



Year 11 > 12 Bridging Work Summer Term 2026



Subject	Politics
Course	A-Level
Awarding Body	Edexcel/Pearson



Course/specification overview

[Edexcel AS & A level Politics \(2017\) | Pearson qualifications](#)



Review/revise

The aims and objectives of this qualification are to enable students to:

- develop knowledge and an informed understanding of contemporary political structures and issues in their historical context, both within the United Kingdom (UK) and globally
- develop a critical awareness of the changing nature of politics and the relationships between political ideas, institutions and processes
- develop knowledge and an informed understanding of the influences and interests which have an impact on decisions in government and politics
- develop knowledge and an informed understanding of the rights and responsibilities of individuals and groups
- develop the ability to critically analyse, interpret and evaluate political information to form arguments and make judgements
- develop an interest in, and engagement with, contemporary politics.

Skills

- Students must comprehend and interpret political information in relation to areas of UK politics and core political ideas.
- Students must fully understand, and critically analyse and evaluate areas of UK politics and core political ideas.
- Students must identify parallels, connections, similarities and differences between content studied, providing a basis for comparing the UK with the USA and appreciating the UK's position in global politics.
- Students must construct and communicate arguments and explanations with relevance, clarity and coherence, and draw reasoned conclusions about UK politics and core political ideas.
- Students must develop knowledge and understanding of key political concepts. The content supports these skills by presenting the main content for learning in the righthand side of the content tables.
- Students must use appropriate political vocabulary.



Watch

This list is intended to be a suggested guide to films, documentaries and dramas which will enrich your subject knowledge ahead of starting the course. Do not feel you need to watch them all!

1. BBC Documentary Series- Inside the Commons <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6o8rtl>
2. BBC Documentary Series- Meet the Lords <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6nz0qx>
3. BBC Documentary Series- The Cameron Years
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/m0008kk7/the-cameron-years>
4. BBC Documentary Series- Thatcher: A Very British Revolution
<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7am1i8>
5. BBC Documentary Series- Andrew Marr's The Making of Modern Britain
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRJ1E9Ai2E>
6. BBC Documentary Series- The Wilderness Years Labour 1979-1995
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XrO72C1WQ0>
7. BBC Drama Series- The Project (dramatization of New Labour)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gzO5Re9nwlo>
8. BBC Documentary Series- Steve Richard's Reflections on British Prime Ministers
<https://www.youtube.com/user/steverichards14/videos>
9. BBC Documentary Cabinet Confidential https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdAhvOD1_hc
10. Inside the White House (1995) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1lf5NvFidM>
11. Fahrenheit 9/11 (2004)
12. The Iron Lady (2011)
13. The Queen (2006)
14. BBC Question Time
15. The Politics Show with Andrew Neill
16. The Andrew Marr Show
17. All the Presidents Men (1976)
18. Get Me Roger Stone, Netflix Documentary (2019)
19. Thirteen Days (2000)
20. Selma (2014)



Listen to

This list is intended to be a suggested guide to podcasts which will enrich your subject knowledge ahead of starting the course. The suggestion is to listen to one or two episodes ahead of starting the course. Do not feel you need to listen to them all!

1. [Talking Politics](#)
2. [Stitcher – A-level politics podcast](#)
3. [Beyond Westminster](#)
4. [BBC politics podcasts](#)
5. [The Westminster Hour](#)
6. [Politics.co.uk podcasts](#)
7. [Guardian ‘politics weekly’ podcasts](#)
8. [US – KCRW – Left, Right & Center](#)

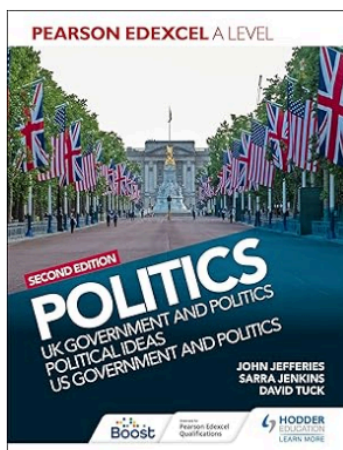


Read

This list is intended to be a suggested guide to some books which will enrich your subject knowledge ahead of starting the course. Do not feel you need to read them all!

