



# **Advanced Higher Modern Studies**

**Approved List of Dissertations**

**2017**

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# Introduction

This list of titles applies to the project–dissertation for Advanced Higher Modern Studies. The titles list is neither final nor definitive but is designed to exemplify suitable questions/hypothesis.

If centres wish to present dissertation titles which are not listed in this document, they must submit their proposed titles to SQA by 1 November. Further details are available on the Modern Studies page of SQA's website. This service is advisory in nature.

**There is no need for centres to seek approval for titles which merely refine the issue in some way.**

# **Study Theme 1: Political Issues**

## **Area of Study A: Power and Influence**

### **Interest groups and their impact on the political process**

Professional lobbying corrupts the political process.

The political process would grind to a halt without the input of specialist insider groups.

Interest groups exert a positive influence on policy-makers and the political process.

Outsider groups exert greater influence on public opinion and policy-making than insider groups.

Direct action is a legitimate course of action for interest groups to employ in order to achieve their aims and objectives.

Interest groups have more significant influence in the USA than the UK. (Replace country or countries as fits with contexts studied.)

Interest group influence varies from country to country.

The use of direct action by interest groups is counter-productive and a threat to the values of democracy.

Only interest groups who share the same ideological outlook of the government enjoy influence and success.

Interest groups provide legitimacy within pluralist democracies and/or a challenge to despotic governments.

Interest groups' greatest asset is social media.

When it comes to interest groups, size is all that matters.

## **Media and its influence on the political process**

The media plays a key role in the political process by informing and educating the electorate.

A media free from government or independent oversight is necessary for true democracy.

Public service broadcasting is necessary to preserve a pluralistic and politically impartial media.

Concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few media conglomerates damages politics and the political process.

The influence of newspapers on political decision-making is declining in line with their decreasing circulations.

Those newspapers which are still politically influential are those which have managed to establish an online presence.

Social media is the most influential media format on election outcomes in the twenty-first century.

Television is still king when it comes to influencing elections and voting behaviour.

The influence of social media on politics is over-exaggerated.

The Scottish Independence result shows that social media is creating a new breed of voter.

Reports on the demise of the traditional media's influence are greatly exaggerated.

The Democrats' use of social media and mobile technology has given them the edge over their political rivals in the USA.

A political leader's greatest ally is the media.

## **Political parties and elections**

Only parties who have adapted their ideological positions remain relevant today.

All major parties have divisions within and between them.

Pragmatism is the defining feature of parties of government.

The Labour Party OR Liberal Democrats OR Conservatives have abandoned ideology in the pursuit of power.

The Labour Party is no longer a party of the working classes.

The Conservative Party has abandoned any notion of compassionate conservatism.

The Orange Book revolution has proved disastrous for the Liberal Democrats.

Third parties are ineffective and act only as a protest vote.

Single issue parties within the UK have evolved and broadened their appeal.

The two-party system is under threat.

South Africa is a one-party state.

There are increasing similarities between the American and British Party systems.

The surge in party membership of new parties in recent years shows disillusionment with mainstream political parties in the UK.

Will the SNP be the natural party of governance in Scotland for the foreseeable future?

The success of the SNP in recent elections has been the result of a more clearly defined ideology in comparison to the Westminster parties.

Political parties are inherently undemocratic.

Political parties are increasingly dominated by their leaders.

Grassroots members of political parties have limited input into decisions and policy making.

Political parties are a dying breed in the twenty-first century.

Only those parties who increase their party membership will remain relevant in the twenty-first century.

Political parties in the UK have become more polarised over issues in recent years.

State funding of political parties is necessary to avoid corruption of the political process.

FPTP has no place in a modern democracy.

FPTP acts as a safeguard against the worst aspects of the tyranny of the majority.

PR systems are fairer and more representative of the will of the people.

PR systems ensure more effective electoral outcomes.

The differences between the party systems in the UK and Germany are a consequence of the different election systems used.

Electronic voting would address the issue of low voter turnout.

Compulsory voting is necessary to overcome the democratic deficit of low voter turnout.

Race is an increasingly important factor in elections.

Leadership is the most important factor in electoral success.

Social class remains the underlying, key influence in determining voting behaviour in elections.

The economy is now the key issue in influencing voting behaviour in modern elections.

## **Area of Study B: Living Political Ideas**

### **Political theories, thoughts and ideas**

Liberty and equality are not compatible.

