

Transition to Advanced Level 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.

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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 system of government and the challenges of Global Politics. You will also gain insight into some of the great political ideas that have shaped the world we live in, including both socialism and feminism.

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.

¹ <http://bentelevision.com/prime-minister-theresa-may-speech-britain-after-brexit-2016-a-vision-of-a-global-britain/>
<http://lybio.net/jeremy-corbyn-queens-speech-2017/people/>

² <http://lybio.net/jeremy-corbyn-queens-speech-2017/people/>

“A week is a long time in politics”



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 This means that any textbook is, to some degree, out of date by the time it is published.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.

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 Brexit is set to 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)

³ <http://www.quotecounterquote.com/2016/04/a-week-is-long-time-in-politics.html>

Component 2 UK Government

- The constitution
 - Parliament
 - Prime Minister and executive
 - Relationships between the branches
- (You will also feminism as a Political Idea)

Component 3 Comparative Politics – Global Politics

- Comparative Theories – Realism and Liberalism
- State and Globalisation
- Political and Economic Governance
- Global Governance Human Rights
- Power and Developments
- Regionalism and the EU

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>

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.

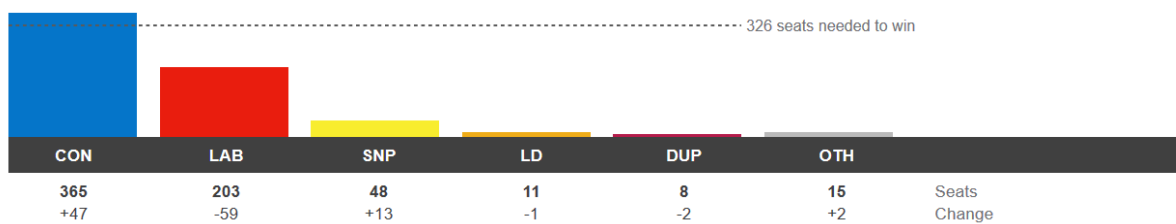
- The following are all quality newspapers which are free to access:
 - <https://www.theguardian.com/uk>
 - <https://www.independent.co.uk/>
 - <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/>
 - <https://www.nytimes.com/>
 - <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>
 - <https://www.washingtontimes.com/>
- TV and Radio, which 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
 - Tuesday: *The Mash Report* BBC2 22:00
 - 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

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 between core Political ideas are made with both Realism and Liberalism. 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.

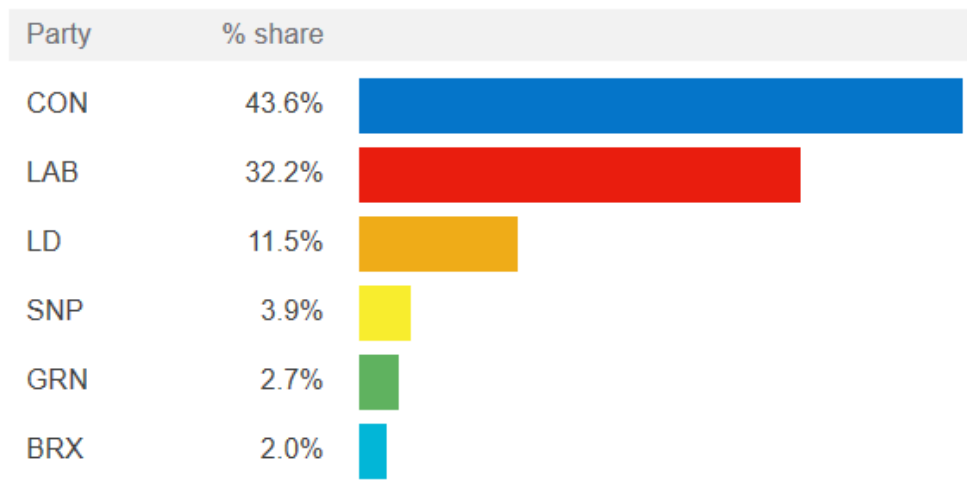
This may well sound daunting but synoptic thinking is a skill that can be mastered with practice and it is also worth emphasising that you are not expected to start the course with any prior knowledge: just the commitment to acquiring it, including through independent study. The tasks below will give you some insight into how this skill can be applied to the most recent major political event in the UK – the general election of 2019. This event is studied, to a greater or lesser degree, in all UK topics. At the time when Boris Johnson decided to call this ‘snap’ election, the Conservatives had lost a number of votes in Parliament over Brexit. Johnson began the campaign with an opinion poll lead in double figures and kept his lead all the way to Polling day to win the election with a Majority in Parliament of 81.

