



Topic Assessment System

Component 3A: USA Politics

Tests – Set B

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Teacher's Introduction

This pack is part of the comprehensive Topic Assessment System for Edexcel A Level Politics Component 3A: Government and Politics of the USA.

Tests: Set B

For each topic there is a short-answer test worth 40–52 marks, designed to take around 1 hour. Note that for comprehensive specification coverage, the Presidency and Democracy tests are worth the maximum 52 marks, so please ensure you allocate enough time for these (for instance, if a 52-mark test is too long for your lesson, you may wish for students to complete the 12-marker as homework).

The tests combine 4-mark explanation questions with exam-style 12-mark analysis questions, primarily focused on AO2 skills. For each 4-mark question there are four possible answers, double the number required by the question. Each 12-mark question includes a possible answer which is indicative rather than exhaustive.

Set B mirrors Set A, by, for instance, asking for disadvantages where the equivalent question in Test A asked for advantages. The key principle is that trying and then reviewing answers for Set A should help students do better on Set B.

Ideas for using Set A and Set B: These tests could be used one after the other, but are designed to be more effective if they are spaced out throughout the one-year course (e.g. Test A used to consolidate knowledge and provide a standard assessment during delivery, and Test B used to identify weaknesses in knowledge and analysis skills prior to revision sessions).

Structure

The Tests are divided into the following topics: Constitution and Federalism, Congress, The Presidency, The Supreme Court, Civil Rights, Democracy and Comparative Theories. The final topic, Comparative Theories, covers the previous subtopics, assessing their relationship to the rational, cultural and structural approaches outlined in the specification. Questions assessing the similarities and differences between the US and UK political systems are included throughout the resource.

Also available:

The complete Topic Assessment System	
Quizzes: Set A For each topic, a 30-mark multiple-choice quiz with answers and explanations.	Quizzes: Set B A second quiz per topic, covering the same content, allowing students to retry after completing the first test.
Tests: Set A One-hour set of short-answer questions per topic. Each question is a bite-size challenge towards an essay.	Tests: Set B A second one-hour test per topic, with questions cleverly mirrored from Test A. ✓
Essays: Set A 10 essay questions with model answers for students to analyse and compare with their own.	Essays: Set B 10 more essay questions on similar topics, with indicative content for easy self- or peer-marking.

December 2021

Constitution and Federalism

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1. Explain **two** disadvantages of the amendment process.

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2. Explain **two** weaknesses of the Constitution.

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3. Explain **two** ways in which the Constitution is authoritative.

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4. Explain **two** reasons why the Constitution might be amended.

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5. Explain **two** reasons why the Constitution guarantees a separation of powers.

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6. Explain **two** ways in which state governments are similar to the federal government.

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7. Explain **two** ways in which the Constitution can be seen as undemocratic

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8. Explain **two** advantages of the Constitution being vague.

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9. Explain **two** negatives of federalism.

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10. Analyse the similarities between how constitutional reform is achieved in

In your answer you should refer to at least one comparative theory.

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Preview of Questions Ends Here

This is a limited inspection copy. Sample of questions ends here to avoid students previewing questions before they are set. See contents page for details of the rest of the resource.

9. Explain **two** economic policies advocated for by Republicans.
- Republicans tend to favour eliminating welfare programmes and encouraging free enterprise.
 - Republicans tend to support the insurance system for healthcare and oppose universal coverage.
 - Republicans strongly support low taxes for everyone
 - Some Republicans are opposed to virtually any state intervention in the economy.
10. Explain **two** policy differences between the Democrats in the US and Labour in the UK.
- Labour are traditionally far more comfortable with state intervention in the economy.
 - Labour have a socialist tradition and sometimes favour universal policies such as universal child benefit, which tend to oppose
 - Labour tends to favour higher taxes on big business and the rich, whereas the Republicans tend to favour lower taxes.
 - Labour traditionally supports working class and trade union causes, whereas the Republicans are associated with the interests of the business class.
11. Analyse the similarities between the two party systems in the US and the UK.
In your answer you should refer to and use one comparative theory.

