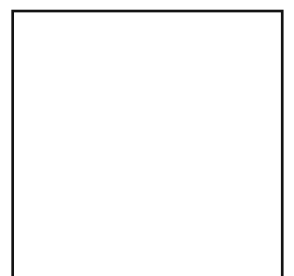
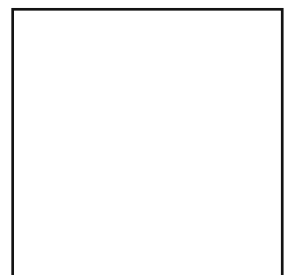
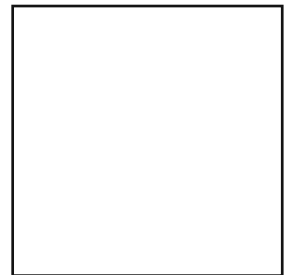


Nelson Thornes
Distance Learning

AS Government & Politics

Rachel Fairhead



Nelson Thornes

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First edition published in 2011:
Nelson Thornes Distance Learning
Delta Place
27 Bath Road
CHELTENHAM
GL53 7TH
United Kingdom

10 11 12 13 14 / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Page make-up by OKS Group Ltd

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Berforts Group

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Contents



Student Information

Study Calendar v–vi

AS Introduction vii–xiv

Module 1: People, Politics and Participation

Unit 1.1 Democracy 1–6

Unit 1.2 Political participation 7–12

Unit 1.3 Voting behaviour – patterns and models 13–22

Unit 1.4 The mass media 23–34

Unit 1.5 Opinion polls and representation 35–40

Unit 1.6 First past the post 41–48

Unit 1.7 Electoral reform 49–56

Unit 1.8 Referendums 57–62

Unit 1.9 The party system 63–70

Unit 1.10 The political parties 71–78

Unit 1.11 Party organisations 79–88

Unit 1.12 Pressure groups 89–98

Module 2: Governing Modern Britain

Unit 2.1 British constitution 99–106

Unit 2.2 The judiciary 107–116

Unit 2.3 Parliament 117–128

Unit 2.4 Parliamentary reform 129–136

Unit 2.5 Prime Minister and the executive 137–148

Unit 2.6 Cabinet 149–158

Unit 2.7 Civil service 159–166

Unit 2.8 Local government 167–172

Unit 2.9 Local government reform 173–182

Unit 2.10 Devolution 183–194

Unit 2.11 European union	195–204
Unit 2.12 The EU and the UK	205–212
Revision	213–232
A2 Government and Politics Starter Pack	233–262

Study Calendar



AS Government and Politics | 2011–12

Study week	Unit start date	Unit	Assignment	Work due date
1		Introduction		
2		1.1 Democracy		
3		1.2 Political participation	Assignment 1.2	
4		1.3 Voting behaviour – patterns and models		
5		1.4 The mass media	Assignment 1.4	
6		1.5 Opinion polls and representation		
7		1.6 First past the post		
8		1.7 Electoral reform	Assignment 1.7	
9		1.8 Referendums		
10		1.9 The party system		
11		1.10 The political parties	Assignment 1.10	
12		1.11 Party organisation		
13		1.12 Pressure groups	Assignment 1.12	
14		2.1 British constitution	Assignment 2.1	
15		2.2 The judiciary		
16		2.3 Parliament		
17		2.4 Parliament reform	Assignment 2.4	
18		2.5 The Prime Minister and executive		
19		2.6 Cabinet	Assignment 2.6	
20		2.7 Civil Service		
21		2.8 Local government		
22		2.9 Local government reform	Assignment 2.9	
23		2.10 Devolution		
24		2.11 European Union		
25		2.12 The EU and the UK	Assignment 2.12	

Study week	Unit start date	Unit	Assignment	Work due date
26		Revision (if available)		
27		Revision (if available)		
28		Revision (if available)		

All the assignments for AS Government and Politics can be found in the relevant units of the Nelson Thornes Distance Learning Student Course Materials.

Introduction



Hello and welcome to Government and Politics by distance learning.

Over the next year we shall be studying the British political system with in depth consideration of **People, Politics and Participation** and **Governing Modern Britain**.