 UK results: Conservatives win majority
After 650 of 650 seats declared



UK vote share

After 650 of 650 seats



Tasks to complete:

1. The Conservatives' share of the vote is the highest for any single party since the 43.6% won by Labour in 1997, and their total of 13.6 million votes is the second highest total in UK electoral history. 2019 is the biggest election victory for the Conservatives since 1987 and Boris Johnson now has complete power over the Government and Parliament. **To win the election the Conservatives won constituency seats in the North of England and the Midlands that Labour had always won in the past. Why did The Conservatives do so well in these traditional Labour areas?**
2. For the Labour Party and its Leader Jeremy Corbyn the election was a disaster. Labour were behind from the start and ran a poor campaign. **What does the outcome of the election suggest about the importance of the conduct of their respective campaigns by the Conservatives and Labour and the nature of the policies they offered to the electorate? Note: ensure that your answer reflects the actual outcome of the election i.e. that the Conservatives won more votes and seats than Labour.**
3. Not only did The Conservatives win a strong Majority of the Seats in Parliament but he also got a new group of Conservative MPS to replace a group of Conservatives who were against him over Brexit. **How certain can Johnson be that he will be able to win votes and so be able to implement her legislative programme?**
4. Undertake an independent research task and write short explanations of the terms 'hard Brexit' and 'soft Brexit', which could be understood by typical Year 10 students.
5. For the Labour Party 2019 is said to be a low point for the Party and its chances of winning again in the next UK election in 2024. Labour has its lowest number of seats since 1935, has lost seats in the North that it has always previously won and has lost almost all it seats in

Scotland. **Research how the new Labour leader Keir Starmer hopes to win back support for Labour across the UK so that Labour can claim to be a potential party of Government in 2024.**

10 key facts to learn for the start of the course

1. Name the party leader:
 - Conservatives =
 - Labour =
 - Liberal Democrats =
 - SNP =
 - PC =
 - DUP =
 - Greens =
 - UK Brexit party =
2. In the 2016 EU referendum, Leave gained% of votes compared to Remain's%.
3. The 2019 election resulted in the most diverse Parliament that the UK has ever had. What are the numbers and percentages of Female, LGBTQ and BAME MPs?
4. In the 2017 general election the Conservatives won% of seats with% of the votes. What are the figures for the elections in 2015 and in 2019?
5. In the 2017 general election the Liberal Democrats gained% of seats with% of the votes. What happened to the Liberal Democrat vote in 2019?
6. Turnout in the 2017 general election (at%) was the highest in years. How did this breakdown by different age groups
7. For every ten years older a voter was, their chance of voting Tory in 2019 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
8. A hung parliament is a parliament in which
Either a minority government or a coalition will then result.

9. An electoral is a document produced by a political party at election times, stating what policies it intends to implement if it gains power.
10. 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

Global Politics Resources

Read and Watch

Please see below a list of resources for students who are interested in or already enrolled onto the Global Politics Course. All the resources will help you get a better understanding of the issues we will be studying and most importantly how each part of the course is related to each other.

Please ask permission from your parents/carers for any films above your age.

Textbooks

- Rob Murphy, John Jefferies, Josie Gadsby “Global Politics for A Level” [2017] - You will have access to a copy of this during the course, but if you want to buy instead do so.
- John Jefferies “Global Politics Student Guide 5” [2018]
- John Jefferies “My Revision Notes Edexcel A-level Politics (2020) : Global Politics”
- Andrew Heywood “Global Politics” [2014]
- John Baylis “The Globalization of World Politics” [2016]

More specific studies

For students who really want to engage with the material here are a selection of books that will provoke ideas and stimulate discussion:

- **Amy Chua “World on Fire” [2002]:** World Bank economist argues that the global spread of free market economics creates tension and resentment, which create a much more dangerous, and divided world: possibly vindicated by recent political developments.
- **Amy Chua “Political Tribes – Group Instinct and the Fate of Nations” (2018)**
- **Thomas Friedman “The World is Flat”:** Powerful defence of the free market as the route to global prosperity and peace.
- **Henry Kissinger “World Order” [2014]:** A contemporary update of realism by the master of realpolitik.
- **Tim Marshall “Prisoners of Geography” [2016]:** A racy survey of how a nation state’s foreign policy is determined by its geographical location. To what extent are world leaders’ prisoners of their own geography when they determine foreign policy?
- **Tim Marshall “Divided – Why we’re Living in an age of Walls” (2018)**
- **Tim Marshall “Worth Dying For – The Power and Politics of Flags”(2016)**
- **Naomi Klein “No Logo” – (2010)**
- **Naomi Klein “The Shock Doctrine” (2008)**
- **Various authors “System Change not Climate Change” (2019)**
- **Joseph Stiglitz “Globalisation and its Discontents”:** Former World Bank vice president condemns the neo-liberal Washington consensus with the zeal of a convert.
- **Guy Verhofstadt “Europe’s Last Chance” [2017].** Powerful endorsement of quickening the pace of European integration so that European federalism regains the initiative.

- **Richard Haas “A World in Disarray”**: Powerful insight into contemporary politics by the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, “These are no ordinary times. It will not be business as usual in a world of disarray; as a result, it cannot be foreign policy as usual”.