1. David Cameron, For the Record (2019)
2. Anthony King, Who Governs Britain? (2015)
3. Barack Obama, Dreams from My Father (1995) The Audacity of Hope (2006)
4. James Poniewozok, An Audience of One: Donald Trump, Television and the Fracturing of America (2020)
5. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The Communist Manifesto (1848)
6. Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790)
7. Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792)
8. John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (1971)
9. Anthony Giddens, The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy (1997)
10. Emma Goldman, Anarchism and other essays (1910)
11. Reni Eddo-Lodge, Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race (2017)

It is very strongly recommended that you buy a copy of this book:



Roll over image to zoom in

Read sample

Pearson Edexcel A Level Politics 2nd edition: UK Government and Politics, Political Ideas and US Government and Politics Paperback – 31 Mar. 2023

by David Tuck (Author), Sarra Jenkins (Author), John Jefferies (Author)

4.1 ★★★★★ 26 ratings

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- Includes all core and non-core political ideas, with key thinkers integrated throughout the text
- Builds confidence by highlighting key terms and explaining links between different topics in the specification
- Provides opportunities to test your progress with quick knowledge-check questions.
- Develops analysis and evaluation skills with 'stretch and challenge' activities and suggestions for targeted further reading.
- Features practice questions with answer guidance online at www.hoddereducation.co.uk.

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ISBN-10



1398369160

ISBN-13



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Hodder Education

Publication date



31 Mar. 2023

Language



English



It covers all material that you will learn in both Years 12 and 13 and will be hugely valuable for revision. Second hand copies are available on Amazon, eBay etc.



Research

**This task needs to be completed and brought to the first lesson
at the start of term**

Complete this table researching the key details about the following general elections

	Voter turnout %	Party which formed the government	No. of Conservative Seats	% Conservative Party share of votes	No of Labour Party Seats	% Labour Party share of Votes	No of Liberal Democrat Seats	% Liberal Democrat share of votes
2024								
2019								
2017								
2015								
2010								
2005								
2001								

1997								
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Complete

This task needs to be completed and brought to the first lesson at the start of term

Your task is to read through the information below about direct democracy and representative democracy. In particular you are looking for the following information:

- What is direct democracy? How does it work? Where and when do we see it in the world today?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of direct democracy?
- What is representative democracy? How does it work? Where and when do we see it in the world today?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of representative democracy?

Then using the information that you have been given, we would ask that you write an essay of no more than two sides answering the question:

Evaluate the view that direct democracy is more desirable and effective than representative democracy

Essay Success Criteria

- Clear introduction where you outline the points you are going to be and give your judgement on the question.
- Balanced answer- look at both sides of the question
- Use developed paragraphs in your answer
- Conclusion where you return to your overall judgment and justify/explain it.

The essay needs to be brought to your first lesson of the new term- either typed or hand written is fine.

Reading to support written task

The Greek philosopher Plato believed that 'the people' would not respect decisions made by their peers, i.e. what many think of as the process of 'democracy'. For Plato, it was desirable that people should be ruled by their superiors. Authority granted to a leader, he thought, would be more respected than popular decision making. Lack of respect would lead to disorder. Furthermore, left to making their own decisions, people would fall prey to rabble rousers and demagogues. Plato also noted that democracy treats everyone as equal, in terms of knowledge and understanding, when, in reality, they are not equal.

The democratic process continues to prove problematic. Concerned voices are growing louder, voices suggesting that representative democracy is failing many sections of society, that it serves the interests of the majority and leaves minorities behind. This has led to new calls for the return of popular democracy, including referendums. Populist leaders have emerged all over the democratic world, telling us that democracy is no longer working.

Even so, democracy remains a popular form of government. It is assumed in most of the world to be a 'good thing'. The question remains, however, what form of democracy is most desirable?

The history of democracy in the UK has been concerned with how to convert the political system from being the preserve of an elite to being a popular exercise in which the mass of the people can take part in an orderly manner. In practical terms, this has meant spreading democratic practice by extending the franchise, by improving the extent and accountability of representative democracy and by introducing elements of direct democracy through the increasing use of referendums and digital democracy. This chapter will explore the nature of these developments.