Level	Mark	Description
No Level	0	Student produced no material worthy of a mark.
Level 1	1–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AO1 – Students portray surface knowledge and understanding of concepts surrounding US and UK politics, with little or no analysis or evaluation. • AO2 – Students show little or no reasoned comparative theories, making simple links between material and concepts. On one side of the argument they cannot achieve above a level 1.
Level 2	4–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AO1 – Students portray some knowledge and understanding of concepts surrounding US and UK politics, which are sometimes supported by analysis and evaluation. Some relevant general points are made. • AO2 – Students show some signs of comparatively and making some relevant links between material and concepts.
Level 3	7–9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AO1 – Students portray accurate knowledge and understanding of concepts surrounding US and UK politics. Knowledge is used to support analysis and evaluation. Mostly relevant general points are made. • AO2 – Students show mainly reasoned comparative theories, making relevant links between material and concepts.
Level 4	10–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AO1 – Students portray detailed and accurate knowledge and concepts surrounding US and UK politics, which are used to support analysis and evaluation. Relevant general points are made. • AO2 – Students show consistently good, reasoned comparative theories, making multiple reasoned links between material and concepts.

- An answer using the structural approach may highlight: both the US and the UK have a two-party system, which helps to create a two-party system by generating a 'winner-takes-all' system, which is more commonly associated with multi-member constituencies in both countries elect a single member of parliament.
- An answer using the cultural approach may highlight: historically two parties have dominated the political landscape of both countries and each has a strong identity with each other, with few and outside of election periods. This is largely on the activity of the two parties and the arrangements in both countries make no provisions for political parties, which is a key feature of the two-party system.
- An answer using the behavioural approach may highlight: in both countries the two parties are best placed to form broad coalitions which encompass a variety of interests and policies, which represent certain political factions.

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Comparative Theories

1. Explain **two** similarities between Congress and Parliament according to the structure of the legislature.
 - Both are bicameral legislatures, allowing for greater levels of scrutiny in the lower house
 - Both include elected national representatives which give the institutions a high level of legitimacy and significance
 - Both are responsible for scrutinising and providing a check and balance on the executive, preventing the ability for executive overreach
 - Both are forums for public debate and discussion to determine the outcome in an accountable and transparent manner
2. Explain **two** similarities between civil rights in the US and the UK according to the legal system.
 - The US Bill of Rights and the UK Human Rights Act outline many similar protections for freedom of speech, assembly and expression, which are regarded within wider society as fundamental to a democratic culture
 - Changing attitudes regarding civil rights reflect people's changing prejudices, which are recognised, debated and understood within society
 - In both countries, rulings in cases of judicial review on civil rights matters will be influenced by the social context within which that case is taking place
 - Civil rights standards can be notoriously difficult to reverse or alter in both countries, as they are more familiar with, and accepting of, social norms regarding equality
3. Explain **two** differences between members of Congress and Parliament according to the political system.
 - Members of Congress face primaries for reselection as a candidate prior to the general election, providing an incentive to represent their constituents and demonstrate party loyalty in order to secure re-election. In contrast, rarely face re-selection after election to Parliament.
 - The separation of powers in the US mean that members of Congress are less likely to be disciplined by the executive than MPs.
 - In the US, more negotiation and compromise is often required due to the separation of powers and greater barriers to legislation. This means politicians are required to build a coalition of support. MPs, who will usually vote as they are told by their leader.
 - Gaining promotion to the cabinet in the UK is far simpler as there is less competition for cabinet posts as they are restricted to legislators, which further disciplines MPs.
4. Explain **two** differences between the US president and the UK prime minister according to the cultural approach.
 - The US president has a far greater personal mandate on account of their direct election and authority in wider society to conduct themselves in office how they see fit.
 - The US president also has more constitutional restrictions placed upon them, often reducing their role to more of a figurehead than a governor, and meaning they must act through their platform and influence on wider society.
 - US presidents require a large electoral coalition and will often take on a party to build a social base of support across society. By contrast, prime ministers do not need a party as they can work their way up through Parliament instead.
 - US presidents will often appoint a cabinet with a wide range of expertise and from different backgrounds and social grouping, in order to better represent their mandate. By contrast, a prime minister's cabinet will usually be comprised of members of their own party.
5. Explain **two** similarities between the US and UK electoral systems according to the political system.
 - Both use the first past the post system for general elections, which is designed to produce a single party government.
 - In both countries, the first past the post system can result in large discrepancies between vote share and seats, which undermines legitimacy. In 2005, Labour won 55% of seats with only 35% of the vote. In 2016, Donald Trump won the presidency with a smaller vote share, undermining his credibility.
 - Both countries operate a largely two-party system in which cooperation between parties is limited and debate is highly partisan.
 - Due to first past the post and a predominately two-party system in both countries, candidates often campaign in a select few 'swing seats' or 'swing states' in which small margins can determine the outcome.