Each week, during the videoconference, we shall review the unit you have worked on. It is essential that you complete all of the activities in preparation for the video conference. Assignments must be completed on time and given to your link tutor to post or you can email them directly to your tutor.

Learning via distance learning is not a 'soft' option. It is a full-time course. It is recommended that you allocate at least four additional hours of study per week, and you must work on the pack during your study periods and at home if you are to benefit from the course.

Over the first year we shall study the British political system. At the end of this you will sit module examinations which will give you an AS in Government and Politics.

In year two we shall study **The Politics and Government of the USA**. At the end of year two you will sit two module examinations which, combined with the AS, will give you an A level in Government and Politics.

The topics covered in year one are:

Module 1: People, Politics and Participation which consists of:

- Participation and voting behaviour
- Electoral systems
- Political parties
- Pressure groups and protest movements

Module 2: Governing Modern Britain which consists of:

- The British Constitution
- Parliament
- The core executive
- Multi-level governance

Politics is about everyday events that can affect us all. Examples include the Iraq war, the expenses scandal and more recently the debates around tuition fees for university students in Britain. All of these issues have been reported upon by the media yet accounts have varied considerably.

The study of politics involves the investigation of different accounts of those events from different people all of whom have different perspectives or interests. The media, political parties, politicians and interest groups all tend to argue from their own points of view, often ignoring the views of others. Only through careful investigation of these different arguments are we able to gain a clear picture of what is actually going on. 'Different people see different events differently.'

Politics is a subject which is constantly changing. This can be seen by the amount of news stories and issues which are seen in the media. It is therefore really important that you keep up to date with current events and any major political developments. There are a number of ways that this can be done, you can watch news and current affairs programmes, and read a variety of newspapers. It is also a good idea to keep a newspaper 'diary'. Use this to cut and keep any stories that you think are relevant to the course you are following. Up to date examples in your examination answers will not only impress the examiner marking your papers it will also show that you have a genuine interest and appreciation for the subject you are studying.

It is important to remember that newspapers, television programmes and websites can and do have bias, and vary in quality in their reporting. It is therefore important to remember this when choosing which newspapers or websites to read, or television programmes to watch. It is best, if possible, to use a variety of sources.

Politics is a new subject, and therefore there will be terms that you will need to know and understand, it would therefore be sensible to keep, and update, a glossary of terms. The following resources might also be useful:

- *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics* by Iain McLean, Alistair McMillan, published by Oxford University Press.
- *Politics Review* (details can be obtained from the Philip Allan website): a magazine which is published four times a year and gives you useful information on current issues and events.
- *Politics Pal* (details can be found at www.politicspal.eu), a periodic update of politics for students.
- Politics blogs are useful for analysis and evaluation, e.g. <http://tutor2u.net/blog/index.php/politics>

All these are optional, but they will help you with your studies and are worth the small investment.

During the two years that you will be studying politics we shall be looking at a variety of British and European Institutions connected with Government and Politics. If possible try and visit some of these places, for example it is possible to visit the Houses of Parliament.

It is also worth seeing whether you can get work experience with your local MP, MEP or local Government Councillor. This will give you first hand experience of how politics works in practice.

The main textbook for year one is: *AQA Government and Politics Student Book*, by Duncan Watts, published Nelson Thornes.

As mentioned previously, we shall be exploring **Government and Politics**. It is a subject which affects almost every aspect of our everyday lives, although the connections are not always obvious. If you read any newspaper there will always be stories about the latest government policy, decision or scandal, or there will be stories about the effects of decisions made by the various government institutions either in Westminster, where Parliament is, or more local to you. It is therefore important to build up a picture of what the current issues are – some are more obvious than others.

Activity 1

1 For next week find at least two national newspapers and a local newspaper. Firstly make a list of the issues that are covered by the newspapers. Do the stories cover the same topics?

2 Which of the issues covered do you think are the most important, and why?

- 3 What do the stories tell you about the current concerns facing Britain today? Do these affect you directly?

- 4 Can you detect any bias in the way the stories are being reported?

- 5 Write a short report about the issues you have found and include the questions above.



