

Politics

The aim of politics is to provide a conceptual foundation on which to construct political judgements. The course seeks to develop an awareness of the relationship between ideas and concepts and political institutions, and to encourage a critical understanding of political events and issues. Students will be made aware of the importance of arguing a case relevantly and analysing alternatives objectively. On a more general level, the course should assist in preparing students for citizenship. Previous students have gone on to study PPE at Oxford or politics at a variety of universities, including Edinburgh, Exeter and Durham. Politics has been successfully combined with both arts and sciences in the sixth form and has provided a good academic training for those wishing to study law at university.

The department prepares students for the examinations offered by Edexcel. The following is a summary of the focus of the three units of study. In politics the course is examined by 3 written examinations taken at the end of the U6th year.

Component 1

UK Politics

This component explores the nature of politics and how people engage in the political process in the UK. Students investigate in detail how people and politics interact. They explore the emergence and development of the UK's democratic system and the similarities, differences, connections and parallels between direct and indirect democracy. They focus on the role and scope of political parties that are so central to contemporary politics, including the significance of the manifestos they publish at election time and their relevance to the mandate of the resulting government. Students gain an understanding of the individual in the political process and their relationship with the state and their fellow citizens. They examine how electoral systems in the UK operate and how individuals and groups are influenced in the voting behaviour and political actions. The role of the media in contemporary politics is explored. In addition the core political ideas of Liberalism, Conservatism and Socialism are explored and students learn about how they apply in practice to human nature, the state, society and the economy, the divisions within each idea and their key thinkers.

Component 2

UK Government

This component enables students to understand where, how and by whom political decisions are made in the UK and to begin to make comparisons with other political systems. Students are introduced to the set of rules governing politics in the UK, the UK constitution, and consider how it differs to the constitutions around the world. The specific roles and powers of the major branches of government – legislative, executive, and judiciary, as well as the relationships and balance of power between them are explored along with the topical question of where sovereignty lies.

Component 3

Comparative Politics

This component allows students to explore the impact that the USA has had on the UK, European and global politics. They learn about the US Constitution and the arguments surrounding this guiding document of US

democracy. In learning about the key institutions of government in the USA and analysing the manner in which they achieve this power and exercise it over citizens, students are asked to judge whether 'liberty and justice for all' has been achieved in the USA.

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