Plato (wearing red) in
Raphael's fresco 'The School
of Athens'

Two forms of democracy

Direct democracy

We normally divide the concept of democracy into two main types. These are **direct democracy** and **representative democracy**. Direct democracy was how the idea was first conceived in ancient Greece, mainly in the city state of Athens in the fifth century BC. Hence it is sometimes described as 'Athenian democracy'.

The assembled free citizens would make important decisions, such as whether the state should go to war or whether a prominent citizen who had committed anti-state acts should be exiled. Laws were also made in this way, and the officials who ran the state were elected in the same fashion. In between examples of direct democracy, therefore, a form of representative democracy took over, running the day-to-day affairs of the state. But it is the direct form of democracy that we tend to remember today.

After Athenian democracy declined in the fourth century BC, direct democracy, with a few exceptions, disappeared as a democratic form until the nineteenth century. The Swiss have used forms of direct democracy throughout their history and still use it extensively to this day, but the idea did not spread. Some communities in the early life of the USA conducted local government by direct democracy (largely through 'town meetings') but these were also rare exceptions.

Today direct democracy has returned in the form of the referendum, now relatively common in Europe and some states of the USA. However, direct democracy cannot replace representative democracy completely. Rather, it is an *addition* to representative democracy. Some decisions are considered so vital, and also so unsuitable for representatives to make them, that they are left to the people.

Direct democracy has its critics as well as its supporters. Table 1.1 summarises the main advantages and disadvantages of direct democracy.

Key terms

Direct democracy A form of democracy where the people themselves make key decisions. In modern societies this usually takes the form of holding referendums.

Representative democracy A form of democracy where the people elect or somehow choose representatives who make political decisions on their behalf. It also implies that representatives are accountable for what they do.

Table 1.1 Direct democracy – is it desirable?

Advantages	Disadvantages
It is the purest form of democracy. The people's voice is clearly heard.	It can lead to the 'tyranny of the majority', whereby the winning majority simply ignores the interests of the minority. Elected representatives can mediate between the interests of the majority and minorities.
It can avoid delay and deadlock within the political system.	The people may be too easily swayed by short-term, emotional appeals by charismatic individuals. (The great philosopher Plato criticised direct democracy on these grounds.)
The fact that people are making a decision gives it great legitimacy.	Some issues may be too complex for the ordinary citizen to understand.

Representative democracy

Representative democracy is the most common model to be found in the democratic world today.

The basis of this type of democracy is that the people do not make political decisions but, instead, choose representatives to make decisions on their behalf. The most common way of choosing representatives is to elect them. (In parts of ancient Greece, representatives of the people were sometimes chosen through a lottery!) Indeed, if representatives are not elected, it calls democracy into question. Elections are, in other words, what we first think of when we consider representation. But it is not only elections that characterise representative democracy. Those elected also need to be accountable.

Key term

Accountability This means that those who have been elected in a representative democracy must be made responsible for their policies, actions, decisions and general conduct. Without such accountability, representation becomes largely meaningless.

Accountability is essential if representatives are to act responsibly and in the interests of the people. It is at election time that accountability is most striking. Both individual representatives, such as MPs in the UK, and the government as a whole are held accountable when the people go to the polls. During the election campaign, opposition parties will highlight the shortcomings of the government and will offer their own alternatives. At the same time the government will seek to explain and justify what it has done in an effort to be re-elected. Similarly, individual representatives will be held to account for their performance — how well they have represented their constituents and whether their voting record in the legislature meets the approval of those same constituents. In between elections accountability is less certain. The legislature can hold government to account regularly, but the individual representatives are normally safe until the next election.

Having said that representatives in a democracy will be elected and will be accountable, we need to explain the concept of representation in general. It can have different forms and meanings.

Social representation

Social representation implies that the characteristics of members of representative bodies, whether they be national parliaments, regional assemblies or local councils, should be broadly in line with the characteristics of the population as a whole. In other words, they should be close to a *microcosm* of society as a whole. For example, close to half should be women, a proportion should be drawn from ethnic or religious minorities and there should be a good range of ages and class backgrounds in representative bodies. Of course this is difficult to achieve and the UK Parliament certainly falls short. This is explored further below when we discuss the state of representative democracy in the UK specifically.