Another important part of studying politics is to become familiar with the people, personalities and concepts which are related to the subject you are studying. So in this introductory section we will begin to examine of the terminology and concepts which you need to become familiar with.

On completion of this introductory unit you should be able to:

- Understand what the term 'politics' means.
- Understand what the term 'authority' means.
- Understand some of the main theories linked to the study of politics.

What is politics?

Activity 2



- 1 Using a dictionary find a definition of the term politics.

- 2 Was there a single definition? And was the definition what you expected it to be?

- 3 You have chosen to study government and politics at AS level, does the definition match with your reasons or expectations?



The common thread, which is often used in a definition of politics is that it's about decisions and choices. But this is still quite a general definition.

The definition is often broken down into a number of themes:

- Government
- Compromise
- Public issues
- Power
- Conflict resolution

The definition of '**Government**' is fairly straightforward. It focuses on the roles of individuals, and Institutions, that is, one group makes decisions and another carries them out. This is a tangible definition – one we can see, even if we are not really sure what the people actually do. We can see the Prime Minister or Parliament on television, and read about them in the news – we can even visit our local MP's office. The problem is that this is a very limited definition, and is not the whole picture.

'**Compromise**' is not quite so clear and straightforward, and has a lot of difficulties attached to it. It focuses on the idea that everybody who has a vested interest in a policy or idea is consulted in some way, and that the widest range of feelings and views are taken into account so that the final result reflects as many views as possible. This does mean that not all views can be taken into account, but by consulting as many people as possible there is a chance that a compromise can be reached.

'**Public affairs**' takes the definition even further. This idea makes the distinction between public and private life and believes that politics is about public life. This therefore means that anything which is discussed, participated in or debated in public – whether it be in the office, school, or youth club, can be deemed to be political. Remember that decisions are still being made in these forums which affect everyone.

'**Politics is about power**', this definition is often seen as the one which covers everything and everyone. This means politics is about public and private affairs. It is about discussion and compromise; and about the ability to force a decision or policy. This theory is often linked with the idea that one group of people dominate at one time.

'**Conflict resolution**' like the previous theory, is one which is seen to encompass a wide range of situations and gives the impression that, ultimately, politics is about resolving these different conflicts. The conflicts can be on a small scale, for example a group of friends can't decide which film to go and see, or it could be on a much larger scale, such as global warming.

Activity 3

The following are quotes about politics. Answer the questions that follow:

'In our age there is no such thing as "keeping out of politics". All issues are political issues.'

George Orwell

'The only justifiable purpose of political institutions is to ensure the unhindered development of the individual.'

Albert Einstein

'The basis of our political system is the right of the people to make and to alter their constitutions of government.'

George Washington

- 1 Explain what you think each is saying about politics?

- 2 Which of these quotes do you think is most appropriate to explain your understanding of politics, and why?



Political power

The term '**power**' in a general sense is the ability to make people do something that they would not otherwise have done.

'Power' can be split up even further into the following types:

- Coercive power
- Legitimate power
- Influence

Coercive power is based on threat and demand. This means that a group of people are able to get another group or body of people do something because of a threat. The threat can be obvious or subtle. An example of this would be the use of sanctions or strikes.

Legitimate power is based on the right given to an individual or group of people in accordance with the law. This can come from elections taking place.

Influence is based on the ability to persuade a group to do something they would not normally do. There is not the same level of threat which comes from coercive power. Pressure groups are often associated with this form of power – they do not want power for themselves, but want to influence governments and MPs to adopt certain policies.

Activity 4

Explain which type of power you think is the most appropriate term for UK politics and why. You might decide that more than one type can be applied.



Authority

Authority is another type of power. Authority and **legitimacy** are two terms which we say our government has, and often mistakenly it is assumed that they mean the same thing.

Legitimacy has very positive connotations. We would say that our government is legitimate in other words in that it has the right to govern and this is generally accepted by the people because this legitimacy comes from the winning of open and free elections.

Authority is what a government which we deem to be legitimate *has*. In a country such as Britain the authority of the government is accepted even by those individuals who did not vote for that government. In simple terms, authority means the right to wield power.

