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KNOW**

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at your
fingertips

Edexcel **A-LEVEL**

POLITICS

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Thinker	Human nature	Government	Society	Economy
Michael Oakeshott	Humanity should be free within structures.	Government by tradition and pragmatism.	Humanity depends on local communities.	Free markets need to be moderated.
Ayn Rand	Humans should be guided by rational self-interest and self-fulfilment.	Minimal role (law, order and security).	There is no society, only a mass of individuals.	Free markets with no state intervention.
Robert Nozick	Self-interested in self-ownership.	The state passes public works to private sectors.	Society should promote individual self-fulfilment.	The state should only be an arbiter between private companies.

Do you know?

- 1 What are the core principles of conservatism?
- 2 What are typical conservative attitudes to human nature, government, society and the economy?
- 3 What are the tensions within conservative ideology?
- 4 What are the areas where the different types agree and disagree?
- 5 Which types of conservatism are the core thinkers associated with?

3.3 Socialism

You need to know

- the core ideas of socialism
- how the core ideas relate to human nature, the state, society and the economy
- the differing views and tensions within socialism
- the key ideas of:
 - Marx
 - Webb
 - Luxemburg
 - Crosland
 - Giddens

Socialism emerged over the nineteenth century as a reaction to traditional conservatism and the growing inequalities that had emerged in industrial societies as a result of capitalism. It promoted the idea of collective action and the removal of all hierarchy to promote a system that would ensure economic equality for all.

Core ideas

Table 58 Core ideas of socialism

Idea	Meaning	Related concepts
Collectivism	Human society will be strongest when there is collective action by all humanity towards a greater good. Politics, economics and social reform should benefit society, not individuals. There should be wealth redistribution to equalise society.	Common ownership Progressive taxation Progressive public spending Public services
Common humanity	Humans are naturally social. Individuals are shaped by society and capitalism has corrupted natural social tendencies.	Anti-capitalism Fraternity
Equality	Belief that people are not born equal. Focus on equality of outcome , rather than of opportunity.	Social justice
Social class	Society is divided into classes based on how money is earned and professions with higher classes benefiting at the expense of the lower.	Class consciousness
Workers' control	Those who produce should control the means of production. A strong state is necessary to achieve a socialist state, but that state should be governed by the workers.	Communism Marxism

Key terms

Common ownership The means of production are owned collectively and profits are shared.

Fraternity The relationship between people.

Capitalism Wealth is privately owned and economies are driven by market forces.

Social justice An attempt to limit inequality through wealth redistribution.

Equality of outcome Aiding disadvantaged groups to achieve the same outcomes as other groups.

Class consciousness A self-understanding of a class by its members.

Communism All wealth and society are organised and shared communally.

Marxism The political theories of Karl Marx that communism is inevitable.

Types of socialism

Revolutionary socialism

Revolutionary socialism believes in:

- the destruction of the capitalist system
- the overthrow of the existing world order
- the 'creation' of a socialist state
- total state control over the economy
- a socialist or communist state would be governed by a dictatorship of the proletariat
- imposition of socialism on society
- common ownership

Exam tip

Be careful not to confuse revolutionary with evolutionary; evolutionary means gradual change, while revolutionary means rapid change. Both types of socialism agree on change but disagree on the speed of change.

Key thinkers include:

- Karl Marx
- Rosa Luxemburg

Democratic socialism

Democratic socialism believes in:

- the replacement of the capitalist system by a socialist system
- that a socialist state can evolve from current systems without revolution
- a socialist state will be achieved by socialist parties winning electoral majorities
- nationalisation and common ownership

Key thinkers include:

- Beatrice Webb

Social democracy

Social democracy is a branch of **revisionist socialism**, that believes capitalism and socialism can be compatible, unlike fundamental socialism, which believes capitalism must be eradicated to create a socialist state.

Social democrats believe in:

- rationality
- **evolutionary socialism**
- operating within current political structures
- a mixed economy, with socialistic elements operating within a capitalist framework
- major state involvement in the economy
- nationalisation of private industry
- **Keynesian economics**
- persuading voters of the inevitable benefits of socialism through social justice

Key thinkers include:

- Anthony Crosland

Third way

Third way believes in:

- a greater focus on equality of opportunity rather than equality of outcome
- liberalisation of the economy to provide more money for public spending
- privatisation over nationalisation
- a greater focus on social and political equality as well as economic equality

Key terms

Revisionist socialism

An approach to socialism that believes socialism is compatible with capitalism.

