

# SUMMER PREPARATORY WORK

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AS LEVEL POLITICS

Central  
Saint Michael's  
Sixth Form

A UNIVERSITY STYLE SIXTH FORM

# A Level Politics

## Bridging the Gap.

*This job is a lot harder than I expected...*



Welcome to Politics at Central Saint Michael's Sixth Form! This is your 'Bridging the Gap' task for A level Politics, which you've chosen to take at A level this September. The pack is designed to give you a flavour of what A level Politics is all about. The pack will introduce you to some core political concepts and events, to aid your understanding of politics ready for sixth form. You will also be set an independent research project. The work in these packs will take a long time, so you can break it up. Don't feel you need to complete it all in one go! You can complete the tasks in this booklet in the spaces provided or type them up separately.

You will need to bring your completed work along with you when you start sixth form in September.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me on [Matthew.Lamb@sandwell.ac.uk](mailto:Matthew.Lamb@sandwell.ac.uk)

A Level course outline		
<b>First Year (AS and A Level): UK Politics</b>	<b>First and Second years (A Level): Ideologies</b>	<b>Second year (A Level): US Politics</b>
UK Constitution, Parliament & Prime Minister	Liberalism	US Constitution, Congress & Presidency
UK Democracy	Conservatism	US Democracy
UK Parties	Socialism	US Parties
UK Elections & Voting	Nationalism	US Elections & Voting

# A Level Politics.

*'Man is a political animal'* (Aristotle)

## Politics will suit students who:

- Have an interest in the world around them: who want to know more about the society they live in, how it works and how it could work,
- Enjoy debate, discussion and argument: who are comfortable with the fact that in politics there are no simple 'rights' or 'wrongs',
- Like to think for themselves: who wants to develop their own views, rather than accept the views of others.
- Politics will be a new subject to the majority of you and therefore you may see it as an opportunity to do something fresh and new, an enriching experience in itself.
- It is particularly important that you have an enquiring mind, a desire to learn about how the political system works and its impact on you, the citizen.

*"Just because you do not take an interest in politics, doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you."* – attributed to Pericles, 5th century BC

## The skills you will develop studying politics:

- Knowledge and understanding of basic political ideas, concepts, structures and processes, the relationship between them and how they work at different levels.
- An ability to interpret and analyse political information in various forms and from various sources, and to apply a range of political ideas concepts and theories.
- An ability to evaluate arguments, theories, values and ideologies to explain political behaviour and suggest solutions to controversial issues.
- The skills to organise and present an argument with relevance, clarity and coherence using good English.

## How will you be successful on this course?

You will need to take an interest in current affairs and political issues.

This will involve:

- Reading a QUALITY newspaper (such as The Times, Guardian, Telegraph or their Sunday equivalent); magazines and specific politics journals such as Politics Review as well as the set textbooks.
- Watching current affairs programmes such as Panorama, Despatches etc. and specific politics programmes such as 'A Week in Politics'.
- Watching the news or listening to 'Today' on Radio 4.
- Discussing and debating political issues with both fellow politics students and others
- Keeping a scrapbook of press cuttings on politics and issues

But interest alone is not enough!

The work will be hard and challenging. If you don't do independent reading & research you WILL be left behind. The jump from GCSE to A level is probably bigger than from A level to undergraduate.

You will be given a variety of tasks such as reading, research, stimulus response questions and essays.

# Task One: What is Politics?

*“Politics is the study of how a people, a nation or a state is governed.”*

When most people think of politics, they think of old, wealthy men (sometimes women, and only sometimes ethnic minorities) in offices, making deals that will affect millions of people, just for personal gain. And it's true that some decisions are made that way, but politics is much more than that.

Politics is about power, about people, equality, war, conflict, debate, cooperation, freedom, money, etc. – it's about the relationship between the state (the government) and its citizens, or the state and other states. It governs everything we can and will do in our lives.

One of the reasons politics is so exciting is that it changes every single day based on the actions of individuals. If just one out of every 50 people who voted to leave the EU had voted differently, we wouldn't have left. Each individual vote is vital, and yet 28% of all the people who could vote and registered to vote in that referendum didn't turn out on June 23<sup>rd</sup>. It would take just a small number of them to change the result.

