (3.1.1.1)
 - □ Task 3: Exploring Political Participation (3.1.2.1)
 - □ Task 4: Five-entry News Diary (UK and US politics)
- $\hfill\square$ Read or explore at least one Politics resource from the reading suggestions
- \square (Optional) Try a stretch task to extend your thinking

Name:

WELCOME

Welcome to A-Level Politics. This subject is dynamic, challenging and deeply relevant. It helps you understand how power works, how decisions are made, and how people like you can influence politics locally, nationally and globally.

This pack will prepare you for a confident start in September. All tasks are designed to introduce you to the first two topics you'll study: the **UK Constitution** and **UK Democracy & Participation**.

HOW IS THE COURSE IS STRUCTURED?

In Year 12, you will study **UK Politics**, taught by two teachers:

- One teacher will cover the Governing strand (starting with the Constitution)
- The other will cover the Participation strand (starting with Democracy & Participation)

In Year 13, the course shifts to:

- US Politics and Comparative Politics
- Political Ideologies (Liberalism, Conservatism, Socialism, and Feminism)

AQA A-Level Politics Course Structure; Governing AQA A-Level Politics Course Structure; Participation	
UK Constitution (3.1.1.1)	UK Democracy & Participation (3.1.2.1)
UK Devolution (3.1.1.5)	UK Elections & Referendums (3.1.2.2)
UK Parliament (3.1.1.2)	UK Political Parties (3.1.2.3)
UK Prime Minister & Executive (3.1.1.3)	UK Pressure Groups & Other Influences (3.1.2.4)
UK Supreme Court & Judiciary (3.1.1.4)	European Union (3.1.1.6)
US Constitution & Federalism (3.2.1.1)	US Political Parties (3.2.1.6)
US Congress (3.2.1.2)	US Pressure Groups (3.2.1.7)
US Executive (3.2.1.3)	Core Ideologies – Liberalism (3.3.1.1)
US Elections & Electoral Systems (3.2.1.5)	Core Ideologies – Conservatism (3.3.1.2)
US Supreme Court & Judiciary (3.2.1.4)	Core Ideologies – Socialism (3.3.1.3)
US Civil Rights (3.2.1.8)	Non-Core Ideology – Feminism (3.3.2.2)

EXAM OVERVIEW – AQA A-LEVEL POLITICS (7152)

You will sit three 2-hour exam papers at the end of Year 13:

Paper 1: UK Politics and Government

- Democracy and Participation
- Political Parties
- Electoral Systems
- Voting Behaviour and the Media
- Constitution
- Parliament
- Prime Minister and Executive
- Relationships between the Branches

Paper 2: US Politics and Comparative

Politics

- US Constitution and Federalism
- Congress
- Presidency
- US Supreme Court and Civil Rights
- Democracy and Participation in the USA
- UK/US Comparative Politics

Paper 3: Political Ideas

- Conservatism
- Liberalism
- Socialism
- Feminism

There is no coursework.

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES – WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

Every piece of work you do will be assessed using these three objectives:

AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding

- Use accurate knowledge of political institutions, processes, ideas and key terminology
- Support your points with specific, relevant examples
 - A Top tip: Use real cases (e.g. elections, constitutional reforms, politicians) to illustrate your understanding.

AO2 – Analysis

- You need to explain how different parts of the political system work together and analyse political ideas and processes.
- This means showing cause and effect, comparing systems, or explaining the significance of an event or idea.

A Top tip: Use connectives like this shows, this means, as a result to build clear analysis.

AO3 – Evaluation

- You must form reasoned arguments and make judgements.
- This means weighing up evidence, assessing different viewpoints, and coming to a clear, justified conclusion.
 - A Top tip: Phrases like on balance, however, a more convincing view is... show evaluation in action.

AO Skills in Practice	How to Demonstrate Each One
Knowledge (AO1)	 Am I showing the examiner that I have political knowledge? Key terms, concepts, processes and institutions? Do I have contemporary political examples of structures and issues in their historical context, both within the UK and globally?
Understanding (AO1)	 Am I explaining the concepts that I am using? Am I using the knowledge in the right context?
Interpretation (AO2)	 Am I focused on the question? Am I using material from the extract and linking it to my knowledge and the question?
Application (AO2)	 Am I using relevant concepts, theorists and evidence?
Analysis (AO3)	 Am I explaining and developing ideas? Am I reading between the lines and introducing new ideas? Am I able to find synoptic links between different units of work?
Evaluation (AO3)	 Am I including a well constructed argument, making substantiated judgements and drawing conclusions? Do I have a critical awareness of the changing nature of politics and the relationships between political ideas, institutions and processes?
Comparison (AO3)	 Am I including in relation to parallels, connections, similarities and differences between UK and US politics?