Films

War and Conflict

- **Charlie Wilson’s War** – Soviet war in Afghanistan and how the Americans were involved in funding the Mujahedeen.
- **Fahrenheit 9/11** – conspiracy theories involving the Bush family and their relations with the Saudi government
- **JFK** – why JFK was shot and the conspiracy theories
- **13 Days** – the Cuban Missile Crisis
- **Black Hawk Down** – conflict in Somalia and US involvement
- **Apocalypse Now** – the Vietnam War (part of a trilogy)
- **The Quiet American** – Vietnam War
- **Heaven and Earth** – part of the *Apocalypse Now* trilogy but from a Vietnamese peasant’s point of view.
- **Platoon** – Vietnam War (again! Part 3 of the trilogy!)
- **Goodnight and Good Luck** – the McCarthy era in the USA and communist witch-hunts.
- **Michael Collins** – the IRA
- **The Wind that Shakes the Barley** – politics and tensions in Ireland
- **Tea with Mussolini** – fascism in Italy
- **Che** – two films about the communist revolution in Cuba and the attempted overthrow of Bolivia
- **Motorcycle Diaries**

Poverty and Development

- **The Constant Gardener** – the pharmaceutical industry in Kenya and selling drugs at high rates
- **Syrina** – the oil industry and the ways in which people from LEDCs are exploited
- **Blood Diamond** – Funding of Civil Wars by selling diamonds for guns (links to conflict)

Human Rights and Humanitarian Intervention

- **Hotel Rwanda** – the genocide in Rwanda
- **Shooting Dogs** – the Rwandan genocide
- **Black Hawk Down** – conflict in Somalia and US involvement
- **The Killing Fields** – genocide in Cambodia
- **The Year of Living Dangerously** –
- **Salvador** – American intervention in South American politics
- **The Last King of Scotland** – Human Rights abuses in Uganda under Idi Amin’s dictatorship
- **Milk** – about gay rights in America
- **Persephone** – a story about the problems in Iran
- **Waltz with Bashir** – how changes to the leadership in Iran affected people

Environmental Issues

- **An Inconvenient Truth** – Al Gore’s take on the impact of climate change
- **The Day After Tomorrow** – What could ‘potentially’ happen if climate change continues.
- **Children of Men** – the impact of everyone in the world becoming infertile.

Journals

The Economist: very serious journalism with unrivalled global coverage.

Foreign Affairs: Iconic political journal: many of the “great” political theories, such as Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilisations” first appeared in Foreign Affairs.

The New Statesman: Left wing critique of domestic and global politics: usually sensible and non-ideological. Essential reading.

The Spectator: Right wing critique of domestic and global politics: never sensible and highly ideological. Essential reading.

Politics Review – available at HWS

Documentaries

Adam Curtis “The Power of Nightmares” / “Bitter Lake”. [DVD / You Tube]

Errol Morris “The Fog of War”: Eleven lessons from the life of Robert S McNamara [DVD]

Articles to get you started

What is the W.H.O and why has Trump stopped funding it?

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/15/world-health-organization-why-has-trump-suspended-funding>.

We will come through this together – United Nations Secretary General -

<https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/covid-19-we-will-come-through-together>

The Coronavirus is killing globalisation as we know it -

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/12/coronavirus-killing-globalization-nationalism-protectionism-trump/>

Global treaty needed to protect states from pandemics, say world leaders

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/30/global-treaty-needed-to-protect-states-from-pandemics-say-world-leaders>

The dangers of vaccine nationalism

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/22/worlds-poor-need-action-not-covid-vaccine-nationalism-say-experts>

Also follow Ms Birnie’s Twitter – HWSPolitics for global news and views.

Global Politics

The global politics course is based on the comparative theories of both Realism and Liberalism, which provide two contrasting interpretations of international relations. These two theories are specifically examined in Section B although you need to apply these theories throughout to be synoptic.

Reflect back on the last year of COVID 19. How has the global community reacted to the biggest collective dilemma that the world has faced since WW2. Read some of the articles as to what the global community is doing collectively (Liberalism) or where are nation states putting their own self interest first?

Global Politics and Covid-19. How is the global community resolving this collective dilemma?	
Realism in Practice	Liberalism in Practice
Where is there evidence that nation states and leaders have focused more on their own interests and have disregarded/refused to cooperate with other nation states and institutions of global governance (e.g. The World Health Organisation part of the United Nations) to solve this collective dilemma?	Where is there evidence that nation states and leaders have cooperated with other nation states and non-state global actors (for instance the United Nations, IMF and World Bank) to collectively solve this collective dilemma?
<i>Trump as leader of the USA, has announced that the USA will now withhold funding to the W.H.O.</i>	<i>The WHO is meeting with leaders from the G20 countries to co-ordinate the global production and supply of PPE for frontline medical staff globally to save lives.</i>

Keywords

Realism: A theory of global politics, which regard nation-states as the central actors in international relations. Since nation-states pursue self-interest and there is no authority greater than the nation-state that can force stability, this means that international relations tend towards conflict

Liberalism: A theory of global politics, which is based on an optimistic interpretation of human beings' capacity for cooperation. Nation-states are not simply power-maximisers. Instead, they can work together and with intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, to resolve collective dilemmas and achieve beneficial outcomes.

Collective Dilemma – Problems that cannot be solved by a nation-state on its own within its own borders, but requires cooperation across the global community to resolve collectively – e.g. climate change or coronavirus.