**Your first task is to help you garner an understanding of what Politics is really all about.** Use the internet (e.g. Wikipedia, YouTube and other sources) to research and understand what the following key terms mean and create a short definition or explanation for each *in your own words*.

You are welcome to try to get your families involved in this – they may have some understanding of these concepts already! The most important thing in an A level is your understanding – so it's not about having the “right” or “word-perfect” definition, it's about you understanding what a concept means 😊

Term	Explanation/Definition
Power	
Authority	
Legitimacy	
Government	
Politics	
Civil society	
Executive branch	
Prime minister	

Cabinet	
Legislative branch	
Parliament	
House of Commons	
House of Lords	
Judicial branch	
Supreme Court (UK – not US!)	
Rule of Law	
Westminster Model	
Elective dictatorship	
Direct democracy	
Representative democracy	
Sovereignty	
Parliamentary sovereignty	
Referendum (UK – not US!)	
Constitutional monarchy	
Fusion of powers	

Separation of powers	
Devolution	
Labour Party	
Conservative Party	
Liberal Democrats	
Brexit Party	
Presidency (USA)	
Congress (USA)	
Constitution (USA)	
Checks & Balances (USA)	
Supreme Court (USA)	
Republican Party (USA)	
Democratic Party (USA)	
Liberalism (Ideology)	
Conservatism (Ideology)	
Socialism (Ideology)	
Nationalism (Ideology)	

# Task Two: British Politics

Go to these links here for the UK's three major parties:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2019-50524262>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2019-50501411>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2019-50459123>

These links summarise their key manifesto policies in the 2019 general election, which you may remember voting in at school. **I would like you to choose a few policies of your choose and explain below why you support OR do not support that policy.** You must choose at least 1 policy from each manifesto to discuss your agreement to or opposition to (therefore compulsory is to do 3) – if you want to extend yourself and go further, you can do more than 3 by copying and pasting the spaces I have provided.

Party: \_\_\_\_\_

Manifesto policy:

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Agree/disagree & why:

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Party: \_\_\_\_\_

Manifesto policy:

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Agree/disagree & why:

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Party: \_\_\_\_\_

Manifesto policy:

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Agree/disagree & why:

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**Next I want you to conduct some research into the role of your local MP.**

I would like you to find out who your local MP is and the following details about them:

MP's name:

Political party:

Constituency (the area they represent):

Areas they have a particular interest in:

And finally, look at their voting record (found here <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/> by clicking 'voting record') and jot down some ways in which they've voted in parliament. For example, my MP when I was at university, Julian Sturdy (Conservative) voted against laws to promote same-sex marriage, and voted for increasing VAT rates.



# Task Three: Making a Case

**Now I would like you to make a case for and against a particular issue.** Politics at A level will require you to make judgements about issues. Choose a political issue of your choice. A political issue is anything where there is a disagreement. Politics issues can be about whether something is right or wrong or whether scarce money should be spent on one thing or another.

Examples of political issues could include:

- Should drugs be legalized?
- Should immigration into the UK be easier or more difficult?
- Should voting be made compulsory?
- Should Britain have nuclear weapons?
- Should the voting age be reduced to 16?
- Should students have to pay to go to university?
- Should Britain have a monarchy?
- Should Britain have left the EU?

These are just some ideas. Choose a contentious (controversial) issue that you are passionate about or interested in. Anything with two sides to the argument could be used.

For example on the question “should the voting age be reduced from 18 to 16?” you could argue the following:

*“Some who think we should extend the vote to 16- and 17-year-olds say that it may lead them to understand political issues more if they have to research them. If under 18s have to make choices on issues like taxes, the NHS and the size of the army, they would have to research them, so this will improve their understanding and they will make good choices. However, this argument doesn’t hold water because over-18s as it is rarely research political issues – if we don’t have adults researching taxes, the NHS or the size of the army before elections why would we expect children to? Therefore, this is not a good argument for extending the vote to 16- and 17-year-olds.”*

**Task: Write 500 words on the topic of your choice. Set out what the issue is and consider briefly the arguments for and against. Make sure you consider both sides of the argument. Finish with a brief conclusion summing up what you think on the topic.**

This can be typed or hand written and you can use books, magazines, newspapers or the internet. Please indicate which sources that you have used at the end of your piece of writing.

## Have a good summer and I will see you in September!

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