The following terms are also used to explain different types of authority:

- Traditional
- Legal
- Charismatic

Traditional authority stems from well established and long held practices and experience. This would include, for example, the monarchy and the Pope. Legal authority is gained through the office that an individual holds. For example, the Prime Minister has the right to carry out certain functions and duties because of the office he/she holds. The last category has perhaps the most problems associated with it. Charismatic authority is based on the idea that an individual's personality is so strong that the force of that individual's personality will lead to people following them and accepting their ideas and policies. As history has shown, these charismatic leaders can range from Winston Churchill and Nelson Mandela to Adolf Hitler. Therefore it can be argued that charismatic leaders are not always a force for good.

These different types of authority have to be handled with care as they can overlap each other. For example Margaret Thatcher had both legal (from her role as Prime Minister) and charismatic authority. When dealing with the issue of power, governments use different types at different times.

In studying politics you will often find that definitions, roles and are blurred.

Activity 5



- 1 Write down your own examples of people with traditional, legal and charismatic authority respectively. These could be from any area of life.

- 2 Why do you think the different types of authority overlap? Give an example of overlap of your own.

- 3 Which of these types of authority do you think is the most important in politics, and why?



Parliamentary and presidential government

In the UK it can be argued that there is mixed democracy (we will be studying the concept of democracy in the next unit). This means that the system is based on a number of different elements, some of which are deeply rooted in tradition. In the UK we have a monarchy, a House of Commons and a House of Lords (which had until recently been a fully unelected body). It is accepted that in Britain we also have a parliamentary democracy or government.

In a parliamentary democracy the following are expected to occur:

- the people elect their representatives
- parliament is the highest source of political authority

Module 1 People, Politics and Participation

Unit 1.1 Democracy

Learning objectives:

On completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the nature of Parliamentary democracy
- Understand what is meant by direct and representative democracy
- Understand about democracy in the UK

Key terms:

- Democracy
- Direct democracy
- Representative democracy

Key reading:

Textbook pages 2–4.

Democracy

"Government of the people, by the people, for the people"

Abraham Lincoln

Activity 1

Using any resources available, including the internet, research the attitude the following historical figures had towards democracy:

- Plato
- Aristotle
- Karl Marx
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Democracy is term which we are all probably familiar with even if we are not completely sure of what it means. It is one of the most commonly used political terms. The word democracy originated in ancient Greece, and was used to identify a specific type of political system and how, in fact, power was distributed. Democracy meant that rule was by the people as a whole. This was different to monarchy or aristocracy. Monarchy was rule by a single person, whereas aristocracy was rule by a few people, who were judged to be the best suited for the job. This is not to say that the ancient Greeks were entirely happy with the idea of democracy, concerns were expressed by philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato who believed that democracy often lead to corruption i.e. that democracy could lead the rule of the majority at the expense of the minority. Or monarchy could turn into tyranny, i.e. a single leader could use his or her power not in the best interests of the country as a whole or aristocracy could be corrupted into an oligarchy where a small group

of powerful people rule to serve their own interests. Most countries today claim today to be fully democratic. There are two main types of democracy Direct and Representative (sometimes referred to as Liberal democracy).

Direct democracy

- In **direct democracy** the idea is that the many are able to make decisions directly rather than having to rely on people to make decisions on their behalf. In ancient Greece this would have been that decisions would have been taken at small public meetings.

Representative democracy

In **representative democracy** it is recognised that all the people of the country cannot take part in decision making or government. Therefore it is accepted that a smaller group of people, usually chosen by election, will make decisions on behalf of the people of the country. As these representatives are normally chosen by election, how effective the system of election is affects the strength and adequacy of the country's democracy.

Representative democracy may take any of these forms:

- Delegation – that people chosen to act on behalf of the people who voted for them follow exactly their instructions.
- Group representation – groups act on the behalf of a particular group.
- Party representation – people are elected under a party label and are then expected to follow the party policies.
- Representatives who use their own judgement on behalf of the people they represent.

Comparing direct and representative democracy

Both these types of democracy have a number of weaknesses.

Weaknesses of direct democracy

- Decisions cannot be made quickly.
- Can only really be used in very small states.
- Does not allow professional representatives who can devote more time to political issues.
- Provides a forum for charismatic politicians to hold too much influence.
- Time consuming process.

