Cornwallis Academy
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Year 12 Politics

UK Politics - Democracy & Participation & Political Parties

Learning Objectives

- AO1 - Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of political institutions, processes, concepts, theories and issues.
- AO2 - Analyse aspects of politics and political information, including in relation to parallels, connections, similarities and differences.
- AO3 - Evaluate aspects of politics and political information, including to construct arguments, make substantiated judgements and draw conclusions.

What previous knowledge is required?

This is the introduction to A Level Politics.

How will this term's content help with future learning?

These topics prepare students for the examination Paper 1 of the A Level.

Common Misconceptions:

Democracy & Participation

- **"The UK is a direct democracy."**
  Students often confuse referendums with direct democracy. The UK is primarily a **representative democracy**, with citizens usually electing representatives to make decisions on their behalf.
- **"Higher voter turnout always means democracy is healthier."**
  Whilst turnout is an important indicator, democratic health also depends on factors such as political engagement, participation opportunities, rights, freedoms, and electoral fairness.

*** "Political parties only exist to win elections."**

Although seeking power is central, parties also perform functions such as policy formulation, political representation, recruitment of leaders, and educating voters.

***"The three main UK parties are clearly divided by ideology."**

Students may overstate ideological differences. In reality, major parties can move towards the centre ground, adopt similar policies, or contain diverse ideological factions within the same party.

National Curriculum / Specification

Democracy & Participation

1.1 Current systems of representative democracy and direct democracy.

- The features of direct democracy and representative democracy.
- The similarities and differences between direct democracy and representative democracy.
- Advantages and disadvantages of direct democracy and representative democracy and consideration of the case for reform.

1.2 A wider franchise and debates over suffrage.

- Key milestones in the widening of the franchise in relation to class, gender, ethnicity and age, including the 1832 Great Reform Act and the 1918, 1928 and 1969 Representation of the People Acts.
- The work of the suffragists/suffragettes to extend the franchise. The work of a current movement to extend the franchise.

Political Parties

2.1 Political parties.

- The functions and features of political parties in the UK's representative democracy.
- How parties are currently funded and debates on the consequences of the current funding system.

2.2 Established political parties.

- The origins and historical development of the Conservative Party, the Labour Party and Liberal Democrat Party, and how this has shaped their ideas and current policies on the economy, law and order, welfare and foreign affairs.

Core Political Ideas (Conservatism / Socialism / Liberalism) & thinkers

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What previous knowledge is required?

Basic grounding in political terms gained from start of the course

How will this term's content help with future learning?

These topics prepare students for the examination Paper 1 of the A Level.

Common Misconceptions

Conservatism

- **"Conservatives always oppose change."**
  Conservatism supports **gradual, pragmatic change,** when necessary, not change for its own sake.
- **"All Conservatives support a minimal state."**
  One-Nation Conservatives often favour **state intervention** to maintain social cohesion.
- **"Conservatism is a single, unified ideology."**
  There are divisions between **Traditional, One-Nation and New Right** conservatism.

Socialism

- **"Socialism means everyone earns the same amount."**
  Socialists focus on **reducing inequality**, not necessarily complete equality of income.
- **"All socialists want revolution."**
  Many socialists, especially **social democrats**, favour gradual reform through democracy.
- **"Socialism and communism are the same thing."**
  Socialism is a broad ideology with many strands, whilst communism is a more specific and radical branch.

National Curriculum / Specification

Conservatism 1.1 - traditional conservative – commitment to hierarchical and paternalistic values
• one-nation conservative – updating of traditional conservatism in response to the emergence of capitalism
• New Right – the marriage of neo-liberal and neoconservative ideas and include:
neo-liberal: principally concerned with free-market economics and atomistic individualism.
neo-conservative: principally concerned with the fear of social fragmentation, tough on law and order and public Morality.

Liberalism 1.2
Core ideas and principles of liberalism and how they relate to human nature, the state, society and the economy:
• individualism – the primacy of the individual in society over any group – to cover egoistical individualism and developmental individualism

• freedom/liberty – the ability and right to make decisions in your own interests based on your view of human nature – to cover how liberals guarantee individual freedom, the link between freedom and individualism, that freedom is 'under the law'
• state – it is 'necessary' to avoid disorder, but 'evil' as it has potential to remove individual liberty, thus should be limited; this is linked to the liberal view of the economy
• rationalism – the belief that humans are rational creatures, capable of reason and logic – to cover how rationalism underpins an individual's ability to define
their own best interests and make their own moral choices, creating a progressive society.
• equality/social justice – the belief that individuals are of equal value and that they should be treated impartially and fairly by society – to cover foundational and formal
equality, and equality of opportunity
• liberal democracy – a democracy that balances the will of the people, as shown through elections, with limited government (state) and a respect for civil liberties in
society – to cover why liberals support it as well as why they are concerned about it.

Socialism 1.3
Core ideas and principles of socialism and how they relate to human nature, the state, society and the economy:
• collectivism – to cover how collective human effort is both of greater practical value to the economy and moral value to society than the effort of individuals
• common humanity – to cover the nature of humans as social creatures with a tendency to co-operation, sociability and rationality, and how the individual cannot be understood without reference to society, as human behaviour is socially determined
• equality – is a fundamental value of socialism – to cover the disagreements among socialists about the nature of equality and how it is critical to the state, society, economy and human nature
• social class – a group of people in society who have the same socioeconomic status – to cover the extent to which class impacts on socialists' views of society, the state and the economy
• workers' control − to cover the importance and the extent of control over the economy and/or state and how it is to be achieved

Non-Core Idea - Ecologism & thinkers

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What previous knowledge is required?