Inequality is the price of a strong, economic liberal democracy.

States that prioritise individual freedom above equality have prospered and come closer to achieving equality than states which have not.

There is no such thing as society, only individuals.

The interests of the state override the rights of the individual.

Citizens' rights are inalienable.

### **The relationship between political ideas and ideologies**

In a post-ideological world there is no place for ideology, only pragmatism.

Recent economic turbulence has seen resurgence in the ideas of Socialism/Marxism.

Liberalism has undergone a resurgence in recent years.

Liberalism is not compatible with political parties or systems that are socially and morally conservative.

Conservatism shares more similarities than differences with Liberalism.

Conservatism has appropriated the values of nationalism and dressed them up as patriotism.

Marxism is a failed ideology.

The rise in nationalism within Scotland is civic in nature.

Ethnic nationalism is inherently negative and inward looking.



## **The contemporary relevance of political ideas**

Neo-liberal values now dominate the global economy.

Individualism has triumphed over collectivism.

Social democratic rather than socialist values now dominate the values of centre-left political parties.

Right-wing think tanks and interest groups hold more influence than their left-wing counterparts.

The influence of right-wing ideas has seen a shrinking of the state in recent years.

A smaller state is a worthwhile price for individual liberty and choice.

Public opinion has shifted rightwards in recent years.

Public opinion firmly supports austerity.

The Conservative Government's welfare reforms represent an ideological attempt to shrink the state.

The Scottish Government's belief in a collectivist welfare state is unaffordable and unsustainable.

Universal welfare benefits all society.

Tax avoidance and tax evasion are more damaging to society than benefit fraud.

# **Area of Study C: Political Structures**

## **Constitutions and political systems**

A written, codified constitution is an integral part of democracy.

The original intent of the United States' Constitution is limiting.

The power of parliament within a unicameral system is greater than under a bicameral system.

Scrutiny of the executive within a bicameral system is more rigorous than under a unicameral system.

A federated UK is the best way forward to maintain the Union.

Federalism is the best system for governing socially diverse, densely populated states.

Devolution is a threat to the sovereignty of the UK parliament.

Committee oversight is more powerful in the US than in the UK system of government.

## **Branches of government and their influence in the political process**

Legislative power trumps that of the executive.

The legislative and judicial branches of government find it difficult to check or block the power of the executive.

Judicial powers to check the legislative and executive are limited but effective.

The US President is imperial.

The UK Prime Minister is presidential.

The powers of the UK Prime Minister are the envy of the American President.

The Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) is all-powerful.

Brazil's presidential system of government produces institutional deadlock between the executive and legislative.

## **Relationships between levels of government**

The jurisdiction of the UK Supreme Court in Scottish affairs is questionable.

The additional powers granted to the Scottish Parliament are sufficient.

UK parliamentary sovereignty is threatened by the European Union.

The Scottish independence referendum has settled relations between Scotland and the rest of the UK for a generation.

English votes for English laws (EVEL) is more of a threat to the Union than the Scottish independence referendum was.

The UK's relationship with the European Union has become increasingly negative.

Britain has more in common with the rest of Europe than it has differences.

# **Study Theme 2: Social Issues, Law and Order**

## **Area of Study A: Understanding the Criminal Justice System**

### **Individual human rights and liberty in relation to criminal justice**

The values of the European Convention on Human Rights are compatible with the UK judicial framework.

A British bill of rights would better suit the UK and/or Scottish criminal justice system.

Civil liberties are under threat from the global war on terrorism.

Recent legislation has reduced the human rights of people in the UK.

Human rights are violated regularly by the Chinese State Government.

Defining Guantanamo Bay inmates as 'unlawful combatants' violates international law.

The Russian Government's treatment of political opposition is immoral and contravenes international human rights legislation.

Human rights legislation hinders the states' attempts to protect national security.

The European Convention on Human Rights has undermined the legal system in the UK.

The UK Government has failed to enforce the rights of asylum seekers.

Civil rights organisations remain the only credible opposition to the government's infringement on an individual's rights.

The media's coverage of crimes of a sexual nature has created mass hysteria and undermined the rule of law.

An irrational fear of crime is fed by the media.

## **Judicial framework**

The UK is a police state.

Scotland's court system is efficient and effective in dealing with crime and criminality.

The court system is undermined by the government's guidelines on sentencing.

Ending the 'double-jeopardy' rule risks increasing miscarriages of justice.

