

Summary of Revised Arrangements for Politics for First Certification in 2007

Higher

There will be a course at Higher, with three component Units.

Political Theory (Higher)

Concepts

The State – what is meant by the term the state; the origins of the state; the link to sovereignty; its principal features and forms; the Pluralist and Marxist views/theories of the role of the state. Hobbes, Locke and Marx/Lenin are the relevant theorists.

Power – different definitions of power – power to – the consensus view of power should be contrasted with the conflict view – power is getting people to do what they would not have done otherwise, ie power over others. Power as decision-making; power as agenda setting; power by manipulating desires. Steven Lukes is the relevant theorist.

Authority – ‘legitimate power’ – using Max Weber’s work the candidate should be able to describe different types of authority and give relevant examples to illustrate them ie, traditional authority; charismatic authority and legal-rational authority.

Legitimacy – linked to authority and rightful power. Max Weber is the relevant theorist.

Democracy – criteria for defining democracy; models of democracy – direct, representative, liberal and people’s democracies; the advantages and disadvantages of democracy must be covered from different viewpoints using the work of appropriate theorists.

Ideologies

Liberalism – human nature; individualism; notion of freedom, justice and equality; democracy; rights and toleration; classical and modern liberalism. John Locke is the relevant theorist.

Conservatism – human imperfection; tradition; organic society; hierarchy; authority; property; traditional conservatism and the New Right. Edmund Burke is the relevant theorist.

Socialism – human nature; fraternity; social equality; social justice; Marxist and socialist traditions.

Political Structures (Higher)

This Unit compares and contrasts a number of key political structures in the UK with those in either Scotland or the USA.

Political Assemblies – unicameral and bicameral legislatures and their advantages and disadvantages, their functions including: representation of interests and legitimacy in each of the countries; the scrutiny of legislation and government policies.

Judiciary – the importance of the judiciary and its independence in constitutions; its place in the separation of powers debate is critical from a comparative point of view; the constitutional importance of the Supreme Court in the USA and the debate about the creation of such a body

in the UK should be covered rather than a detailed look at the judicial process and judicial reviews in each country.

Political Executives – types of executive – prime ministerial versus first ministerial/presidential; method of election; differences in the distribution of power and how the executive relates to other branches of government – separation of powers, sovereignty of parliament; cabinet government and accountability; styles/theories of leadership; formal and informal sources of power.

Political Representation (Higher)

This Unit explores a variety of elections in the UK, the US Presidential election along with other electoral systems and theories of representation and voting behaviour.

Representation – definitions, models and theories and the controversies that surround them. The candidates will cover competing theories of representation, based on particular ideological assumptions.

The types of electoral system that are already used for different elections in the UK at local, Scottish, UK and European level – Simple Majority, Alternative Vote, Second Ballot, Party List, Single Transferable Vote, Additional Member System and their relative advantages and disadvantages; the Presidential electoral system in the USA.

The use of referenda as a special case; the role of political parties and pressure groups in the electoral process.

The role of opinion polls and their uses/abuses; and the short-term and long-term influences on voting behaviour; theories of voting behaviour.

Intermediate 2

There will be no course at Intermediate 2 after 2006, but there will be three Units designed to articulate with the Units of the Higher Course.

Political Theory (Intermediate 2)

Content and Context

The State and Constitutions – candidates should focus on what a constitution is; what functions does it perform; what types are there – written/unwritten, flexible/rigid, unitary/federal; how constitutions embody political principles, eg separation of powers, rule of law, sovereignty of parliament. The concept of the state could flow from the unitary/federal distinction, but it must look at examples of states being legal, political and geographical entities. The distinction between a nation and a state and the issue of sovereignty should also be covered.

Power and Authority – these are related concepts and are best taught together. In studying power, candidates should appreciate that it involves having your decisions carried out by coercion, influence and by authority. It involves rewards and punishment and the notion of legitimacy, with authority linked to respect and the right to wield power. An exploration of

people/groups with a lot of power but little authority or a lot of authority but little power introduces types of authority and power in a basic way; a brief look at the distribution of power in the UK is a must with perhaps other contexts, eg the USA used as examples – this would be useful, particularly for those candidates going on to study at Higher later.