Representing the national interest

Though representatives may be elected locally or regionally, if they sit in the national Parliament they are expected to represent the interests of the nation as a whole. Sometimes this may clash with the local constituency they represent, so they have to resolve the issue in their own way. For example, an MP representing a constituency near a major airport may be under pressure to oppose further expansion on the grounds of noise and pollution, but may see it as in the *national* interest to expand that airport. Fortunately not all issues concerning the national interest cause such a dilemma. For example, foreign policy issues usually do not have local effects.



Local MP Zac Goldsmith protesting against the third runway at Heathrow Airport

Constituency representation

The locality that elects a representative in UK national politics is known as a constituency. In other countries different names are given. In the USA, for example, congressmen and women represent congressional districts. Wherever this kind of representation exists, though, it concerns *local* interests. It can imply three things:

1. It can mean representing the interests of the constituency *as a whole*. Should the building of a new railway be opposed? How can funds be extracted from central government for the redevelopment of a town centre? Will high levels of immigration into the area adversely affect the social balance? These are all examples of the kind of issue that might arise locally.
2. It can also mean representing the interests of *individual* constituents. This is often described as the **redress of grievances**. Has a constituent been unfairly treated by a public body such as the NHS or the taxation authorities? Is an asylum seeker not receiving a fair and speedy hearing? Has a person been the victim of a miscarriage of justice? These are typical examples dealt with by elected representatives.
3. Finally, it can simply mean that a representative listens to the views of his or her constituents when deciding about a national issue. This can lead to another dilemma. What happens if the elected representative does not personally agree with the majority of the constituents? This becomes a matter of conscience that has to be resolved by the individual concerned. This often occurred during the EU referendum campaign.

Party representation

All modern democracies are characterised by the existence of political parties. Furthermore, the vast majority of those seeking and winning election are members of a political party. It is unusual in modern democracies to find many examples of *independent* representatives who do not belong to a party. Parties have stated policies. At election time these are contained in a **manifesto**. It follows that members of a party who are seeking to be elected will campaign on the basis of the party's manifesto. This means that they are representing their party and the voters understand that they are.

Activity

Find out which parliamentary constituency you live in. Access the site of the local MP. What local issues are currently prominent in your area?

Key terms

Redress of grievances

The practice, adopted by many elected representatives, of taking up the case of an individual constituent who feels they have suffered an injustice, usually at the hands of government or an agency of the state.

Manifesto A statement of a party's agreed policies produced during an election campaign to inform the public about the political platform upon which its candidates are standing. Candidates for the party are expected to support the manifesto and usually do so in the UK, though there may be exceptions.

It should be said that, in the UK, candidates for election do generally adhere closely to the party manifesto. In some political systems, notably the USA, party candidates may vary in their political stance from their party's manifesto or agreed policies. In such cases party representation is weaker.

Functional representation

This refers to the fact that some elected representatives will represent not only their constituency or region, but also a particular occupational or social group. For example, those who support and are supported by trade unions will often pursue the cause of groups of workers; others may represent professions such as doctors or teachers. This function can also apply to social groups such as the elderly, those with disabilities, members of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community or low-income groups. Of course, groups like this are also represented by interest groups that may be *outside* the parliamentary system, but functional representation can still flourish within elected legislative bodies.

Causal representation

Here representative bodies are not representing people so much as ideas, principles and causes. In a sense this represents the *whole* community, in that the beliefs and demands involved are claimed to benefit everyone, not just a particular group in society. Typical causes concern environmental protection, individual rights and freedoms, greater equality and animal rights. Though elected representatives often support such causes and principles, most causal representation is carried out by pressure groups.

Debate

Which is more desirable and effective: direct or representative democracy?

Advantages of direct democracy

- It is the purest form of democracy. It is the voice of the people.
- Decisions made directly by the people will have more authority.
- Decisions made by the people are more difficult to be changed or cancelled by future governments.
- Direct democracy can help educate the people about political issues.

Advantages of representative democracy

- Elected representatives may have better judgement than the mass of the people.
- Elected representatives may be more rational and not swayed by emotion.
- Representatives can protect the interests of minorities.
- Elected representatives may be better informed than the general public.



Appendices/resources

Learning Resources for Students

- <https://learning.parliament.uk/resources/>
- <https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/a-level/subjects/politics/>
- <https://www.tutor2u.net/politics>

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