

A LEVEL POLITICS – COMPONENT 3 LEARNING GUIDE

Key content for Component 3: US and Comparative Politics

1. The US Constitution and federalism – AJE (6 weeks incl 1 on comparative)

- 1.1 The nature of the US Constitution
- 1.2 The principles of the US Constitution
- 1.3 The main characteristics of US federalism
- 1.4 Interpretations and debates around the US Constitution and federalism

2. The US Congress - AJE (6 weeks)

- 2.1 The structure of Congress
- 2.2 The functions of Congress: Representation, Legislative, Oversight
- 2.3 Interpretations and debates around Congress

3. The US presidency – PA

- 3.1 Formal sources of presidential power
- 3.2 Informal sources of presidential power
- 3.3 The Presidency: relationships with Congress and the Supreme Court; Limitations on power
- 3.4 Interpretations and debates of the US presidency

4. The US Supreme Court and Civil Rights – PA

- 4.1 The nature and role of the Supreme Court
- 4.2 The appointment process for the Supreme Court
- 4.3 The Supreme Court and public policy
- 4.4 The protection of civil liberties and rights in the US today
- 4.5 Race and rights in contemporary US politics
- 4.6 Interpretations and debates of the US Supreme Court and civil rights

5. US democracy and participation - AJE/PA (7 weeks)

- 5.1 Electoral systems in the USA – (AJE)
- 5.2 The key ideas and principles of the Democratic and Republican parties - (PA)
- 5.3 Interest groups in the USA – (PA)
- 5.4 Interpretations & debates of US democracy & participation - (AJE/PA)

6. Comparative theories (AJE - 4 weeks)

- 6.1 Key Theoretical Approaches
- 6.2 Similarities and differences in the UK and USA
 - US & UK Constitutions
 - US & UK Legislatures
 - US & UK Executives
 - UK & US Supreme Courts & civil rights
 - UK & US Democracy & Participation

Component 3 US and Comparative Politics AJE - 6 weeks

Topic 1 - The US Constitution

The US Constitution Subject Content	Students should gain knowledge & understanding of:
<p>1. Key Terms & Concepts: Bipartisanship Checks and balances Codification Constitution Entrenchment Enumerated powers Federalism Limited government 'Principle' Separation of powers</p>	<p>1.1 The nature of the US Constitution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vagueness of the document, codification and entrenchment. • The constitutional framework (powers) of the US branches of government. • The amendment process, including advantages and disadvantages of the formal process. <p>1.2 The principles of the US Constitution (as listed below) and an evaluation of their effectiveness today.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federalism. • Separation of powers and checks and balances. • Bipartisanship. • Limited government. <p>1.3 The main characteristics of US federalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature of the federal system of government and its relationship with the states. <p>1.4 Interpretations and debates around the US Constitution and federalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent of democracy within the US Constitution, its strengths and weaknesses and its impact on the US government today. • The debates around the extent to which the USA remains federal today.

Tasks

Read Chapter 1 – introduction to US Politics

Explore the origins of the US Constitution - <https://constitutioncenter.org/timeline/flash/cw.html>

Notemaking on Nature of the Constitution and amendment process – pps20-27

Notemaking on Separation of Powers and Bipartisanship– pps27-35

Notemaking on Federalism – pps36-46 (to include timeline)

Reading/notemaking from articles

Research on recent constitutional amendment attempts

Essay – Evaluate the extent to which the process for amending the US Constitution works well [30]

Source-based activity p44 on US federalism: Is Washington doing too much or too little?

Key Reading:

The US Constitution

Amendments to the US Constitution and timeline

US Government and Politics, Anthony J Bennett, Hodder Education 2017, Chapters 1 and 2

Extension Reading:

Politics Review Vol 25, No. 4, April 2016, *Debate: Is the US federal government too powerful?* R Maggs & S Lemieux

Politics Review Vol 23, No. 3, Feb 2014, *The US Constitution: does it ensure limited government?* R Singh

Politics Review Vol 25, No.3, February 2016, *The US Constitution: a protection against the growth of a security state?* A Colclough

National Constitution Center - <https://constitutioncenter.org/>

Bowdoin College *Founding Principles* video series - <http://www.bowdoin.edu/founding-principles/chapter-one.shtml>

Recent constitutional amendment attempts –

- <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/12/a-look-at-proposed-constitutional-amendments-and-how-seldom-they-go-anywhere/>
- <http://thehill.com/homenews/house/382915-bid-to-amend-constitution-falls-short-in-the-house>
- <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2017/09/30/america-might-see-a-new-constitutional-convention-in-a-few-years>

