**A-Level Politics Year 11 Bridging the Gap 1**





**Welcome, year 11!**

This is your first ‘Bridging the Gap’ task for A-Level Politics, which you have chosen to take in 2020/21. The pack is designed to give you a flavour of what A-Level Politics is all about. To aid your understanding of Politics, the pack will introduce you to some core political concepts and events. The second pack will be an independent research project. The work in these packs will take a while to complete and even longer if you put it off, so you should plan your time and the amount of work you do each day/week. Don’t feel you need to complete it all in one go! You can complete the tasks in this booklet in the spaces provided.

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| **A-Level course outline** |
| **Year 12: UK Politics** | **Year 12-13: Ideologies** | **Year 13: US Politics** |
| 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 |

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 (only sometimes women, and only sometimes ethnic minorities) in offices, making deals and agreements that will affect millions of people. Some of these people enter the sphere of Politics for personal gain, while others are motivated by giving back to society, or trying to change society for the better. Politics, however, is much more than what motivates people to enter into the sphere of government.

Politics can be about state and personal power, about people, equality, war, conflict, debate, cooperation, freedom, and money. It is 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. Here is an example of how Politics can change things – In the referendum to leave the EU 52% voted to leave, while 48% voted to stay. Over and over we are told it was a ‘close’ result, but in our system of Politics, it does not matter even if the result was 51/49, the ‘first past the post’ system says that the majority decision had to be followed by the Government of the day. But, as we know, the implementation of this result was tortuous and decisions made by many Parliamentarians suggested that they had no intention of implementing the will of the people, which in a democracy is the only decision that counts. One could argue that if just one out of every 50 people who voted to leave the EU had voted differently, we wouldn’t have left, but that is an argument that can only be answered through the voting franchise. Each individual vote is vital, and yet 28% of all the people who could vote and registered to vote in that referendum did not turn out on June 23rd. There is an assumption made that if the 28% had voted, we would not have left the EU, but it could just as easily be said that the vote to leave would have been even more decisive. Understanding how Politics works and changes our lives is the answer, so yes, it is exciting and a subject which every person who is able to vote should understand.

Your first task is to help you garner an understanding of what Politics is. Use the Internet to research and understand what the following key terms mean, and create a short definition for each *in your own words*. To provide you with an overview Wikipedia might be useful, but it is not a reliable vehicle for academic research, so use it very judiciously.

The most important thing in work for A-Level, is *your understanding* – so it’s not about having the “right” or “word-perfect” definition, it’s about your *understanding* what a concept means. An important point to bear in mind is that almost everything ever written, unless it is an iteration of the bare facts, is written with a bias, *i.e.*, the author’s. So, make up your own mind, and how do you do that? By reading sources that put forward a specific point of view and balancing these with sources that put forward a counter view. So good luck everyone. Enjoy and Learn!! ☺

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| **Term** | **Explanation** |
| 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 the parties’ key manifesto policies in the 2019 General Election. I would like you to choose a few policies that you feel interest you, and explain below why you support OR do not support the policy. You must choose at least one policy from each manifesto to discuss (therefore it is compulsory to do three) – if you want to extend yourself and go further, you can do more by copying and pasting in the spaces I have provided.

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

Manifesto policy: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Agree/disagree & why:

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

Manifesto policy: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Agree/disagree & why:

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

Manifesto policy: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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.

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. You need to create a for/against case for the issue of:

***Should we lower the voting age from 18 to 16?***

This will require you to write at least three paragraphs (approximately ¾ to 1 full typed A4 page – but if you like you can write more). You can use websites like this: [https://yougov.co.uk/topics/Politics/articles-reports/2012/02/15/and-against-lowering-voting-age](https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2012/02/15/and-against-lowering-voting-age) or Google search “for and against [issue]” to get more information about the issue at hand. I’ve written a sample paragraph below – I’m interested in your ARGUING your case with evidence!

*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 as it is over-18s 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.*

Write your paragraphs below. Once you have completed this, you have finished the first Bridging the Gap task for A-Level Politics – well done!