ORGANISATION – WHAT TO BRING IN SEPTEMBER

Please bring the following to your first lesson:

Two A4 ring binders:

- One for UK Government
- One for UK Politics / Participation
- A set of **dividers** (at least 5 per folder)
- □ A4 lined paper
- Pens and highlighters

You'll be asked to add two more folders in Year 13.

OPTIONAL TEXTBOOK

It's strongly recommended that you purchase:

AQA A-level Politics: Government and Politics of the UK, Government and Politics of the USA and Comparative Politics Simon Lemieux et al. (Hodder Education)



This is the main course textbook and will be used throughout both years.

You do not need to bring it to lessons, but it will be extremely useful for homework, revision, and independent study.

Copies are widely available online, including **second-hand editions on Amazon, eBay, and other textbook resale sites**.

Additional Recommended Books



These books are **not essential**, but many students find them helpful for clarifying content and preparing for assessments. They follow the AQA specification and are structured by paper.

Revision Guides

Available new or second-hand from Amazon, eBay and other retailers:

- My Revision Notes: AQA A-level Politics UK Politics (Second Edition) Rowena Hammal – Covers democracy, participation, political parties and electoral systems.
- My Revision Notes: AQA A-level Politics US and Comparative Politics (Second Edition)

Rowena Hammal – Helpful for Year 13 content on the US political system.

My Revision Notes: AQA A-level Politics – Political Ideas (Second Edition)
 Adam Tomes – A concise review of the core and non-core ideologies covered in Paper 3.

Each guide includes clear summaries, key terms, exam-style questions and revision tips. These are especially useful for students who like to revise from concise, structured notes alongside their class materials.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A-LEVEL POLITICS

Regular Reading

You'll need to keep up with UK and US political news throughout the course. This includes reading news articles, short opinion pieces, and real-world case studies. Developing the habit of regular reading will help you understand political developments as they happen – and apply them in essays and exam answers.

You'll be expected to refer to real political examples from current affairs in almost every topic.



Note-Taking and Organisation

You'll be expected to take clear, well-organised notes in and out of lessons. Keeping on top of folders, readings and handouts will make revision and essay planning much easier later on.

Many students benefit from summarising key topics into revision sheets or mind maps as they go – your teachers will show you how.

💪 Essay Writing

Politics is assessed entirely by written exams, so building strong writing skills is essential. You'll practise:

- Planning and structuring arguments
- Writing paragraphs with clear analysis and evaluation
- Reaching balanced conclusions

Your teachers will give regular feedback to help you improve – and your writing will develop quickly with practice.

Discussion and Debate

You'll regularly take part in class discussions. This may involve group tasks, debates or simply responding to questions.

You don't need to be loud or have strong political views – just be willing to contribute, ask questions, and think critically. Listening carefully to others is just as important as speaking.

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Independent Thinking

Politics isn't just about memorising facts – it's about making judgements. You'll be asked to weigh up different arguments, question what you've read, and reach your own supported conclusions.

We'll expect you to think independently, challenge assumptions, and explore different perspectives – even those you might not agree with.

In short...

A-Level Politics rewards students who are curious, engaged with current events, and willing to build their knowledge and skills step by step. You don't need to know everything already – just bring an open mind and a willingness to learn.

SUMMER PREPARATION TASKS

These tasks are designed to give everyone a shared foundation for the first two units:

- UK Constitution (3.1.1.1)
- UK Democracy & Participation (3.1.2.1)

TASK 1: WHAT IS POLITICS?

Write a short paragraph (approx. 200 words) explaining:

- U What politics is
- U Why it matters
- □ An example of a recent political issue in the UK

TASK 2: UNDERSTANDING THE UK CONSTITUTION (3.1.1.1) Read the explainer article from the University College of London, then summarise: U What a constitution is □ The main features of the UK Constitution (e.g. uncodified, flexible) □ One significant constitutional reform since 1997



TASK 3: EXPLORING PARTICIPATION IN THE UK (3.1.2.1)

Create a fact sheet or infographic that explains how people participate in UK politics and whether democracy in the UK is in decline.

You'll need to do some independent research to complete this task. Use reliable sources such as the BBC, the Electoral Commission, the Hansard Society, or Parliament's education pages.

Your work should include:

- □ Two ways people participate in politics
- □ Turnout in the most recent UK general election
- lacksquare One argument for or against the idea that UK democracy is in decline

TASK 4: POLITICS NEWS DIARY

Over the summer, choose **five different political stories** (UK or US). Each should be from a **different date** and ideally a **different news source**.

A political story could be about government decisions, elections, political leaders, protests, new laws, or any issue being debated in Parliament or Congress.

For each story, record:

- o What happened (a short summary)
- Who was involved (e.g. political parties, leaders, organisations)
- o Why it matters politically (what issue it relates to, what's at stake)
- Where you found it (name the news source and date)

Keep each entry to about 3–5 bullet points. Aim for clarity, not length.

Suggested sources:

BBC News | The Guardian | Sky News | CNN | Politico | NPR

🛅 Story 1

- What happened:
- Who was involved:
- Why it matters politically:
- Where you found it:

🛅 Story 2

- What happened:
- Who was involved:
- Why it matters politically:

Where you found it:

🛅 Story 3

- What happened:
- Who was involved:
- Why it matters politically:
- Where you found it:

🛅 Story 4

- What happened:
- Who was involved:
- Why it matters politically:
- Where you found it:

🛅 Story 5

- What happened:
- Who was involved:
- Why it matters politically:
- Where you found it:

STRETCH YOURSELF FURTHER (OPTIONAL)

If you're keen to go a little deeper before September, try one or more of the tasks below. These are not compulsory, but they will give you a stronger start and help develop your political awareness.

Please complete these on separate paper and bring them with your main summer tasks to hand in at the start of term.

- Choose five glossary terms and explain them in your own words, using a political example for each
- **Explore a party manifesto** from the 2024 summer general election. Choose one policy and explain whether you agree or disagree with it, giving reasons
- Listen to an episode of the Constitution Unit Podcast and write a short summary of what you learned or found interesting

STARTER GLOSSARY: KEY POLITICAL TERMS

Term	Definition
Democracy	A system of government where power is held by the people, usually via elections.
Government	The group responsible for running the country – led by the Prime Minister and Cabinet.
Parliament	The UK's legislature, including the House of Commons and House of Lords.
Constitution	A set of rules that define how a state is governed.
Sovereignty	The highest legal authority – in the UK, this lies with Parliament.
Political Party	A group with shared views aiming to win and hold political power.
Electoral System	The method by which votes are translated into seats.
Turnout	The percentage of eligible voters who actually vote in an election.
Legislation	Laws made by Parliament.
Judiciary	The branch of government that interprets and applies the law.
Participation	The different ways people get involved in politics (e.g. voting, protesting).
Executive	The branch that implements laws and runs the country (PM and Cabinet).

POLITICS SUMMER READING SUGGESTIONS

You are not expected to read a full book before September, but dipping into any of the following will help build your understanding and curiosity about UK Politics and democracy.

General Introductions to Politics

• Andrew Heywood – *Politics*

A foundational text that introduces the key ideas and debates in political theory. Chapters 1 and 2 are especially useful for A-Level students.

• Simon Jenkins – A Short History of Parliament An accessible history of the development of the UK's democratic institutions.

Current Affairs and Commentary

- Steve Richards *The Prime Ministers: Reflections on Leadership from Wilson to Johnson* Offers insight into the personalities, priorities and decision-making of recent UK Prime Ministers.
- Isabel Hardman Why We Get the Wrong Politicians A clear, readable and sometimes frustrating look at the inner workings of Westminster.

Analytical and Critical Works

- Levitsky & Ziblatt How Democracies Die
 A widely respected study of how democratic systems weaken, using examples from across the world.
 Excellent context for the 'participation crisis' debate.
- Owen Jones *The Establishment: And How They Get Away With It* A more opinionated take on how power operates in modern Britain.

Follow Online for Shorter Reading

- Institute for Government <u>www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk</u>
 Policy briefings and excellent explainers on political reforms and how the UK government functions.
- Hansard Society <u>www.hansardsociety.org.uk</u> Especially good on democratic accountability, constitutional reform and participation.

Podcasts for Easy Listening

- **The Rest is Politics** Presented by Alastair Campbell and Rory Stewart. Thoughtful and well-informed discussion of UK and international politics.
- BBC Radio 4 Any Questions? A weekly political panel show with live audience questions and discussion.
- **Pod Save the UK** A UK spin-off of the American political podcast network, with a progressive slant.

<u>Websites</u>

- UK Parliament Official site with information about how Parliament works
- Hansard Society Excellent for understanding constitutional reform and political participation
- Institute for Government Independent, clear guides to government policy, power and accountability
- BBC Politics Daily coverage and background analysis
- CNN Politics For accessible US political news
- NPR Politics US analysis and political commentary