Recent federalism debates -

- <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/04/02/trump-states-rights-education-sanctuary-drilling-492784>
- <http://www.governing.com/columns/potomac-chronicle/gov-federalism-trump-knots.html>
- <https://www.economist.com/democracy-in-america/2018/05/15/the-supreme-court-lets-states-legalise-sport-gambling>
- https://www.salon.com/2017/04/02/federalism-explained-is-progressive-federalism-an-oxymoron_partner/

Separation of powers examples –

- Congress rejecting/delaying/amending Pres legislative proposals – immigration reform, gun law reform
 - Power of purse – the Wall
 - Refusing appointments - Ronny Jackson to VA, Ryan Bounds to judgeship + incl inaction – Garland
 - Refusing to ratify treaties – Kyoto, CTBT, 2012 UN rights of disabled convention – but likely refusal leads to non-treaty deals (Iran)
 - Impeachment – Clinton, Porteous
 - Amending constitution to overturn a judicial decision – Income tax, topical attempts
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- Pres veto – Keystone XL
 - Congress veto override – Obama 9/11 Act
 - Pres judicial apptmt – Kavanaugh
 - Pres pardon – Arpaio, Libby. Alice Marie Johnson (Obama 212 pardons, 1715 commutations)
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- Cts can strike down a law as unconstitutional – Murphy, Shelby County, Sebelius, Citizens Utd
 - Cts can check Pres by declaring action unconstitutional – Hamdan, etc + Obama/Trump immigration rules

Sample Questions:

Spec 2 Q 3 (a) Evaluate the view that the US Constitution ensures that civil rights are effectively protected by the Supreme Court.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way. (30)

2019 Paper Q3(b) Evaluate the effective working of the US Constitution depends more on interest groups than the Supreme Court.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way. [30]

Topic 2 - The US Congress

US Congress Subject Content	Students should gain knowledge & understanding of:
<p>2. Key Terms & Concepts: Congressional caucuses Divided government Filibuster Gridlock Incumbency Mid-term elections Oversight Partisanship Unanimous consent</p>	<p>2.1 The structure of Congress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bicameral nature, the membership of Congress and the election cycle. <p>2.1.1 The distribution of powers within Congress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • powers given to Congress in the Constitution, the exclusive powers of each House and the concurrent powers of Congress. <p>2.2 The functions of Congress.</p> <p>2.2.1 Representation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congressional elections and the significance of incumbency. • Factors that affect voting behaviour within Congress: • parties and caucuses, constituency, pressure groups and lobbyists. <p>2.2.2 Legislative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The legislative process, including the strengths and weaknesses of this process. • The differences between the legislative process in each chamber. • The policy significance of Congress – impact and effectiveness of laws passed. <p>2.2.3 Oversight</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors that influence the relationship between Congress and the presidency. • The checks on the other branches of government and the extent of its institutional effectiveness <p>2.3 Interpretations and debates around Congress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing roles and powers of Congress and their relative importance, and debates about adequacy of its representative role • Changing significance of parties in Congress • Significance and effectiveness of the powers outlined in the Constitution

Tasks

Reading on functions and structure of Congress – pps 59-69 (to go with AJE intro ppt)

Center on Congress interactive learning modules - <https://corg.iu.edu/>

Reading on Legislative process (adding to Center on Congress module notes) – pps 74-83

AJE Ppt on legislative process

Notemaking on Representation & voting influences – pps 87-99

Notemaking on Congressional committees – pps 69-74 and Oversight – pps 84-86

Group research and presentations into Bills -

Individual research and sharing findings on committees and oversight

Activity p83 – using Center on Congress

Reading/notemaking from articles

AJE Ppt on Role of Parties in Congress

Essay – Evaluate the extent to which Congress is a representative body [30]

Essay – Evaluate the extent to which political parties play an important role in Congress [30]

Key Reading:

US Government and Politics, Anthony J Bennett, Hodder Education 2017, Chapter 3

Extension Reading:

Politics Review Vol 26, No. 1, September 2016, *Is Congress overly dysfunctional and partisan?* A J Bennett

Politics Review Vol 23, No. 4, April 2014, *Is Congress “the broken branch”?* R Hamal & A Baker
It's Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided With the New Politics of Extremism, Norman Ornstein & Thomas Mann, Basic Books 2013

