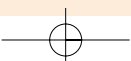




Essentials of UK Politics



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Andrew Heywood

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macmillan



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First published 2008 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010
Companies and representatives throughout the world

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ISBN-13: 978-0230-20173-6
ISBN-10: 0230-20173-3

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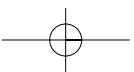
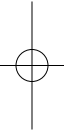
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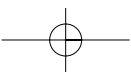
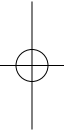
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Printed and bound in Hong Kong



For David, Anne, Daniel and Kelly





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How to Use this Book

This textbook has been written specifically to meet the needs of students who are studying AS level Government and Politics. It provides a lively, accessible and comprehensive introduction to the ‘essentials’ of the subject and covers the key topics and themes on the *revised* GCE 2008 Edexcel, AQA and OCR specifications (see below for more details).

Features of the book

The book has a number of features that are designed to aid understanding and to support examination performance. (The boxed features are cross-referenced throughout.)

- ▶ **Preview.** These appear at the beginning of each chapter. They provide an introduction to the topic of the chapter and highlight the key issues that it addresses.
- ▶ **Getting you thinking.** Also appearing at the beginning of each chapter, these focus on a significant event or development from recent years that raises interesting questions about the topic being studied.
- ▶ **On-page definitions.** These provide single-sentence definitions of key terms at appropriate points in each chapter. (You can search for defined terms by looking for bold entries in the index. They also appear on the website; see online support.)
- ▶ **‘What is’ boxes.** These provide fuller explanations of important political ideas and concepts.
- ▶ **‘Focus on’ boxes.** These supplement information that is found in the main text by providing fuller or more detailed explanations of important political processes.
- ▶ **‘Who is’ boxes.** These provide brief biographies of major figures in contemporary UK politics, mainly prime ministers.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

- ▶ **‘Differences between’ boxes.** These highlight differences between terms and concepts that are sometimes confused.
- ▶ **‘By comparison’ boxes.** These aim to strengthen the understanding of UK politics by providing comparative information about the USA. (In many AS topics, explicit comparisons with US politics can help candidates to demonstrate a deeper level of understanding.)
- ▶ **‘Debating’ boxes.** These provide an overview of the main arguments for and against a particular topic. (One of the important skills that AS students need to develop is the ability to show an awareness of competing viewpoints and to be able to evaluate political arguments.)
- ▶ **Weblinks.** Found at appropriate points in each chapter, these provide information about useful websites that offer up-to-date comment and more information on the issue under discussion.
- ▶ **What you should know.** These appear at the end of each chapter and provide a summary of the key information that is contained in the chapter.
- ▶ **Test yourself.** Also appearing at the end of each chapter, these consist of a set of questions that can be used to check your understanding and to help to prepare you for the examination.
- ▶ **Online support.** The website associated with this book provides clickable weblinks and a searchable glossary of all the on-page definitions. See www.palgrave.com/politics/essentials.

The specifications

The following provides an overview AS Government and Politics specifications of each of the three main boards and shows, topic by topic, how this book supports their study.

EDEXCEL Government and Politics (8GP 01)	
Topic	Chapter
Introduction to the subject	1
<i>Unit 1: People and politics</i>	
Democracy and participation	2
Political parties, policies and ideas	4

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Topic	Chapter	
Elections	3	
Pressure groups	5	
Unit 2: Governing the UK		
The constitution	6	
Parliament	7	
Prime minister and cabinet	8	
Judges and civil liberties	9	
Chapter 10 (on devolution and Europe) contains useful background information that is relevant to a variety of other topics		
AQA Government and Politics (2150)		
Main topic	Subtopic	Chapter
Introduction to the subject		1
Unit 1: People, politics and participation		
Participation and voting behaviour	Nature of participation	2
	Participation through elections	3
Electoral systems	Types of electoral system	3
	Nature of representation	2
Political parties	Role of parties in a democracy	4
Pressure groups and protest movements	Importance of groups	5
	Pressure group behaviour	5
Unit 2: Governing modern Britain		
The British constitution	Nature of the constitution	6
	The judiciary	9
Parliament	Role of Parliament	7
	Parliament and government	7
The core executive	Prime minister and cabinet	8
	Ministers and civil servants	8
Multilevel governance	Local and devolved bodies	10
	The European Union	10
OCR Government and Politics (H095)		
Topic	Chapter	
Introduction to the subject	1	
Unit F851: Contemporary Politics in the UK		
Background knowledge of key concepts	2	

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Topic	Chapter/section
Political parties (mandatory)	4
Pressure groups (mandatory)	5
Electoral systems and referendums	2 and 3
UK parliamentary elections	3
Voting behaviour in the UK	3
Unit F852: Contemporary Governing of the UK	
The constitution	6
The executive (mandatory)	8
The legislature (mandatory)	7
The judiciary	9
The European Union	10

Maximizing performance

How can you ensure that your performance in Government and Politics is as good as it can be? How can you ensure exam success? Below are some helpful hints on how you can maximize your performance as you study the subject and as you prepare for the examination.

