

How to approach teaching Political ideas in the new 2017 specification

Background

Our specification puts UK Politics at the centre of this Pearson Edexcel A level Politics qualification, offering students an informed understanding of contemporary political structures and issues in their historical context within the United Kingdom. By placing the Political ideas content across two separate exam papers, Pearson wants to encourage students to develop a critical awareness of the changing nature of politics and the relationships between political ideas, institutions and processes. This will broaden and deepen students' learning of all areas of the content

The two options below are examples of how teachers may wish to structure their teaching. Other variants are possible and acceptable.

Teaching AS and A level together

Term	Content
Autumn Year 12	UK Politics
Spring Year 12	UK Government
Summer Year 12	AS exams and political ideas (two weeks teaching for each core political idea, to total six weeks)
Autumn Year 13	Complete the political ideas (two weeks for the non-core political idea), then Comparative Politics – USA or Global Politics
Spring Year 13	Comparative Politics – USA or Global Politics
Summer Year 13	Exams

Teaching the full A level only

Term	Content
Autumn Year 12	UK Politics and core political ideas
1 st half Spring Year 12	UK Politics and core political ideas
2 nd half Spring Year 12	UK Government and non-core political ideas
Summer Year 12	UK Government and non-core political ideas
Autumn Year 13	Comparative Politics – USA or Global Politics
Spring Year 13	Comparative Politics – USA or Global Politics
Summer Year 13	Exams

Paper 1

The core political ideas will enable students to widen and deepen their understanding of the origins and historical developments of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties and how this has shaped their ideas and current policies on the economy, law and order, welfare and foreign affairs. Of course, each of these political ideas is not exclusive to any one political party and various liberal, conservative and socialist ideas are at different times embraced by a range of political parties.

When teaching the core political ideas, teachers may return/link to the following parts of the specification in order to reinforce and exemplify learning and show how they underpin other concepts, institutions and processes across the rest of the content:

Component	Content section	Relevant core idea
UK Politics	Section 2.2, Established political parties	All
UK Politics	Section 1.4, Rights in context	Liberalism
UK Government	Sections 1.1 – 1.4, The Constitution	Liberalism
Comparative politics: USA	Sections 1.1 – 1.5.2, US Constitution and Federalism	Liberalism
Comparative politics: USA	Section 5.2.2, Party factions (Republicans)	Conservatism (New Right)
Comparative politics: Global politics	Sections 1.1 – 1.5, Theories of global politics (Liberalism)	Liberalism
Comparative politics: Global politics	Sections 1.1 – 1.5, Theories of global politics (Realism)	Conservatism (Hobbes)

Paper 2

The non-core political ideas act as a challenge to much of the UK Government and UK politics content of the qualification. By studying one non-core political idea, students will learn how political ideas, institutions and processes have been challenged by their non-core political idea and how they have responded to that challenge. In addition, the non-core political ideas both challenge and complement the core political ideas.

Non-core political ideas

How each relates to the core political ideas

Anarchism

The biggest crossover here is that by studying this idea, teachers will be able to revisit and revise many of the main points, such as human nature, within the core political ideas section, in particular within Socialism. Anarchism offers a challenge both to the nature of Government and participation in the US and the UK.

Ecologism

This will allow students to revisit their study of the core political ideas by challenging some of the core concepts and whether existing ideas, processes and institutions can deal with environmental crises. In addition, this idea will deepen and broaden understanding of section 4.2 in Global Politics on environmental issues.

Feminism

This idea will allow students to revisit their study of the core political ideas, as some aspects of Feminism complement them, such as Liberalism and Socialism and some aspects challenge them. Liberal Feminism can also be used to develop discussions around Rights in Context with UK Politics.

Multiculturalism

The study of this idea will play a key role in broadening and deepening the understanding of both Liberalism and Conservatism in the core political ideas section. This idea will also enhance the understanding of Rights in Context (section 1.4) in UK Politics.

Nationalism

This idea will allow students to revisit their study of the core political ideas as some aspects of Nationalism complement them, particularly Conservatism and Liberalism, and some aspects challenge them. Links can also be made with the study of colonialism and the North-South Divide (section 3.2.3) within Global Politics.

Assessment

The assessment of the political ideas will follow familiar formats each year.

For the core political ideas questions (Paper 1), there will be two questions and students choose one to answer. In one exam series, one question may be on Socialism, and the other on Liberalism. In another exam series, both questions may be on Conservatism. The question setting is designed this way to ensure that all three core political ideas are taught.

For non-core political ideas questions (Paper 2), each idea will have two questions, and students choose one to answer.

All political ideas questions will follow a familiar format:

- be worth 24 marks, eight marks for each of AO1, AO2 and AO3.
- use the command “To what extent...”and either:
 - Ask students to examine the political idea’s view on the economy, society, the state or human nature/the individual, or a combination of these, e.g. to what extent do modern and classical liberals agree over the role of the state?

Or:

- Ask students to examine the divisions within the political idea from a particular perspective, e.g. to what extent do ecologists agree over environmental ethics?
- have the “You must use appropriate thinkers you have studied to support your answer and consider both sides in a balanced way” instructions
- students will be expected to refer to at least two thinkers in their answer (these must be named thinkers from the specification for the relevant political idea).