Knowledge of political parties within the UK

How will this term's content help with future learning?

This topic prepares students for the examination Paper 2 of the A Level.

Common Misconceptions

Ecologism

- **"Ecologism is the same as environmentalism."**
  Ecologism seeks a **fundamental reorganisation of society**, while environmentalism generally works within existing systems.
- **"All ecologists oppose economic growth."**
  Some strands support **sustainable development**, while others advocate **zero or negative growth**.

- **"Ecologism is a single, unified ideology."**

  There are differences between **shallow/deep ecology** and **reformist/radical** approaches.

Specification

Ecologism 2.2

Ecologism is a reaction against the process of industrialisation and urbanisation. It promotes sustainability and believes that a fulfilling existence needs to be based on a radical altering of our relationship with non-human nature and our social and political life.

There are three content areas for this option:

1. Ecologism: core ideas and principles
2. Different types of ecologism
3. Ecologist thinkers and their ideas.

1. Core ideas and principles of ecologism and how they relate to human nature, the state, society and the economy:

• ecology – to cover the extent to which the study of the relationship between living beings and the environment has implications for deep- and shallow-green views of the state, society and the economy
• holism – to cover the opposition to the mechanistic world view of post-Enlightenment science that dominates the state and society in its view of the non-human world and the economy
• environmental ethics − developing new moral standards and values for human relations with each other and the non-human world, which will underpin the state, society and economy – to cover the nature of ethics and how far they extend.
• environmental consciousness – a state of being where one's sense of self is fully realised by a deep identification with the non-human world – to cover the extent to which there needs to be a radical change in human nature and society.
• post-materialist and anti-consumerism – to cover the criticisms of materialism and consumerism and how to move beyond them

Electoral Systems / Voting Behaviour

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What previous knowledge is required?

Knowledge of the key vocabulary outlined at the start of the course

How will this term's content help with future learning?

This topic prepares students for the examination Paper 1 of the A Level.

Common Misconceptions

Electoral Systems

- **"Proportional representation always produces fair outcomes."**

  PR can improve proportionality but may lead to coalition governments and weaken constituency links.
- **"FPTP always gives the winning party majority public support."**

  Parties often win parliamentary majorities without receiving over 50% of the national vote.

Voting Behaviour

- **"People vote only because of social class."**
  Class remains important, but factors such as age, leadership, issues, and the media also influence voting.
- **"Voting behaviour never changes."**
  Party dealignment and partisan realignment mean voting patterns can shift significantly over time

National Curriculum / Specification

Electoral Systems 1.3

Different electoral systems. First-past-the-post (FPTP), Additional Member System (AMS), Single Transferable Vote (STV), and Closed Proportional List System (CPLS).
• The advantages and disadvantages of these different systems. 3.2 Referendums and how they are used.
• The case for and against referendums in a representative democracy.
• How referendums have been used in the UK and their impact on UK political life since 1997. 3.3 Electoral system analysis.
• Debates on why different electoral systems are used in the UK.
• The impact of different electoral systems on voter choice, party representation and the government or type of government appointed.

Voting Behaviour 1.4

Case studies of three key general elections.
• Case studies of three elections (one from the period 1945 92, the 1997 election, and one since 1997), the results and their impact on parties and government.
• The factors that explain the outcomes of these elections, including: the reasons for and impact of party policies and manifestos, techniques used in their election campaigns, leadership, and the wider political context of the elections o class-based voting and other factors influencing voting patterns, such as partisanship and voting attachment o gender, age, ethnicity and region as factors in influencing voting behaviour, turnout and trends.
• Analysis of the national voting-behaviour patterns for these elections, revealed by national data sources and how and why they vary.

The Constitution

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What previous knowledge is required?

Understanding of key words / terms from earlier in Year 12 learning

How will this term's content help with future learning?

This topic prepares students for the examination Paper 2 of the A Level.

Common Misconceptions

- **"The UK has a codified constitution like the USA."**
  The UK has an **uncodified constitution**, made up of various sources including statutes, conventions, and common law.
- **"Parliamentary sovereignty means Parliament has no limits."**
  Although Parliament is legally sovereign, its actions can be constrained politically by public opinion, conventions, devolution, and international commitments.

National Curriculum / Specification
2.1 The nature and sources of the UK Constitution, including: • an overview of the development of the Constitution through key historical documents: o Magna Carta (1215); Bill of Rights (1689); Act of Settlement (1701); Acts of Union (1707); Parliament Acts (1911 and 1949) • the nature of the UK Constitution: unentrenched, uncodified and unitary, and the 'twin pillars' of parliamentary sovereignty and the rule of law • the five main sources of the UK Constitution: statute law; common law; conventions; authoritative works, and treaties. 1.2 How the constitution has changed since 1997. • Under Labour 1997–2010: House of Lords reforms, electoral reform; devolution; Human Rights Act 1998; and the Supreme Court. • Major reforms to the constitution since 2010, to include the House of Lords, devolution, electoral reform and human rights. 1.3 The role and powers of devolved bodies in the UK, and the impact of this devolution on the UK. • Devolution in England. • Scottish Parliament and Government. • Welsh Assembly (Senedd) and Government. • Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive. 1.4 Debates on further reform. • An overview of the extent to which the individual reforms since 1997 listed in section 1.2 above have been successful or should be taken further. • The extent to which devolution should be extended in England. • Whether the UK constitution should be changed to be entrenched and codified, including a bill of rights.