Weaknesses of representative democracy

- Representatives too often lose touch with their voters.
- Representative democracy is too closely linked to political parties who can impose viewpoints on its members.
- Representative democracy allows people to pass responsibility on to other people, only really taking an interest at election time.
- Accountability is, in reality, quite limited – normally it is not till the next election that voters can remove their representative and even then it does not always happen.

Other types of democracy

In addition to these two main forms of democracy, there are other meanings which conflict with the original two:

- Totalitarian democracy – where people are represented by a single individual or elite, so the people have no real influence even though they formally elected the leader(s).
- Pluralist democracy – where people are represented by groups of which they are members, this is often seen as the most modern concept of democracy.

- Liberal democracy – this is where the rights of individuals are valued and all people are encouraged to participate, this form of democracy has been very popular since the Second World War.

Activity 2

- 1 In what kinds of situations would you expect to find direct democracy?
- 2 What is the difference between pluralist and liberal democracy (both different kinds of representative democracy)?
- 3 What problems do you think there might be in representing people fairly in a representative democracy?

Activity 3

Answer the following questions:

- 1 What is meant by the term democracy?
- 2 Using these notes and your own knowledge outline and assess the main criticisms of both representative and direct democracy.
- 3 'Democracy is the worst form of government except all other forms which have been tried from time to time.' Winston Churchill. How accurate is this assessment of democracy?

Representative democracy

Direct democracy is where people make decisions for themselves without an intermediary. Representative democracy is where decisions are made by intermediaries on behalf of people.

Representative democracy is said to have the following general principles:

- 1) Delegation – that people chosen to act on behalf of the people who voted for them follow exactly their instructions.
- 2) Group representation – groups act on the behalf of a particular group.
- 3) Party representation – people are elected under a party label, and then are expected to follow the party policies.
- 4) Representative who use their own judgement on behalf of the people they represent.

Activity 4

Write a paragraph describing both Direct and Representative Democracy, include the advantages and disadvantages of each form of democracy and consider which you think mostly occurs in Britain.

Democracy in Britain

When dealing with the issue of democracy in Britain, it is important to remember the factors which are linked to Parliamentary, Representative Democracy. When evaluating democracy in Britain there are number of positive and negative issues which need to be considered in order to evaluate democracy in the UK.

Negative features

- There is no codified constitution which can limit government authority.
- Elections often are biased towards particular parties and votes often do not have the same value.
- A lot of power is in the hands of unelected bodies/groups.
- There are few effective controls on the Prime Ministers powers.
- The Prime Minister has a lot of power for someone who is indirectly elected.
- Government has too much control over parliament.
- Citizens do not have the protection of a Bill of Rights.

Positive features

- Elections are free and secret.
- There is freedom of expression and association.
- Parties and pressure groups are able to operate freely within the law.
- The media is not controlled by the government.
- Most people are able to stand for political office.
- The government is not above the law.
- The government is responsible to Parliament.

Module 1 People, Politics and Participation

Unit 1.2 Political participation

Learning objectives:

On completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- Assess the reasons for the decline in political participation

Key terms:

- Political participation
- Apathy
- Alienation
- Turnout
- Compulsory voting

Key reading:

Textbook pages 5–14.

Political participation

Political participation is an essential part of politics, and is concerned with how people interact with government; the decision making process; and attempts to influence decisions. Participation is an issue which greatly concerns both politicians and commentators. In most democracies participation is a voluntary process, but this is not always the case.

Participation is usually broken down into the different methods that people use, some are more pro-active than others.

- Participation via elections
- Participation via referendums/initiatives
- Direct action

In recent years there has been a decline in political participation. This unit will explore some of the reasons why.

Activity 1

Using pages 6–9 of your own textbook, write an explanation of the following terms:

- 1 **Apathy**

- 2 **Abstainers**

- 3 **Alienation**

- 4 **Direct action**

- 5 **Initiative**

- 6 **Referendum**

- 7 **Opinion poll**

Voting

Voting is the most usual way that people participate in politics, and is often the way that a democracy is judged, many countries have high voter turnouts, but Britain and America, and some European countries have experienced a decline in the amount of people to **turnout** to vote.