Rights and Obligations – candidates covering rights should be introduced to the idea of basic liberties. Many legal and political rights are based on natural rights – entitlements associated with being human. The notion of obligations is associated with rights so that there are bound to be constraints to freedom if rights are universalised. Rights included in a Bill of Rights; the difficulties associated with agreeing such a list; the issue of who should be able to restrict rights.

Democracy and Representation – the main aim is to show that democracy may exist in more than one form, and that all societies, including the UK (and perhaps America as another example), have some flaws in their claims to being democratic.

Some historical development of the concept and discussion of direct democracy and participation should lead to representative democracy and the principles associated with it. Democracy can be viewed as being involved in decision making and/or a way of selecting a government. The first view sees democracy as dynamic, an ideal to be aimed for, whereas the second sees it as static, achieved when people have the vote.

There is a natural link here between democracy and the other related concept of representation. This concept is of crucial importance in the history of political thought and in the way it is applied within many political systems today. Candidates should explore different definitions of representation, eg representative in the sense of being typical of a larger group and representative as an agent or delegate. Such an approach introduces the ideas of consent and accountability, particularly when applied to **responsibility** in that representatives should be sensitive to the needs and wishes of their constituents and need to seek re-election.

A comparative approach would assist in the understanding of the following political models. However assessment will focus only on their impact on the UK.

Liberalism – the candidate should look at liberal ideas and values concerning the individual, capitalism and welfare. Political toleration, views on censorship, freedom of speech, minority interests; equality of opportunity; rule of law; individualistic, decentralist.

Conservatism – the candidate should look at conservatism as a tradition and as an ideology. Views on the value of tradition, human nature, authority and private property underpin the model. The conservative view of government and other areas like the free market, nationhood, patriotism and unity are also important. The need for social control and order – deference, collectivism, centralism – are also important.

Socialism – the candidate should look at the socialist view of human nature with socialism building a society in which individuals can cooperate; how individuals are influenced by their environment; economic equality; public ownership of the means of production; collectivist, centralist.

Political Structures (Intermediate 2)

Content and Context

Legislatures – the structure of the legislatures for Scotland, the UK and the EU. The unicameral, bicameral and tricameral models with their relative advantages and disadvantages; the nature of the committee system in Scotland, the UK and the EU (a powerful legislature needs a well developed committee structure which gives detailed consideration to legislative measures and financial proposals, scrutinises administration and expenditure and investigates matters of public concern).

Candidates should be introduced to and be aware of the important institutions involved in legislation – the Queen, the House of Commons and House of Lords in Westminster; the Holyrood Parliament in Edinburgh; The European Council, the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the European Commission.

The functions of a legislature include some or all of the following – monitoring of the executive; recruitment and control of political leaders; making and dismissing governments; representation; the passing of laws. These are useful guides to compare and contrast the functions of the legislatures of Scotland, UK and the EU.

Executives – how the executives are structured (who is included when we speak about the executive in Scotland, the UK and the EU); how are their powers distributed and what checks and balances on their powers exist; candidates should be able to describe these powers as well as compare and contrast them.

Political Representation (Intermediate 2)

Content and Context

Political Parties and Pressure Groups in the UK – functions of political parties, eg electoral and governing roles; party system and the major parties in the UK; distinction between the aims and functions of pressure groups and parties; power and influence of pressure groups.

Elections and Electoral Systems – candidates should be aware of the functions of elections and the advantages and disadvantages of several types of electoral systems, including the simple plurality system, the second ballot system, the alternative vote system, additional member system, single transferable vote system and the party list system; rather than very detailed knowledge of each, it is more important that candidates understand those systems which are relevant to elections taking place in the UK and what the key points are in the debate over electoral reform in the UK; the Scottish parliamentary system can be covered here by way of comparison.

Electoral Data – candidates should be introduced to electoral data and given the opportunity to develop skills, including analysis and detecting bias and selectivity in source materials.