Evolutionary socialism

Socialism will gradually be achieved within existing systems.

Keynesian economics

Government intervention is necessary in economics.

3 Ideologies

Key thinkers include:

- Anthony Giddens

Comparing types of socialism

Revolutionary, democratic socialism, social democrats and third-way supporters disagree over:

- the impact of society on human nature
- how far human nature is corrupted by capitalism
- the strength and power of the state
- the speed and nature of change
- the existence or role of capitalism within a socialist state

Revolutionary, democratic socialism, social democrats and third-way supporters agree that:

- human nature is social and malleable
- a nation state is essential
- change and reforms are needed to the current system
- the state has a duty to oversee public welfare
- the state plays a part in the economic developments

Key thinkers

Table 59 Key thinkers and themes

Thinker	Human nature	Government	Society	Economy
Karl Marx	Humans are social creatures, but this has been damaged by capitalism.	Existing governments need to be destroyed and replaced by a socialist state.	Society should be classless.	Collective ownership.
Rosa Luxemburg	Social cohesion exists within social classes.	Existing governments need to be destroyed and replaced by a workers-based society of true democracy.	Sub-cultures provide a model for future societies.	Capitalism can only be replaced by an economy based on workers' control.
Beatrice Webb	Capitalism should be replaced by an evolutionary process.	Universal suffrage was the key to creating a socialist state.	Poverty should be tackled as a priority.	Gradual replacement of capitalism by common ownership of the means of production.
Anthony Crosland	Humans naturally oppose inequality.	Existing systems can be used to create a socialist state.	The class system is complex and many do not fit into class distinctions.	A mixed economy.
Anthony Giddens	Social fairness is combined with self-fulfilment.	Government power should be decentralised.	Socialists must work with the middle classes, not oppose them.	A neo-liberal economy to provide for welfare programmes.

Do you know?

- 1 What are the main ideas upon which socialism rests?
- 2 How does socialism relate to human nature, government, society and the economy?
- 3 What are the different types of socialism?
- 4 What are the areas of agreement and disagreement within socialism?
- 5 Which types of socialism are the core thinkers associated with?

End of section 3 questions

- 1 What are the core ideas of liberalism?
 - 2 How do the core ideas of liberalism relate to human nature, society, the state and the economy?
 - 3 Why is there tension between the different strands of liberalism?
 - 4 What are the common traits of liberalism?
 - 5 How do different thinkers relate to different strands of liberalism?
 - 6 What are the core ideas of conservatism?
 - 7 How do the core ideas of conservatism relate to human nature, society, the state and the economy?
 - 8 Why is there tension between the different strands of conservatism?
 - 9 How do different thinkers relate to different strands of conservatism?
 - 10 What are the common traits of conservatism?
 - 11 What are the core ideas of socialism?
 - 12 How do the core ideas of socialism relate to human nature, society, the state and the economy?
 - 13 Why is there tension between the different strands of socialism?
 - 14 How do different thinkers relate to different strands of socialism?
 - 15 What are the common traits of socialism?
- 

4 US politics

4.1 The US Constitution

You need to know

- the structure of the US Constitution
- the powers delegated to the branches of government
- how the Constitution can be amended
- the principles of the Constitution
- how democratic the Constitution is

Features of the US Constitution

The US **Constitution** has three key features:

- it is **codified**, meaning in one single, authoritative document
- it is **entrenched**, meaning it is difficult to amend and judiciable
- it has many vague elements, opening it up to interpretation

As a result of these features, the US Constitution is a higher form of law than other laws, giving the USA a two-tier legal system.

The constitutional framework

The US Constitution comprises seven articles detailing the powers of different branches and the relationship between the branches and the nature of the Constitution itself.

Table 60 The constitutional framework

Article	Aspect	Powers
I	Legislature	All legislative powers will be held by a bicameral Congress.
II	Executive	All executive powers will be held by a single president for a 4-year term.
III	Judicial	Judicial power will be vested in a Supreme Court of the United States.
IV	Federalism	Reserved powers are held by the states, implied powers are held by the federal government, concurrent powers are shared.
V	Amendment process	Amendments can be proposed by Congress or the states and must be ratified by the people or by state legislatures.
VI	Miscellaneous provisions	Supremacy clause set the Constitution as the highest form of law in the USA.
VII	Ratification process	Gives the power to the people, through conventions, to accept the Constitution.

