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| **A-level Politics** | | | |
| **Paper 3A: Comparative Politics – Government and Politics of the USA** | Sad face with solid fill with solid fill | Confused face with solid fill with solid fill | Smiling face with solid fill with solid fill |
| * 1. **The nature of the US Constitution.** * Vagueness of the document, codification and entrenchment. * The constitutional framework (powers) of the US branches of government. * The amendment process, including advantages and disadvantages of the formal process. |  |  |  |
| **1.2 The principles of the US Constitution (as listed below) and an evaluation of their effectiveness today.**   * Federalism. * Separation of powers and checks and balances. * Bipartisanship. * Limited government. |  |  |  |
| **1.3 The main characteristics of US federalism.**   * The nature of the federal system of government and its relationship with the states. |  |  |  |
| **1.4 Interpretations and debates around the US Constitution and federalism.**   * The extent of democracy within the US Constitution, its strengths and weaknesses and its impact on the US government today. * The debates around the extent to which the USA remains federal today. |  |  |  |
| **2.1 The structure of Congress.**   * Bicameral nature, the membership of Congress and the election cycle.   *2.1.1 The distribution of powers within Congress:*   * powers given to Congress in the Constitution, the exclusive powers of each House and the concurrent powers of Congress. |  |  |  |
| **2.2 The functions of Congress.**  *2.2.1 Representation.*   * Congressional elections and the significance of incumbency. * Factors that affect voting behaviour within Congress: * parties and caucuses, constituency, pressure groups and lobbyists.   *2.2.2 Legislative.*   * The legislative process, including the strengths and weaknesses of this process. * The differences between the legislative process in each chamber. * The policy significance of Congress – impact and effectiveness of laws passed.   + 1. *Oversight.* * Factors that influence the relationship between Congress and the presidency. * The checks on the other branches of government and the extent of its institutional effectiveness. |  |  |  |
| **2.3 Interpretations and debates around Congress.**   * Changing roles and powers of Congress and their relative importance, and debates about adequacy of its representative role. * Changing significance of parties in Congress. * Significance and effectiveness of the powers outlined in the Constitution. |  |  |  |
| **3.1 Formal sources of presidential power as outlined in the US Constitution and their use.**   * The role as the Head of State and as the Head of Government.   The significance of these powers with reference to presidents since 1992. |  |  |  |
| * 1. **Informal sources of presidential power and their use.** * The electoral mandate, executive orders, national events and the cabinet. * Powers of persuasion including the nature/characteristics of each president. * Executive Office of the President (EXOP), including the role of the National Security Council (NSC), Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the White House Office (WHO).   The significance of these powers with reference to presidents since 1992. |  |  |  |
| **3.3 The presidency.**  *3.3.1 Relationships between the presidency and the following institutions and why this varies:*   * Congress and the Supreme Court.   *3.3.2 Limitations on presidential power and why this varies between*  *presidents:*   * changing nature of power over their term in office * Congress, the Supreme Court and the Constitution * the election cycle and divided government.   The significance of these limitations with reference to presidents since 1992. |  |  |  |
| **3.4 Interpretations and debates of the US presidency.**   * How effectively they have achieved their aims. * The imperial presidency. * The extent of presidential accountability to Congress. * The role and power of the president in foreign policy.   With reference to presidents since 1992. |  |  |  |
| **4.1 The nature and role of the Supreme Court.**   * The US Constitution. * The independent nature of the Supreme Court. * The judicial review process (Marbury vs Madison 1803 and Fletcher vs Peck 1810). |  |  |  |
| **4.2 The appointment process for the Supreme Court.**   * Strengths and weaknesses of the process. * Factors influencing the president’s choice of nominee. * The current composition and ideological balance of the Court. |  |  |  |
| **4.3 The Supreme Court and public policy.**   * The impact of the Supreme Court on public policy in the US, with a range of examples, including examples post-2005. * Political significance debate: the role of judicial activism and judicial restraint and criticisms of each. |  |  |  |
| **4.4 The protection of civil liberties and rights in the US today.**   * Rights protected by the Constitution, by the Bill of Rights, by subsequent constitutional amendments and by rulings of the Supreme Court. |  |  |  |
| * 1. **Race and rights in contemporary US politics.** * The methods, influence and effectiveness of racial rights campaigns and the impact on current domestic policy: * voting rights, affirmative action and representation. |  |  |  |
| **4.6 Interpretations and debates of the US Supreme Court and civil rights.**   * The political versus judicial nature of the Supreme Court. * Living Constitution ideology as against originalism. * How effectively civil and constitutional rights have been upheld by the Supreme Court and the effectiveness of this protection. * The extent of their powers and the effectiveness of checks and balances. * The successes and failures of measures to promote equality, including affirmative action and immigration reform. |  |  |  |
| **5.1 Electoral systems in the USA.**  *5.1.1 Presidential elections and their significance.*   * The main processes to elect a US president, including the constitutional requirements, the invisible primary, primaries and caucuses, the role of National Party Conventions and the electoral college, and the resulting party system. * The importance of incumbency on a president seeking a second term.   *5.1.2 Campaign finance.*   * The role of campaign finance and the current legislation on campaign finance, including McCain-Feingold reforms 2002 and Citizens United vs FEC 2010. |  |  |  |
| **5.2 The key ideas and principles of the Democratic and Republican parties.**  *5.2.1 The distribution of power and changing significance of the parties:*  Democrats   * progressive attitude on social and moral issues, including crime * greater governmental intervention in the national economy * government provision of social welfare.   Republicans   * conservative attitude on social and moral issues * more restricted governmental intervention in the national economy while protecting American trade and jobs * acceptance of social welfare but a preference for personal responsibility.   *5.2.2 The current conflicts and tendencies and the changing power and*  *influence that exist within the parties.*   * Democrats: liberals, moderates and conservatives. * Republicans: moderates, social conservatives and fiscal conservatives.   *5.2.3 Coalition of supporters for each party.*   * Voters: how the following factors are likely to influence voting patterns and why, in relation to one recent presidential election campaign (since 2000) – race, religion, gender and education. |  |  |  |
| **5.3 Interest groups in the USA – their significance, resources, tactics**  **and debates about their impact on democracy.**   * The influence, methods and power of at least one single interest group, professional group or policy group. |  |  |  |
| **5.4 Interpretations and debates of US democracy and participation,**  **including:**   * advantages and disadvantages of the electoral process and the Electoral College and the debate around reform * the role of campaign finance and difficulty in achieving effective reform * the role of incumbency in elections * the ways in which interest groups can influence the three branches of government and policy creation, including the role of PACs and Super PACs and their impact on democracy. |  |  |  |
| **6.1 Comparative approaches**  Understanding of these three approaches and the different ways they explain similarities and differences between the government and politics of different  countries.  **Rational**   * This approach focuses on individuals within a political system. * A rational approach suggests that such individuals will act rationally, choosing to act in a particular way as it will give them a beneficial outcome.   **Cultural**   * This approach focuses on groups within a political system – this could be voters, parties, pressure groups and so on. * A cultural approach suggests that the shared ideas, beliefs and values of these groups often determine the actions of individuals within them.   **Structural**   * This approach focuses on the institutions in a political system and the processes within them. * A structural approach suggests that political outcomes are largely determined by the formal processes laid out within a political system. |  |  |  |
| **6.2.1 Compare and debate the following aspects of the UK and US Constitutions and the resulting impact on politics and government:**   * their nature (codified/uncodified) and their sources, provisions and principles, including separation of powers, checks and balances * the similarities and differences between the US federal system and the UK system of devolution.   *6.2.2 The extent to which rational, cultural and structural approaches can be used to account for these similarities and differences.* |  |  |  |
| **6.2.3 Compare and debate the following aspects of the UK and US legislative branches and their resulting impact on politics and government:**   * powers, strengths and weaknesses of each of the Houses * the extent to which each of the Houses are equal.   *6.2.4 The extent to which rational, cultural and structural approaches can be used to account for these similarities and differences.* |  |  |  |
| **6.2.5 Compare and debate the following aspects of the UK and US executive branches and their resulting impact on politics and government:**   * key similarities and differences between the role and powers of the US President and the UK Prime Minister and their impact on politics and government * extent of accountability to the US and UK legislature.   *6.2.6 The extent to which rational, cultural and structural approaches*  *can be used to account for these similarities and differences.* |  |  |  |
| **6.2.7 Compare and debate the following aspects of the UK and US Supreme Courts and civil rights and their resulting impact on politics and government:**   * basis for and relative extent for their powers * relative independence of the Supreme Court in the US and UK * effectiveness of the protection of rights in each country * effectiveness of interest groups in the protection of civil rights in the USA and the UK.   *6.2.8 The extent to which rational, cultural and structural approaches can be used to account for these similarities and differences.* |  |  |  |
| **6.2.9 Compare and debate the following aspects of the UK and US democracy and participation, and their resulting impact on politics and government:**   * the different nature of the party systems (two-party and multi-party) * degree of internal unity within parties * the policy profiles of the two main parties in each country * debates around campaign finance and party funding * the relative power, methods and influence of pressure groups.   *6.2.10 The extent to which rational, cultural and structural approaches*  *can be used to account for these similarities and differences.* |  |  |  |