The creation of the UK Supreme Court threatens the independence of the Scottish criminal justice system.

## **Current criminal justice issues**

Extending the powers of the security services is necessary to safeguard national security.

Reducing the pre-charge detention period for terror suspects in the UK to 14 days threatens the UK's national security.

Only those who attempt to disrupt the state should fear the use of new technology by the police and other government agencies.

Biometric identity cards should be compulsory for all UK citizens.

The 'not proven' verdict has no place in a modern Scottish criminal justice system.

The need for corroboration in criminal trials should be reviewed.

Recent changes to Legal Aid exclude the most vulnerable and poorest from justice.

Criminal justice systems discriminate against young males.

The special needs of women are being recognised and met within the Scottish criminal justice system.

Ethnic minorities in the USA fail to receive equality before the law.

The criminal justice system is inherently racist.

The police are institutionally racist.

The creation of Police Scotland has been an unmitigated failure.

CCTV has been the key factor in recent reductions in crime levels across the UK.

Cuts to police budgets will invariably lead to increases in crime across the UK.

Police responses to cybercrime are 'too little, too late'.

Cybercrime is increasing in the UK.

All UK police officers should routinely carry taser guns.

Arming the police in the UK would undermine the principle of policing by consent.

## **Area of Study B: Understanding Criminal Behaviour**

### **The nature and extent of criminal behaviour**

All crime is deviant but not all deviance is criminal.

The deviances of the middle classes are permissible while the crimes of the poorest are punishable.

Police crime statistics cannot be trusted.

Self-reporting crime statistics are the only believable crime statistics.

Statistics on reported crimes are inherently unreliable.

Race hate crime is increasing.

Perceptions of crime are universal.

### **Evaluation of theories of criminal behaviour**

Criminals are born that way.

Society creates criminals.

Society prepares the crime, criminals commit them.

Social deprivation and crime are inextricably linked.

Violent crime is in the genes.

Sexual violence against women is a consequence of misogynistic attitudes within society.

Masculinity and violent crime are inextricably linked.

Testosterone is the driver of violent crime.

Crime increases in a consumerist society.

Poor parenting is the cause of youth criminality.

Theoretical approaches to explaining crime are now defunct.

## **The social and economic effects of criminal behaviour**

Crime psychologically affects the elderly more than any other group.

The working classes pay the cost of crime.

Being young, black and male is a prison sentence from birth.

The real cost of crime is paid by young men.

UK laws excessively punish and endanger, rather than protect, women engaged in prostitution.

Crime is concentrated in the most economically deprived areas.

White-collar crime has a wider and more costly impact on society.

The middle-classes are insulated from the worst aspects of crime and criminality.

Female crime has a more damaging impact on the family.

Racism is not only surviving but thriving in Scotland today.

The cost of cybercrime is increasingly borne by the private sector.

The UK taxpayer pays the price of private sector crime.

The public's fear of crime is irrational and misplaced.

# **Area of Study C: Responses by Society to Crime**

## **Theories and explanations of responses to crime**

Prison systems are too focused on punishment to succeed.

Protecting the public should be the first and only priority of any penal system.

Crime prevention is less costly and more effective than punishment in tackling crime.

Capital punishment is ineffective and inhumane.

Recent government policy has led to 'more laws and less order'.

Rehabilitation is revolutionising the criminal justice system in the UK.

Zero tolerance approaches to crime do not deter crime.

The emotions of the public have got in the way of effective responses to criminal behaviour.

## **Current responses to crime and evaluation of responses to crime**

Prison works.

Prison is a costly waste of time.

Restorative justice is not the answer to tackling crime.

Rehabilitation is the way to lower recidivism rates.

Purposeful activity is aiding rehabilitation and reducing re-offending.

Short-term prison sentences are costly and counter-productive in reducing crime.

Only serious crimes should warrant a prison sentence.

Non-custodial sentences are more effective in dealing with crime.

Alternatives to prison jeopardise public safety.



Prison is ineffective in dealing with crime.

Stop and search powers of the police are abused and require reform.

Racial profiling is a controversial but necessary weapon in the police's armoury to fight crime.

Multi-agency approaches to dealing with drug offenders are ineffective.

Criminalising drug addiction and drug-related crimes is ineffective and is better served by the use of DTTOs and social services.

Women should not be sent to prison.

Sending children to prison is of no benefit whatsoever.