Brookings Institute - <https://www.brookings.edu/topic/u-s-congress/>

Sample Questions:

Spec 1 Q 3(b) Evaluate the extent to which Congressional oversight of the President is ineffective.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way. [30]

Spec 2 Q 3(c) Evaluate the view that the legislative process is more effectively influenced by pressure groups than political parties.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way. [30]

2019 Paper Q3(a) Evaluate the view that US Foreign Policy is dominated as much by Congress as by the presidency.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way. [30]

Topic 3 - The US Presidency

US Presidency Subject Content	Students should gain knowledge & understanding of:
<p>1. Key Terms & Concepts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic politics Electoral mandate Executive branch Executive orders Imperial presidency Imperilled presidency Informal powers Powers of persuasion Unified Government 	<p>3.1 Formal sources of presidential power as outlined in the US Constitution and their use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role as the Head of State and as the Head of Government • The significance of these powers with reference to presidents since 1992. <p>3.2 Informal sources of presidential power and their use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The electoral mandate, executive orders, national events and the cabinet • Powers of persuasion including the nature/characteristics of each president. • Executive Office of the President (EXOP), including the role of the National Security Council (NSC), Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the White House Office (WHO) • The significance of these powers with reference to presidents since 1992 <p>3.3 The presidency:</p> <p>3.3.1 Relationships between the presidency and the following institutions and why this varies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congress and the Supreme Court <p>3.3.2 Limitations on presidential power and why this varies between presidents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changing nature of power over their term in office • Congress, the Supreme Court and the Constitution • the election cycle and divided government • The significance of these limitations with reference to presidents since 1992 <p>3.4 Interpretations and debates of the US presidency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effectively they have achieved their aims • The imperial presidency • The extent of presidential accountability to Congress • The role and power of the president in foreign policy • With reference to presidents since 1992

Tasks

Key Reading:

Extension Reading:

Sample Questions:

Spec 1 Q 3(b) Evaluate the extent to which Congressional oversight of the President is ineffective.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way. [30]

2019 Paper Q3(a) Evaluate the view that US Foreign Policy is dominated as much by Congress as by the presidency.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way. [30]

Component 3 US and Comparative Politics PA - 4 weeks

Topic 4 - The US Supreme Court & Civil Rights

US Supreme Court & Civil Rights Subject Content	Students should gain knowledge & understanding of:
<p>1. Key Terms & Concepts:</p> <p>Conservative justice Imperial judiciary Judicial activism Judicial restraint Judicial review Liberal justice Living constitution Originalism Public policy Stare decisis Strict/loose constructionist Swing justice Constitutional rights Racial equality Affirmative action</p>	<p>4.1 The nature and role of the Supreme Court</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The US Constitution • The independent nature of the Supreme Court • The judicial review process (<i>Marbury vs Madison 1803</i> and <i>Fletcher vs Peck 1810</i>) <p>4.2 The appointment process for the Supreme Court</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengths and weaknesses of the process • Factors influencing the president’s choice of nominee • The current composition and ideological balance of the Court <p>4.3 The Supreme Court and public policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of the Supreme Court on public policy in the US, with a range of examples, including examples post-2005 • Political significance debate: the role of judicial activism and judicial restraint, and criticisms of each <p>4.4 The protection of civil liberties and rights in the US today</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rights protected by the Constitution, by the Bill of Rights, by subsequent constitutional amendments and by rulings of the Supreme Court <p>4.5 Race and rights in contemporary US politics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The methods, influence and effectiveness of racial rights • campaigns and the impact on current domestic policy: • voting rights, affirmative action and representation <p>4.6 Interpretations and debates of the US Supreme Court and civil rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The political versus judicial nature of the Supreme Court • Living Constitution ideology as against originalism • How effectively civil and constitutional

US Supreme Court & Civil Rights Subject Content	Students should gain knowledge & understanding of:
	<p>rights have been upheld by the Supreme Court and the effectiveness of this protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent of their powers and the effectiveness of checks and balances • The successes and failures of measures to promote equality, including affirmative action and immigration reform

Tasks

Key Reading:

Extension Reading:

Sample Questions:

Spec 1 Q3a) Evaluate the extent to which the Supreme Court is now an 'imperial judiciary'.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way. [30]

Spec 1 Q 3c) Evaluate the extent to which racial equality has been advanced in the 21st century.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way. [30]

Spec 2 Q 3 (a) Evaluate the view that the US Constitution ensures that civil rights are effectively protected by the Supreme Court.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way. (30)

2019 Paper Q3(b) Evaluate the effective working of the US Constitution depends more on interest groups than the Supreme Court.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way. [30]

Topic 5 - US Democracy & Participation

US Democracy & Participation Subject Content	Students should gain knowledge & understanding of:
<p>1. Key Terms & Concepts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campaign finance Factions Invisible primary Political Action Committees (PACs) Party system Policy group Professional group Single interest group Soft/hard money Super PACs Religious right 	<p>5.1 Electoral systems in the USA – (AJE)</p> <p>5.1.1 Presidential elections and their significance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main processes to elect a US president, including the constitutional requirements, the invisible primary, primaries and caucuses, the role of National Party Conventions and the electoral college, and the resulting party system. • The importance of incumbency on a president seeking a second term. <p>5.1.2 Campaign finance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of campaign finance and the current legislation on campaign finance, including McCain-Feingold reforms 2002 and <i>Citizens United vs FEC</i> 2010 <p>5.2 The key ideas and principles of the Democratic and Republican parties. (PA)</p> <p>5.2.1 The distribution of power and changing significance of the parties:</p> <p>Democrats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progressive attitude on social and moral issues, including crime • greater governmental intervention in the national economy • government provision of social welfare <p>Republicans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conservative attitude on social and moral issues • more restricted governmental intervention in the national economy while protecting American trade and jobs • acceptance of social welfare but a preference for personal responsibility <p>5.2.2 The current conflicts and tendencies and the changing power and influence that exist within the parties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democrats: liberals, moderates and conservatives • Republicans: moderates, social conservatives and fiscal

US Democracy & Participation Subject Content	Students should gain knowledge & understanding of:
	<p style="text-align: center;">conservatives</p> <p>5.2.3 Coalition of supporters for each party (AJE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voters: how the following factors are likely to influence voting patterns and why, in relation to one recent presidential election campaign (since 2000) – race, religion, gender and education <p>5.3 Interest groups in the USA – (PA) their significance, resources, tactics and debates about their impact on democracy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The influence, methods and power of at least one single interest group, professional group or policy group <p>5.4 Interpretations and debates (AJE) of US democracy and participation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advantages and disadvantages of the electoral process and the Electoral College and the debate around reform • the role of campaign finance and difficulty in achieving effective reform • the role of incumbency in elections • the ways in which interest groups can influence the three branches of government and policy creation, including the role of PACs and Super PACs and their impact on democracy (PA)

AJE Tasks

Reading on Congressional Elections & referendums - pps 279-287

Notemaking: spider diagram on requirements for a Presidential candidate - pps 233-236

Reading to accompany AJE ppt notes on Invisible primary – pps 236-240

Reading to accompany AJE notes on primaries & caucuses – pps 240-253

Reading and noting articles on merits of primaries

Reading to accompany AJE notes on conventions – pps 253-261

Notemaking on campaign finance issues – pps 261-265

Reading and exercise on General Election campaign: why Trump won? – pps 265-272

Notemaking on electoral college – pps 273-278

Notemaking and analysis of voting behaviour – pps 302-309

Essay – Evaluate the extent to which the process of selecting presidential candidates is deeply flawed.

Essay – Evaluate the extent to which the Electoral College is an outdated institution.

Essay – Evaluate the extent to which gender, geographic region, and class and education played a significant role in the way people voted in the 2016 presidential election.

AJE Key Reading:

US Government and Politics, Anthony J Bennett, Hodder Education 2017, Chapter 6

Documentary on 2016 campaign

Politics Review Vol 24, No. 4, November 2015, *Is the process for nominating presidential candidates hopelessly flawed?* N Whiskered & A J Bennett

Politics Review Vol 27, No. 2, November 2017, *Is it now time to abolish the Electoral College?* B Clemson & A J Bennett

AJE Extension Reading:

By the People: The Election of Barack Obama video

Race of a Lifetime, John Heilemann & Mark Halperin, Penguin 2010

The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election, John Sides & Lynn Vavreck; Princeton University Press 2013

Politics Review Vol 23, No. 2, November 2013, *Should the Electoral College be replaced with a National Popular Vote?* J Whitton & A J Endersby

Politics Review Vol 22, No. 3, February 2013, *Four more years: How did Obama do it?* Clodagh Harrington, Politics Review

Politics Review V Vol 22, No. 3, February 2013, *US Election 2012 Results*, Kay Moxon

Politics Review Vol 18, No. 1, September 2008, *Update: Why Hilary Clinton lost the primary race*, Edward Ashbee

Extension Reading:

Sample Questions:

Spec 2 Q 3(b) Evaluate the view that campaign finance is the most significant factor in determining the outcome of congressional elections.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way. [30]

2019 Paper Q3(b) Evaluate the effective working of the US Constitution depends more on interest groups than the Supreme Court.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way. [30]

2019 Paper Q3(c) Evaluate the procedures for electing US presidents and members of Congress are not fit for purpose.

You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way. [30]

Topic 6 - Comparative Politics

Comparative Approaches	Students should gain knowledge & understanding of:
<p>1. Key Theoretical Approaches</p> <p>6.1 Theoretical approaches – understanding of these three approaches and the different ways they explain similarities and differences between the government and politics of different countries.</p> <p>Rational</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This approach focuses on individuals within a political system. • A rational approach suggests that such individuals will act rationally, choosing to act in a particular way as it will give them a beneficial outcome. <p>Cultural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This approach focuses on groups within a political system – this could be voters, parties, pressure groups and so on. • A cultural approach suggests that the shared ideas, beliefs and values of these groups often determine the actions of individuals within them. <p>Structural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This approach focuses on the institutions in a political system and the processes within them. • A structural approach suggests that political outcomes are largely determined by the formal processes laid out within a political system. 	<p>6.2 Similarities and differences in the UK and USA:</p> <p>6.2.1 Compare and debate the following aspects of the UK & US Constitutions and the resulting impact on politics and government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their nature (codified/uncodified) and their sources, provisions and principles, including separation of powers, checks and balances • the similarities and differences between the US federal system and the UK system of devolution <p>6.2.2 The extent to which rational, cultural and structural approaches can be used to account for these similarities and differences.</p> <p>6.2.3 Compare and debate the following aspects of the UK & US legislative branches and their resulting impact on politics and government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • powers, strengths and weaknesses of each of the Houses • the extent to which each of the Houses are equal. <p>6.2.4 The extent to which rational, cultural and structural approaches can be used to account for these similarities and differences.</p> <p>6.2.5 Compare and debate the following aspects of the UK & US executive branches and their resulting impact on politics and government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key similarities and differences between the role and powers of the US President and the UK Prime Minister and their impact on politics and government • extent of accountability to the US and UK legislature <p>6.2.6 The extent to which rational, cultural and structural approaches can be used to account for these similarities and differences.</p>

Comparative Approaches	Students should gain knowledge & understanding of:
	<p>6.2.7 Compare and debate the following aspects of the UK & US Supreme Courts and civil rights and their resulting impact on politics and government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • basis for and relative extent for their powers • relative independence of the Supreme Court in the US and UK • effectiveness of the protection of rights in each country • effectiveness of interest groups in the protection of civil rights in the USA and the UK <p>6.2.8 The extent to which rational, cultural and structural approaches can be used to account for these similarities and differences.</p> <p>6.2.9 Compare and debate the following aspects of the UK & US democracy and participation, and their resulting impact on politics and government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the different nature of the party systems (two-party and multi-party) • degree of internal unity within parties • the policy profiles of the two main parties in each country • debates around campaign finance and party funding • the relative power, methods and influence of pressure groups. <p>6.2.10 The extent to which rational, cultural and structural approaches can be used to account for these similarities and differences.</p>

Tasks

Key Reading:

Extension Reading:

Sample Questions:

Spec 1 Q1 EITHER (a) Examine the ways in which the US and the UK Constitutions are similar. [12]

OR (b) Examine the factors that create a two-party dominance both in the US and in the UK [12]

Spec 2 Q1 EITHER (a) Examine the ways in which the US House of Representatives differs from the UK House of Commons. [12]

OR (b) Examine the ways in which US presidents and UK prime ministers may seek to influence legislation. [12]

2019 Paper Q1 EITHER (a) Examine how interest groups in the USA are more effective at protecting civil rights than pressure groups in the UK. [12]

OR (b) Examine how devolution in the UK differs from federalism in the USA. [12]

Spec 1 Q2 Analyse the differences in party unity in the US and in the UK.

In your answer you must consider the relevance of at least one comparative theory. [12]

Spec 2 Q2 Analyse how independent the Supreme Courts are in the USA and the UK.

In your answer you must consider the relevance of at least one comparative theory. [12]

2019 Paper Q2 Analyse the different legislative powers of the UK Parliament and the US Congress.

In your answer you must consider the relevance of at least one comparative theory. [12]