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6. Explain **two** similarities between the US and UK Supreme Courts according to the material.
 - In both countries, Supreme Court justices are independent of the legislative government to prevent their rulings being unduly influenced by political considerations.
 - In both countries, Supreme Court justices cannot gain career advantages from the job because in the US the job is regarded to be for life, while in the UK a retired judge can be re-appointed.
 - Similarly, Supreme Court justices cannot gain pay advantages in either country. In the US, the Constitution states that the pay of Supreme Court justices cannot be reduced while in the UK salaries are determined in line with judicial considerations.
 - Judges in both countries must be extremely well qualified and demonstrate a high level of integrity considered for the role. This reduces the likelihood of an opportunistic or corrupt Supreme Court.
7. Explain **two** differences between political parties in the US and UK according to the material.
 - In the UK the political traditions of parties have been more consistent historically than in the US. The Labour Party has been a mix of socialists and social democrats, traditionalists and economic liberals, and the Liberals a mix of classical liberals and social Democrats and Republicans. In the US, parties have more fluid positions and support base more often and remain less wedded to particular ideologies.
 - Primaries exist in a very different culture in the US, in which challenging incumbents for a party's support has greater influence than in the UK.
 - Party loyalty is regarded as of more importance in the political culture of the US. A challenge to a party can lead to suspension, and party disunity traditionally has greater electoral consequences in the US than in the UK.
 - Other political cultures have been represented by third parties in local government in the UK whereas the US is dominated entirely by the two main parties.
8. Analyse the differences between constitutional arrangements in the US and the UK. In your answer you should refer to at least one comparative theory.

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Level 3	7–9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AO1 – Students portray accurate knowledge and understanding of the material surrounding US and UK politics. Knowledge is used effectively in analysis and evaluation. Mostly relevant general points are made. • AO2 – Students show mainly reasoned comparative analysis, making relevant links between material and concepts.
Level 4	10–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AO1 – Students portray detailed and accurate knowledge and concepts surrounding US and UK politics, which are used effectively and relevantly to support analysis and evaluation. Relevant general points are made. • AO2 – Students show consistently good, reasoned comparative analysis, making multiple reasoned links between material and concepts.

- An answer using the cultural approach may highlight: the location of sovereignty in the US is the Supreme Court as the ultimate authority compared to parliamentary sovereignty in the UK; the US has a clear separation of powers between the three branches of government whereas in the UK the executive sit in the legislature.
- An answer using the cultural approach may highlight: in the UK the constitutional process rather than a legal document, making constitutional development far more fluid; changing social attitudes underpin constitutional reform in the UK rather than in the US where a series of different national identities and histories add to the complexity of constitutional arrangements; in the US there is a strong, single national identity underpinned by a single constitution.
- An answer using the rational approach may highlight: the president's power is limited by Congress; the PM's power is entirely dependent on Parliament; incumbency provides MPs with a significant advantage in reselection in primaries; Supreme Court justices in the US have more power than judges in the UK when reaching rulings than those in the UK.

Preview of Answers Ends Here

This is a limited inspection copy. Sample of answers ends here to stop students looking up answers to their assessments. See contents page for details of the rest of the resource.