Studying the subject

- ▶ **Keep up-to-date with current affairs.** This will both make the subject more interesting to study (politics never stands still) and give you useful ammunition to use in the examination. Your knowledge needs to be as up-to-date as possible, and examiners are particularly looking to reward *contemporary* knowledge and understanding. Use websites, read a 'quality' newspaper (many of which can be accessed online) and articles in *Politics Review* and watch the news and current affairs programmes on television.
- ▶ **Understand key terms and concepts.** Much of political understanding is based on a grasp of major terms and concepts – democracy, representation, parliamentary sovereignty, civil liberties, and so on. Make sure you have a thorough grasp of these terms, and be sure that you can define and explain them reliably in the examination itself.
- ▶ **Be aware of competing viewpoints.** Just about every issue in politics is the subject of debate and discussion. You need to show an awareness of the different sides of an argument – almost every statement you make in politics could be followed by 'However...'. But you also need to develop your own

views, which means being able to support a particular viewpoint on the basis of *evidence* – make your point and prove it.

Preparing for the examination

- ▶ **Draw up a revision plan.** Revision is seldom done effectively if it is left until ‘the mood takes you’. Draw up a plan of which topics you are going to revise and when – and then stick to it!
- ▶ **Know your specification inside out.** You have an outline above of the main topics covered in each unit. But the specification itself, as well as supporting materials provided by the awarding body for students, provides you with greater detail, including the identification of key concepts and an outline of the content.
- ▶ **Be familiar with past papers, marking schemes and examiners’ reports.** These are all provided by awarding bodies, and they contain invaluable information about the kind of questions that will come up and the level of performance that will be expected.
- ▶ **Have as much exam practice as possible.** In the run-up to the examination, frequently practise answering examination questions in examination conditions and within examination timescales. If nothing else, this will ensure that you do not get your timings wrong – the silliest of all reasons for poor exam performance.
- ▶ **Pay attention to ‘command words’ and key terms in questions.** These are words such as ‘define’, ‘explain’, ‘analyse’, ‘assess’ or ‘evaluate’. You need to know what each of these words mean and to ensure that you carry out the ‘right’ task in answering each question. For example:
 - ▶ Define – say what a word or phrase means
 - ▶ Features – the parts that define ‘what a thing is’
 - ▶ Functions – the roles that highlight ‘what a thing *does*’
 - ▶ Explain – show how something works, often by identifying causes and effects
 - ▶ Analyse – break something into its component parts and show how they relate to one another
 - ▶ Evaluate – make judgements about something’s value, its benefits and weaknesses
 - ▶ Assess – ‘weigh up’ a statement, showing arguments in favour and against

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

- ▶ **Be aware of what you get marks for.** This is spelled out in the three assessment objectives that are relevant to Government and Politics. These are:
 - ▶ AO1: *knowledge and understanding* (e.g. ‘Outline...’, ‘Define...’, ‘Distinguish...’, ‘How...’, ‘In what ways...’)
 - ▶ AO2: *analysis, evaluation and parallels or similarities/differences* (e.g. ‘Why...’, ‘Analyse...’, ‘Compare...’, ‘Contrast...’, ‘Assess...’, ‘Evaluate...’, ‘To what extent...’, ‘Discuss...’)
 - ▶ AO3: *communication* (this covers (1) the grammatical accuracy of your writing, (2) the use of appropriate political vocabulary and (3) your ability to organize your ideas and arguments in a clear and structured way)

- ▶ **Answer the *precise* question set.** The most common reason for exam under-performance is a failure to ‘target’ the question set. Common mistakes include providing a pre-prepared answer to a question from a previous examination, and writing generally about the topic of the question, rather than addressing the particular question itself. To help to avoid these mistakes, get in the habit of regularly using the terms from the question in your answers.