Key terms

Constitution A set of formal laws to govern a country.

Codified When laws are gathered into one single document.

Entrenched When laws are entrenched, they are difficult to overturn and amend.

Synoptic link

As constitutional law is higher, the US Supreme Court can strike down statute laws, unlike the UK Supreme Court, where all laws are equal.

Exam tips

- By allowing the people to ratify the Constitution, the USA became the first country to enable the people to decide how they would be ruled, making it highly democratic.
- The articles were written in the order of their importance to the Founding Fathers.

Amendments

The US Constitution has been amended (changed) 27 times since it was written.

Any amendment must go through two stages: proposal and ratification.

Table 61 The amendment process

Proposed by...	Two-thirds of the House AND the Senate OR Legislatures in two-thirds of the states calling for a National Constitutional Convention
Ratified by...	Three-quarters of state legislatures (38) OR Ratifying conventions in three-quarters of the states

Table 62 Advantages and disadvantages of the amendment process

Advantages	Disadvantages
Any amendment will have the support of a clear majority of the USA.	5% of the population can effectively stop an amendment.
Pointless or needless amendments are not passed.	Desirable or necessary amendments cannot be made.
It preserves the sanctity of the US Constitution.	It allows the Constitution to become outdated.
Ratification retains federalism.	Complexities give too much power to the Supreme Court.

The Bill of Rights

The first ten amendments are known as ‘the Bill of Rights’. This aims to protect citizens and states from the federal government.

Table 63 The Bill of Rights

Amendment	Rights
I	Freedom of religion, speech, petition, press and assembly
II	Right to bear arms
III	No quartering of troops in private homes
IV	Unreasonable stop and searches
V	Rights of the accused
VI	Right to trial by jury
VII	Common law
VIII	Cruel and unusual punishments
IX	Protection of unenumerated rights
X	Powers reserved to the states (federalism)

Synoptic link

The debates over powers and the relationship between the branches and the federal government and the states depend on interpretations of the Constitution.

Synoptic link

This is the formal process of amending the Constitution, but the Supreme Court amends it whenever it applies judicial review, meaning the Constitution is effectively amended several times a year.

Exam tips

- On any question relating to the amendment process, do not forget to include the role of the Supreme Court.
- Some questions may ask about constitutional rights while others may ask about the Bill of Rights. Make sure you are clear on the rights specifically stated in the Bill of Rights.

Principles of the US Constitution

Aims of the **Founding Fathers**:

- democracy
- limited government
- federalism
- national government

The key **principles** of the US Constitution are:

- **separation of powers**
- **checks and balances**
- bipartisanship
- limited government
- federalism

Separation of powers

The different branches of the federal government are separated. They physically occupy different locations and people cannot be in two branches at once.

Different branches have different powers, but powers are in fact shared, while it is institutions that are separate.

Table 64 Separated powers

President	Congress	Supreme Court
Power to enforce laws	Power to make and pass laws	Power to review laws
Power to nominate	Power of confirmation	Power to determine constitutionality
Power to spend	Power to tax	Power to determine constitutionality

Checks and balances

The separation of powers means power is distributed between the branches so that no single branch can become too powerful or tyrannical. To limit the power of each branch, the other branches act as a check on the other two to prevent any form of dictatorship.

Table 65 Checks in the US Constitution

Checks by/on	The president	Congress	The Supreme Court
The president	X	Veto a bill	Pardon
Congress	Overriding a veto Confirmation of appointments and treaties Impeachment	X	Proposing constitutional amendments Impeachment
The Supreme Court	Declaring actions unconstitutional	Striking down unconstitutional laws	X

Key terms

Founding Fathers

Influential political figures from the era of the American revolution and creation of the USA. Most often used to describe the men who wrote the Constitution.

Principle A central idea or belief.

Separation of powers

When there is a distinct separation between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government.

Checks and balances

System whereby the different branches have powers divided between them and to oversee each other.

Bipartisanship

The Founding Fathers believed a separation of powers would force factions to compromise to create better legislation, but today **divided government** can occur between the executive and legislative branches.

