Edexcel A Level Politics

***Vision statement**: The vision of the History department, which also includes the teaching of Politics, is 'Developing Enquiring Minds'.*

Intent: Curriculum Intent – Edexcel A Level Politics

Our Edexcel A Level Politics curriculum is designed to develop academically successful, intellectually curious and politically engaged students whose fascination with politics inspires many to pursue the discipline beyond A Level. Through the study of political institutions, ideologies, participation and contemporary issues, students develop a sophisticated understanding of the structures, ideas and debates that shape political life. They examine how power is distributed and exercised, how political decisions are made and contested, and how citizens can influence the political process.

Carefully sequenced learning builds secure knowledge across Edexcel's core content: UK Politics, UK Government, US Politics and Political Ideas. Students develop a secure and increasingly nuanced understanding of political concepts, institutions and processes, examining democracy, participation, constitutional arrangements, representation, accountability and governance. Comparative study of the UK and USA enables students to evaluate contrasting political systems, while the study of liberalism, conservatism, socialism and anarchism develops their understanding of competing perspectives on freedom, equality, authority and the role of the state. Across the course, increasingly complex political debates require students to make connections between ideas, evaluate competing interpretations and reach substantiated judgements.

Independent and critical thinking are developed through the interpretation of political information, evaluation of competing arguments and application of political concepts to contemporary events. Students learn to challenge assumptions, distinguish assertion from evidence and construct balanced, evidence-based arguments. Regular engagement with political developments ensures that theoretical knowledge remains connected to the changing political world.

Political literacy is further developed through sustained engagement with political debate, contemporary affairs and competing viewpoints. Students are expected to interrogate evidence, assess the reliability and significance of political claims, and communicate their ideas with accuracy, clarity and intellectual independence. Structured debate and extended analytical writing provide opportunities to test arguments, respond to alternative perspectives and refine judgements. Engagement with current political developments enables students to apply their knowledge beyond the classroom and develop a deeper understanding of the contested and evolving nature of political life.

Why study Politics at The Sixth Form at Ridgewood?

- The average ALPS grade achieved over the last four years has been a 4 ("very good")
- Students who take Politics invariably develop a lifelong passion for it; 62.5% of Politics students in 2021 went on to study Politics, or a related course, at university
- Politics students have the opportunity to join the school Debate Team; in 2019, the team won the prestigious Helena Kennedy competition hosted by Sheffield Hallam University. In 2020, the Ridgewood Team were in the lead before the competition was called off due to the pandemic.
- Take part in enrichment visits – we have recently been visited by Ed Miliband and a member of the House of Lords
- Studying Politics enables you to explore fascinating topics relevant to today's world

What topics will I study in this subject?

Topic	**What this means**
UK Politics	This absorbing topic explores the nature of politics, and how people engage in the political process in the UK. You will look at four sub-topics, and be able to answer the questions below: **Voting Behaviour and Media** How are voting habits formed? How have they changed over time? Do the media influence us? **Political Parties** What do parties stand for? **Electoral Systems** Is the public will distorted by the Electoral System in use? Is FPTP a valid system? **Democracy and Participation** Is the UK democratic? How do people engage in politics?

UK Government	This component is fundamental to understanding how the political system works in the UK, and considers where political power truly lies. Again, you will look at four sub-topics, and be able to answer the questions below: **The Constitution** What is the point of a Constitution? Is the UK's fit for purpose? **Parliament** What is the role of each chamber? How effective are they? **Prime Minister** How powerful is this office? Case Studies: Thatcher and Blair **Relations between branches** How important is the Supreme Court? What has been the impact of the EU? Where does power lie in the UK?
Ideologies	You will explore four key beliefs, which affect people's thoughts and actions: **Socialism** **Liberalism** **Conservatism** **Anarchism** What are these beliefs? How do they shape society? How united are each group?

USA	The final topic looks, in depth, at the similarities and differences between the US and UK political systems. You will study the topics below, and consider the answers to the questions listed: **Constitution** Is the US Constitution fit for purpose? **Judiciary** How powerful is the Court? What impact does the Court have? **Executive** How powerful is the President? Case Studies: Obama and Bush **Legislative** What are the roles of Congress? How effectively are they fulfilled? **Democracy and Participation** How democratic is the US system? What are the two main parties' beliefs? How influential are Interest Groups? **Comparative Theories** How similar are the US and UK Constitutions? How similar are the US and UK Legislatives? How similar are the US and UK Executives? How similar are the US and UK Judiciaries? How similar are the US and UK systems?

What skills will I need in this subject?

Skill	What this skill involves in this subject
Extended, analytical writing	You must be able to decode essay questions, and come up with points which precisely answer the question. You will then need to be able to apply specific evidence/examples to the demands of the question, to develop your argument.
Retaining knowledge	There are a lot of dates and examples to learn, and multiple topics to cover. It is important, therefore, that you are prepared to undertake regular retrieval practice within, and outside, lessons.
Engaging with current affairs	It is vital that you are watching the news, reading political websites, and engaging with political issues on Twitter to stay abreast of contemporary issues.

What will my lessons involve?

- The lessons are quite heavily teacher-led
- There is a quiz at the start of every lesson
- You will plan a lot of essay questions together
- You will do a piece of extended writing every other week in lessons
- You will participate verbally in discussions about contemporary issues, and course questions.

What will my independent study involve?

- Typing up, and consolidating, your notes from lessons
- Organising your folders
- Retrieval practice e.g. Brain Dumps
- Planning practice questions
- Writing questions to time – c. 45 minutes each

How will I be assessed?

Percentage exam assessment: 100%	Percentage coursework assessment: 0%

Assessment	**Details of assessment**
Exam: Paper 1 (UK Politics)	One exam, 2 hours, worth 33.3% of overall mark One source question, which takes 50 minutes, worth 30 marks One essay question, which takes 40 minutes, worth 30 marks One essay question, which takes 30 minutes, worth 24 marks
Exam: Paper 2 (UK Government)	One exam, 2 hours, worth 33.3% of overall mark One source question, which takes 50 minutes, worth 30 marks One essay question, which takes 40 minutes, worth 30 marks One essay question, which takes 30 minutes, worth 24 marks
Exam: Paper 3 (USA)	One exam, 2 hours, worth 33.3% of overall mark Two shorter-response essay questions, which take 15 minutes each, worth 12 marks each Two extended essay responses, which take 45 minutes each, worth 30 marks each

How do I know this is the right course for me?

- You will really enjoy Politics if you:
  1. Are interested in current affairs, and regularly watch the news
  2. Like to write extended essays, justifying your answers to challenging questions
  3. Are prepared to spend considerable time self-testing on the key content
- Politics links well with History, Economics, Business, English and other Humanities subjects like Geography, Sociology and Psychology.
- Potential future careers include Politics, Law, Journalism, Business and Teaching