Activity 2

Using the information on pages 5–12 of your textbook:

1 Identify and explain the possible reasons for the decline in voter turnout.

2 Complete the summary questions from page 9:

■ Are you in favour of greater participation?

■ Many under-30s don't vote. Should they?

■ How do you think you developed your political attitudes and ideas?

Possible solutions to the decline in voter turnout

Various solutions have been suggested to reverse the general trend towards declining turnout. These include the following:

■ Making it easier to vote, e.g. making polling day a public holiday.

■ More use of postal voting (governments have expanded the use of postal voting in recent years).

■ Voting via the internet.

■ Incentive voting, i.e. giving people a reward for voting, such as a small sum of money.

■ **Compulsory voting.**

Activity 3

- 1 Use the internet to find the statistics of turnout for recent elections in your area. Remember that 'elections' includes council and Euro elections as well as general elections. Also find out the proportion of postal votes.
- 2 What issues do you think are raised by postal and possible internet voting?
- 3 Read the following web pages: <http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/article.php?id=46>, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2005/jul/04/voterapathy.uk>, plus any other relevant sites. Do you think compulsory voting would be a good way to respond to declining turnout? Explain your arguments.

Other types of participation

When it comes to the sort of people that do participate in politics there is often a stereotypical image of the type of person that participates, and what motivates people to participate. It is very often suggested that young people are the group least likely to be engaged in political participation, and the Grey voters (retired people) are the most likely to participate in politics. This is perhaps a simplified way of explaining participation.

Activity 4

- 1 From pages 9–14 of the textbook, list and explain the types of political participation that have been identified.
- 2 List and explain the reasons given for political participation.

3 What reasons are given for the lack of political participation today?

Some people would argue that issues concerning participation are often overstated, and in today's society with the demands placed on people's lives that political participation is often one of the last concerns of the people.

Activity 5



Kerboodle

Log on to Kerboodle at <http://live.kerboodle.com/secondary>

Your tutor should have given you a username and password to access Kerboodle: make sure you make a note of these for frequent future use, e.g. in your school planner. Log in, using these and the organisation code 3094492.

You should find that Govt and Politics AS has been allocated to you as a course; if not, please let your tutor know. Enter this and open up 'Course library', 'Unit 1' and 'Participation and voting behaviour'. Then click on 'What is the most effective way to participate in politics?'

This is a type of exercise known as a *webquest*, where you are expected to do research on the Internet and use the information to report back in a particular way. These exercises are written with face-to-face teaching in mind, so will need to be adapted for distance learning. The following points will apply here and whenever you are asked to do a webquest on the rest of this course:

- You will often be asked to work in groups and allocate roles. You can still work in groups if you wish and, if it is practically feasible to, work with other people from your distance learning class when doing your preparation outside of tutorial time. Otherwise, you will have to work individually instead. You can still divide up topics for research with other members of your distance learning class.
- You will often be asked to produce any of a variety of resources. For distance learning, for practical reasons, it is normally best just to give an oral presentation on your findings. Powerpoint presentations and handouts can also be used, but only if they are **sent in advance** (before the tutorial) by email to your tutor so that they can view them on a laptop or printout at the same time as you present them to the other students in the school classroom. Do not expect your tutor to be able to see any kind of visual presentation in sufficient detail through the video-conference camera.
- For this webquest on political participation, you should come back to the tutorial next week with notes from the websites you have used for research and notes on your recommendations for how to increase participation in the group you have chosen or been allocated (16–24, 25–50, or ethnic minorities).
- When you have completed the webquest, also try 'Test yourself: participating in politics', a self-administered multiple-choice test with feedback provided online.



□□□□□□□□□□

Assignment 1.2

- 1 Explain the term 'political participation' (write a paragraph of 80–100 words in answer to this question, defining the term clearly and giving examples).
- 2 How far does participation really matter?
(Referring to pages 12–14 of the textbook, write 500 words in answer to this question, selecting two or three points and discussing the strength of each in a paragraph. Conclude with your own answer to the question, backed up by reasons.)