Locking women up should have no place in modern society.

The fundamental human rights of prisoners are not being met.

The Criminal Justice System fails to meet the mental health needs of prisoners.

The Scottish/UK approaches to crime lag behind global comparators.

Current responses to crime are working.

Current responses to crime are too soft.

The case for gun control in the USA is irrefutable.

The use of the death penalty by selected US states is legitimate and proportionate.

# **Study Theme 3: Social Issues, Social Inequality**

## **Area of Study A: Understanding Social Inequality**

### **The nature and extent of social inequality**

Social inequality cannot be measured by income alone.

Child poverty in the UK is exaggerated.

Eradicating child poverty is an unachievable objective for any government.

The Conservative Government are right to reform how poverty is measured in the UK.

Social mobility is a thing of the past in developed economies.

BRIC countries' economic development has increased social mobility and raised prosperity for all.

### **Theories and explanations of inequality**

Poverty and inequality are down to the individual.

The culture and attitudes of the poor keeps them trapped in poverty.

The disparity in wages between the highest and lowest earners in the UK cannot be justified.

The more hierarchical a society the more prosperous it is likely to be.

The UK perpetuates an unfair, class-based system which reinforces social and economic inequality.

The caste system is a natural, evolutionary product of Indian society.

Globalisation has reduced inequality in recent years.

Trade liberalisation within the global economy has only reinforced economic inequality between developed and developing nations.

Scarcity of resources best explains societal inequalities.

## **Evaluation of theories and explanations of social inequality**

Marx's critique of capitalism is still relevant today.

All history is the history of class struggle.

Marx and Weber have more in common in their criticisms of capitalism than differences.

Inequality is universal and natural.

Society cannot function without inequality.

## **Area of Study B: Impact of Inequality**

### **The social and economic impact of inequality**

The greatest degree of social and economic inequality within any society falls upon women.

The rich in the UK and USA suffer more from the impact of inequality than the rich in Sweden.

The white working class in the USA are as likely to be victims of poverty and inequality as ethnic minorities.

Inequality's most damaging impact for the individual is on their health.

Individuals born into it find it impossible to escape the vicious cycle of poverty.

Poor children become poor adults.

Rich children become rich adults.

The children of families who experience divorce are more likely to experience poverty and social exclusion.

The elderly community suffer greater social and economic inequality and are less well equipped to deal with it.

Communities with the greatest needs receive the worst public services.

## **The social and economic impact of inequality on aspects of society**

Unequal societies have the worst social problems.

Health and inequality are inextricably linked.

The ability to buy the best education is the best guarantee of economic success.

Poverty pushes the poor into crime.

Britain's obsession with home ownership has fuelled the widening inequality gap.

Under-employment has more negative effects for part-time workers.

The UK housing market only creates social divisions within society.

Zero hours contracts bring no benefits to employees.

## **Area of Study C: Responses to Social Inequality**

### **Theories and explanations of responses to social inequality**

The Nordic model should be adopted by countries who wish to tackle poverty and inequality.

Trickle-down economics has failed to tackle the widening inequality gap in the USA.

Free market economics has been successful in lifting more people out of poverty than any other economic approach.

Germany's welfare system is shifting away from a conservative model towards the liberal American model.

### **Current responses and evaluation of responses to social inequality**

Universal benefits are a price worth paying for a more equal society.

Privatisation of public services only reinforces inequality.

Privately run workfare programmes have been a success.

Welfare reforms are needed to tackle the dependency culture that has developed in the UK.

Recent healthcare reforms in the USA have reduced health inequalities.

The Scottish Government's approach to healthcare tackles health inequalities better than the approach put forward by the UK Government.

The free school model of Sweden, England and Wales offers greater educational choice, improves educational attainment and reduces the inequality gap.

The comprehensive education experiment has failed.

UK Government housing policies are widening the inequality gap.

The state alone cannot solve poverty and inequality.

The 'Big Society' does not work.

Creating equality of opportunity across all social classes is paying dividends in the UK.

The Scottish Government's opposition to welfare reforms and austerity is illogical and unaffordable.

Austerity will only extend poverty and inequality.

Redistributive taxation is the only way to address inequality.

China's command economy allows it to address inequality more effectively than liberal, free-market economies such as the UK and USA.

Germany's strong economic position is down to the 'Agenda' package of welfare reforms.

South Africa remains 'two nations', one white — one black, despite government attempts to redress inequality.