While the Constitution can promote bipartisanship and compromise, it can also lead to less effective government, as partisan groups use the checks and balances to block their rivals.

Table 66 Recent periods of divided and unified government

Years	Presidency	House	Senate
2016+	Republican	Republican	Republican
2014–16	Democrat	Republican	Republican
2010–14	Democrat	Republican	Democrat
2008–10	Democrat	Democrat	Democrat
2006–08	Republican	Democrat	Democrat
2002–06	Republican	Republican	Republican
2001–02	Republican	Republican	Democrat

Limited government

The separation of powers, and checks and balances were designed to limit the power of the national or ‘federal’ government.

The Bill of Rights was introduced to ensure the power of the government was limited.

Federalism

While a strong national government was seen as necessary in 1788, the states wanted to retain their own powers and customs. The Constitution created a federal system, with a strong, but limited, national (or federal) government which would have **enumerated powers** over some areas, with state governments holding power and authority over all other areas.

However, as America changed, so did the nature of federalism, with **implied powers** being used to give more power to the federal government at the expense of the states.

Federalism since 1968

Federalism increased because:

- New federalism attempted to give more control to the states with block grants.

Key terms

Bipartisanship When two parties cooperate and compromise.

Divided government When the presidency is controlled by a different party from one or both chambers of Congress.

Limited government The powers of the government are restricted by constitutional laws and rights.

Federalism The idea that power is shared between a national government and state governments.

Enumerated powers Powers expressly granted to the federal government in the Constitution.

Implied powers Powers that are open to interpretation.

Exam tip

Before the Civil War the USA was described in the plural (the United States are); after the Civil War it was described in the singular (the United States is) showing a change in federalism.

4 US politics

- Reagan attempted to reduce the size of the federal government.
- Supreme Court rulings, like *US vs Lopez*, began to limit the power of the federal government.

However, under Bush and Obama federalism decreased in key areas:

- **education:** No Child Left Behind and Rise to the Top
- **healthcare:** Medicare expansion and the Affordable Care Act
- **defence:** Homeland Security and increasing terror threats
- **economic:** bailouts and growing federal employment
- **environment:** the growth of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and environmental initiatives

Synoptic link

Through devolution the UK appears to have federalism, but the rights of devolved bodies are granted by Parliament and not protected by the Constitution, so their power is much weaker than in the USA.

Federalism in the Constitution

Evidence of states rights and powers in the Constitution include:

- Representation and taxation was determined by state.
- State governors fill vacancies.
- All states get equal representation in the Senate.
- Representatives must reside in their state.
- Electoral processes are to be determined by the states.
- The Electoral College is based on state representation.
- Each state must respect the laws and customs of the others.
- Ratification was to be determined by the state.
- Ratification of amendments is determined by states.
- The 10th Amendment.

Exam tip

When considering democratic elements, it is important to consider what you mean by democracy and what the different types of democracy are.

Democracy and the US Constitution

Many Founding Fathers had a fear of populism so introduced constitutional measures to limit democracy.

Table 67 Democracy in the US Constitution

Democratic	Anti-democratic
Popular elections to the House	Senators to be appointed by state legislatures
Public involvement in amendments	The need for supermajorities can create a tyranny of the minority
An elected president	The Electoral College
Proportional representation of states	Unequal representation in the House
All states get equal representation in the Senate	Large population states are under-represented in the Senate and Electoral College
Bill of Rights protects citizens	3/5 clause and support for slave trade

UK/US comparison

Table 68 The US Constitution and UK constitution compared

US	UK
Codified	Uncodified
Rigid	Flexible
Federal	Unitary
Constitutional sovereignty	Parliamentary sovereignty
Entrenched rights	Semi-entrenched rights
Separation of powers	Fusion of powers
Strong judiciary	Weak judiciary

Do you know?

- 1 What are the aims and principles of the Constitution?
- 2 How can the Constitution be amended?
- 3 How has federalism in the US changed?
- 4 How democratic is the US Constitution?
- 5 What are the similarities and differences between the US and UK constitutions?

4.2 Congress

You need to know

- the structure of Congress
- the shared and separate powers of each chamber
- the functions of Congress
- the effectiveness of Congress
- how congressional powers have changed

Structure of Congress

Overview

Congress is bicameral, made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate.