

A Level Government and Politics: the New Syllabus.

Exam Board: Edexcel, from September, 2017.

A brief guide for prospective pupils and their parents.

Modern politics is experiencing considerable flux, upheaval, and change. Now is perhaps the best time to make sense of unfolding recent and current events.

The new syllabus reflects the broad changes to all A Levels required by the HM Secretary of State for Education, and is also a development of the successful syllabus Edexcel has offered since 2000.

The new syllabus is designed to meet the needs of newcomers to the subject. It is presumed pupils choosing Government and Politics will not have formal previous exposure to the subject - no GCSE in the subject exists-but it is assumed the prospective pupil of Government and Politics will have the curiosity, interest, and aptitude to study the subject. The syllabus provides a foundation for British and American Politics and intellectually stretches pupils as they progress to their exams.

Government and Politics has the rigour, standing and gravity of similar A Levels, such as History or English.

The syllabus is topical: pupils are expected to closely follow unfolding current political events for the duration of the course.

Consistent with all A Levels, the new Government and Politics A-Level will be a two year course. Assessment in the summer of the Upper 6th year will comprise three exam papers of 2 hours duration each.

Syllabus Content and Assessment Summary.

Paper 1: Section A: British Politics: Representation in the UK Today.

- a) Representative, Direct and Pluralist Democracy, political participation including pressure groups.
- b) Electoral systems in the UK (Westminster, Scottish Parliamentary, Welsh, Northern Ireland and London Assembly, and Mayoral electoral systems.)
- c) Political parties in the UK.
- d) Voting behaviour, and the media, in the UK.

Paper 1: Section B: Political Ideas:

- a) **Conservatism:** fundamental ideas and values, differences within Conservatism, Conservative thinkers and philosophers (Hobbes, Burke, Oakeshott, Rand, Nozick.)
- b) **Socialism:** fundamental ideas and values, different types of Socialism, Socialist thinkers and philosophers (Marx and Engels, Webb, Luxembourg, Crosland, Giddens.)
- c) **Liberalism:** fundamental ideas and values, differences within Liberalism, Liberal thinkers and philosophers (Locke, Wollstonecraft, Mill, Rawls, Friedan.)

Assessment: 2 hr written exam.

Paper 2: Section A: British Politics: Government in the UK Today.

- a) The British Constitution and Constitutional Reform.
- b) Parliament: Commons, Lords, committee system, legislative process, Parliamentary Reform.
- c) The Prime Minister, Cabinet, the executive and Civil Service.
- d) The Judiciary, (Supreme Court), the relationships between branches of government, Sovereignty, Devolution and the UK's relationship with the EU.

Paper 2: Section B: Optional Political Ideas. Study one of..... Anarchism, Ecologism, Feminism, Multiculturalism, and Nationalism.

It is likely the Optional subject will be Nationalism: tbc.

Nationalism: fundamental ideas and values, different types of Nationalism, Nationalist thinkers and philosophers (Rousseau, Herder, Mazzini, Maurras, Garvey.)

Assessment: 2 hr written exam.

Paper 3: Section A: American Politics: Representation in the USA Today.

- a) The US Constitution, (Separation of Powers, Checks and Balances), Amendments and Federalism.
- b) The US Congress (House, Senate, Committee System, Mid-Term elections, law-making, oversight, filibusters, efficacy, relations with other branches of US government.)
- c) The US Presidency (the individual, the institutionalised presidency, the domestic and foreign policy presidency), relations between Presidency and other branches of government.
- d) The US Supreme Court: Judicial Review, the court and public policy, the court and civil rights, relations with other branches of government and the states of the USA.
- e) US Democracy and Participation: Elections, Campaign Finance, Political Parties (Democrats and Republicans), US pressure and advocacy groups, Political Action Committees.

Paper 3: Section B: Comparative Politics of the UK and the USA.

Similarities and differences between UK and US government and democracy, with reference to cultural, rational and structural considerations.

- a) Comparative Constitutions (Codified vs Uncodified)
- b) Comparative Legislatures (Congress and Parliament)
- c) Comparative Executives (Presidency and PM)
- d) Comparative Judiciaries (SCOTUS and UK Supreme Court with reference to Civil Rights)
- e) Comparative Parties, Elections, Election Funding, Pressure and Advocacy Groups, Political Parties.

Assessment: 2 hr written exam.

Comment: Much of the current EdExcel syllabus content is replicated in the outline above. The new components comprise Political Ideas, and the Comparative Politics of the UK and the USA.

There is a greater emphasis on the importance of how government branches relate to each other in the new syllabus. The assessment criteria has also changed, but not markedly so.