

Politics A Level

If you are planning on studying A level Politics next year then there are plenty of activities you can do to prepare. Please do not feel that you have to do all of these, they are suggestions and you can dip in and out. Don't worry if you come across terminology or concepts that you do not understand. We will start from the beginning when we start the course.

Getting background understanding is helpful and writing as much as you can will be useful so you don't struggle with that element when you return. You might consider making a file to write up information you have found out during research (a suggested research project can be found after the resources). It is also a great time to catch up on documentaries and political movies (suggestions below).



Resources for the UK

Some news outlets will charge a subscription but some are still free.

BBC News/ Reddit / WikiNews / Google News / Pressreader.com

Remember to read a news story from more than one source as there will often be a bias. Social media in particular will lead you to one particular viewpoint so you need to find out both sides.

Other useful websites:

Tutor2U <https://www.tutor2u.net/politics>

Loughborough Grammar School Politics Blog
<https://lgspolitics.wordpress.com/> (written by an examiner)

Resources for the US

VOX <https://www.vox.com/>

CNN <https://edition.cnn.com/>

Washington Post <https://www.washingtonpost.com/>

New York Times <https://www.nytimes.com/>

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What to watch

Documentaries and other programmes

The Rise and Fall of Blair - YouTube

The Cameron Years - BBC iPlayer

Inside Obamas White House - YouTube

Inside the Commons - YouTube Inside the Lords – YouTube



Available on Netflix:

'Knock down the house' good for US Congress

LA 92- race riots in US Trump: the American Dream

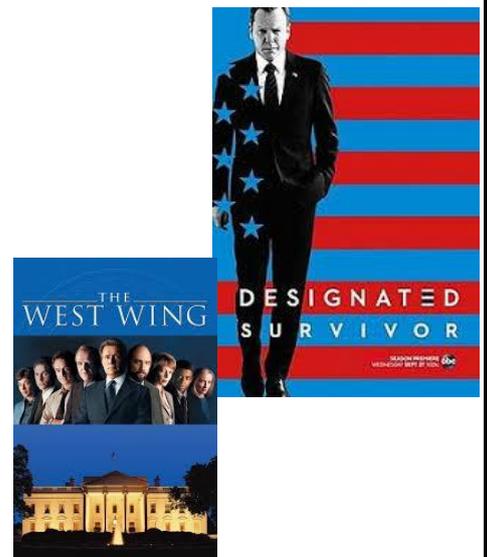
RBG- about legend US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg

Fahrenheit 11/9 - about the Trump administration

Fiction but a great way to learn about the US political system):

West Wing

Designated Survivor



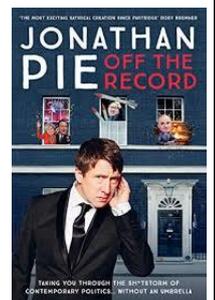
Political comedy

British comedians such as Russell Howard and Jonathan Pie will often do round ups of the week's news on their websites. Warning: they often use colourful language!

Have I Got News For You (BBC)

The Week Tonight – John Oliver (UK comedian reviewing the week's news in the US – available on Comedy Channel)

Jon Stewart (old now but still really funny and worth a watch)



Movies

There are literally hundreds of movies involving the political system, especially in the US.

These are fiction but useful to get historical context – there is more of a focus on this in the A level):

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The Iron Lady – following career of Margaret Thatcher

Darkest Hour – following Churchill through part of his years in office

Selma – Following Martin Luther King looking at race issues in America

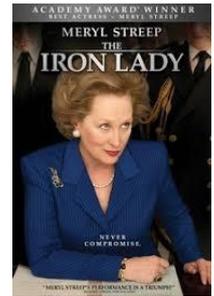
'Classic' political movies:

Manchurian Candidate 1962

Primary Colours (1998)

Citizen Cane (1941)

All the President's Men (1976)



Fancy a challenge?

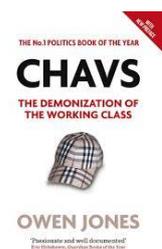
We recommend reading these when you are on the course but if you are feeling confident you could start now. Some of the titles will be available on audio platforms such as Audible too.

15 mins of Power Riddell, Peter

Chavs: Demonization of the Working Class Jones, Owen

The Prime Ministers: Reflections on Leadership from Wilson to May Richards, Steve

Posh Boys: How English Schools Ruin Britain Verkaik, Robert



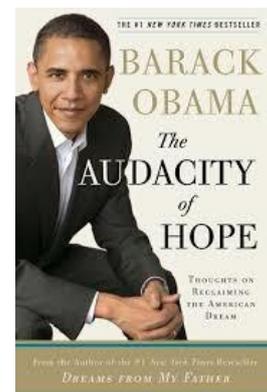
There are also plenty of readable biographies/ autobiographies of political leaders e.g:

Tony Blair: Prime Minister Rentoul, John

The Downing Street Years Thatcher, Margaret

The Audacity of Hope Obama, Barack

Becoming, Obama, Michelle (not herself a political leader but a good insight of her husband's campaign and years in office – also useful for aspiring lawyers).



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Research Project: Coronavirus Pandemic

(Sorry you must be sick of this but it is a major event and has an impact on every element of the political system)

Background – How did the break-out happen? Countries worst hit?

Government measures – What are the measures brought in which affect civilian rights? What are the measures brought in which affect police powers?

Boris Johnson – how is he being portrayed by different news sources? How is he being portrayed now compared to the start of the outbreak?

Opposition response – how did Jeremy Corbyn react? How does this compare to Keir Starmer's response?

Parliament changes – what has happened to Parliament during this time?

US response – how has Trump responded? How are these actions viewed in the UK compared to the US?

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TASK 1

Read the article below and using any other research summarise the main arguments to lower the voting age to 16 (put examples to support your points in red/green):

[Tip: you are not expected to understand all the issues or terminology in your research but it would be helpful if you made of list of terms you do not understand and bring them to class]

Elections & Voting Explained

(Taken from <http://www.britpolitics.co.uk/uk-elections-16-vote-democracy>)

Should the voting age be lowered to 16?

The voting age was reduced from 21 to 18 in 1969. Recently there has been a discussion as to whether it should be reduced to 16 and the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties are both committed to the change. Opinion polls, at present, show that younger voters are less likely to support the Conservatives. This has been given extra impetus by the Scottish Independence Referendum. Cameron and Salmond agreed that 16 and 17 year olds would be able to vote in the Referendum and the SNP leader expected them to be more pro-independence. Young people were active in the debates and campaigns.

Arguments for

Votes at 16 would be consistent with other areas of responsibility. 16 year olds can marry, join the armed forces and consent to medical treatment.

There is a need to reduce the political alienation of young people who are likely to be as aware of issues at 16 as they would be at 18 and might feel that their views do not matter if they cannot vote. A wide range of political decisions affect them such as tax rates, job seekers' allowance, university fees, bullying and public transport. Politicians would be more likely to act on these if young people could vote.

Young people may well have better knowledge of issues than some older people as they are more likely to follow them on the internet and Citizenship Education, which includes electoral systems and how government works, is taught as part of the National Curriculum.

It is important to increase turnout at elections. In the 1964 general election the youngest age group turned out to vote as strongly as other age groups but this has changed. 44% of 18 to 24 year olds voted in the 2010 general election

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compared with 76% of the over 65s. Voting at 16 when politics is still discussed at school/college may get them into the habit of voting.

Arguments against

People legally become adults at 18. Many of the things that 16 year olds can do are still circumscribed, for example, they can join the armed forces but not in frontline service and only with the permission of their parents.

At 16 people may not have the maturity and life experience to make political judgements. They may still be under the influence of parents and teachers or college lecturers. They may also be easily influenced by popular trends as Cleggmania, which developed after the leaders' debates in the 2010 general election campaign, showed, when support for Clegg soared through the social media because of the way that he spoke on camera in the first debate.

The majority of voters in opinion polls, including half of those in the 16-18 year old group, felt that the voting age should stay at 18. Most other countries have chosen 18.

Optional additional reading:

1. *General election 2017: Theresa May rules out votes at 16*, The BBC
(<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2017-39915483>)
2. *Why voting age should be lowered to 16*, The Economist
(<http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21716030-young-voters-are-becoming-disillusioned-elections-catch-them-early-and-teach-them-value>)