

## A Level Politics: Y12 Introductory Work 2023

You must use the **information booklets (2) included** and any **own knowledge** you already have to complete the following tasks:

### **Task One: What is expected of me in Y12?**

Please read the course guide IN FULL at: <https://www.klshistory.co.uk/a-level-politics.html>  
You will be given a copy of this booklet in September, but it is important that you take the time now to get to grips with the course.

Take some time to look through the website too, especially wider reading and viewing:  
<https://www.klshistory.co.uk/wider-reading--viewing.html>

### **Task Two: Key Words**

1. Open the 'Task Two' booklet included with these instructions. You can also download it here: <https://assets-learning.parliament.uk/uploads/2019/12/How-it-Works-booklet.pdf>
2. Find and write down definitions for the following key words.

#### **Key Words:**

Politics  
Suffrage  
Political Participation  
Democracy  
Direct Democracy  
Representative Democracy  
Member of Parliament (MP)  
General Election  
Devolution  
Devolved Assemblies  
Parliament  
By-election  
Referendum  
Manifesto  
First-Past-The-Post (FPTP)  
Constitution  
Uncodified Constitution  
Parliamentary sovereignty  
Legislature  
Executive  
Judiciary  
Parliamentary Reform Acts 1911 and 1949  
Human Rights Act 1998  
Constitutional Reform Act 2005



Kings Langley Sixth Form  
A Level Politics: Y12 Introductory Work 2023

Fixed Term Parliament Act 2011

House of Commons

Constituency

Frontbencher

Backbench MP

The Speaker

The Opposition

House of Lords

Crossbencher

Life Peer

Hereditary Peer

Select Committee

Legislative

Committee

Government Bills

Private Members Bills

Political Party

Party Whips

Party Rebel

Coalition government

Partisan

Partisan Dealignment

Pressure Group

Sectional Pressure Group

Causal Pressure Group

Insider Pressure Group

Outsider Pressure Group

Lobbying

Petition

### Task Three: What does an MP actually do?

Investigate the role of an MP by playing the game in the link below.

<https://learning.parliament.uk/resources/mp-for-a-week/#cta-target>

#### MP For A Week



## Task Four: How does the UK government work?

Open the 'Task Four' booklet included with these instructions or download it here:  
<https://jcross.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Politics-Find-your-Way-Booklet.pdf>

Answer the following in detail (you should aim to write at least a paragraph per question).

- 1) What are the three main principles of modern democracy?
- 2) What are the principles of the UK's constitution?
- 3) How does the UK work with the EU?
- 4) Create a labelled and detailed diagram that explains how the UK Parliament works. It must include the three main elements and explain how each element functions. You may wish to create three separate diagrams.
- 5) What is the difference between a general and select committee?
- 6) How far is the UK Parliament truly democratic? (hint: House of Lords)
- 7) How is a law passed through the UK Parliament?
- 8) Why do different types of elections exist in the UK? What are their functions?
- 9) Describe at least four different voting systems, including their pros and cons.
- 10) What are the functions of a political party?
- 11) Which political parties exist in the UK and what do they believe? (you will need to research their manifestos)
- 12) What are pressure groups and what methods do they use? Give at least one example of a specific pressure group.
- 13) How can people get involved in politics? List at least 5 ways.

## Task Five: Wider Watching/Listening

Please get into the habit of **watching / listening** to at least ONE of the following on a weekly basis:

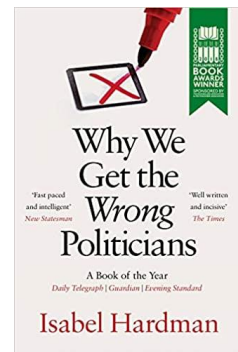
- The Today Show (BBC Radio Four 6-9am, daily)
- The Rest is Politics, Alastair Campbell and Rory Stewart (Podcast)
- The A Level Politics Show, Nick DeSouza (Podcast)
- Question Time (BBC1 Thursdays 10.40pm)
- Have I got News for You (BBC1 Fridays 9pm)
- Laura Kuenssberg (Sunday 9am)

## CHALLENGES:

### 1. Wider reading

If there is one book you read this summer, it should be this:

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Why-We-Get-Wrong-Politicians/dp/1782399739>



### 2. What factors influence voting behaviour?

Read and watch the following and use their analysis to answer this question:

**'Class-based voting is no longer a factor in voting behaviour'. How far do you agree?**

- Introduction: Give a clear judgment
- 1 PEE paragraph: yes, class is no longer an influence in voting behaviour
- 1 PEE paragraph: no, class is still an influence
- Conclusion: Fully explain your judgment

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p07xp3j8/election-2019-the-story-of-the-night>

<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2019/12/17/how-britain-voted-2019-general-election>

<https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/how-britain-voted-2019-election>

<https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2019-12/general-election-2019-poll-aggregate-v8.pdf>

### 3. Should the voting age be lowered to 16?

Read the articles on the next few pages – they are in favour of or against lowering the voting age to 16. Use their analysis and any further research (links below) to answer this question:

**'The franchise (vote) should be extended to 16 and 17 year olds in the UK'. How far do you agree?**

- Introduction: Give a clear judgment
- 1 paragraph FOR: *On the one hand.... For example..... This might improve participation levels / help to solve the democratic deficit / begin to restore legitimacy because.....*
- 1 paragraph AGAINST: *On the other hand.... For example..... This would not help to solve the democratic deficit because..... / Young people should not be given the responsibility of the vote / enfranchised because.....*
- Conclusion: Fully explain your judgment - *In conclusion, I find the argument that.....most convincing because.....*

Articles from **'A Democratic Audit collection'** – edited by Richard Berry and Sean Kippin

Articles from 'Democratic audit UK', a research unit designed to scrutinise and raise awareness of the democratic process.

### **Overview of the debate, by Dr Andrew Mycock**

The proposition supporting the lowering of the voting age for all public elections across the United Kingdom has gained considerable political momentum over the past decade or so, largely due to the concerted

campaigning of some leading youth organisations together with an increasing number of young people and politicians. With the majority of mainstream political parties now supporting the introduction of 'votes at 16', it is a proposal whose time appears to have come. That 16 and 17 year-olds will be able to vote on the constitutional future of Scotland in September 2014 suggests the 'genie is out of the bottle' and the move towards a universal lowering of the voting age to 16 across the UK is imminent.

Such a view should however be tempered by a number of issues that might compromise the adoption of votes at 16. First, the Conservatives appear steadfastly opposed to its introduction and are unlikely to adopt the cause if they form the next government in 2015. Second, two noteworthy UK government-sponsored independent commissions on lowering the voting age over the past decade – The Russell Commission of 2004 and the Youth Citizenship Commission of 2008-9 - have both found against the proposition. Both commissions raised important questions about the increasingly fractured age limits for a range of rights and responsibilities and also questioned whether 'votes at 16' would induce greater youth political literacy and participation. Finally, there is evidence of widespread opposition to the move from adults to lowering the voting age to 16. Moreover, the last sizeable survey of the views of young people themselves by the Youth Citizenship Commission in 2009 suggested only a slight majority supported votes at 16.

It is clear that the issue of whether or not to lower the voting age cannot be addressed in isolation from debates about the much-needed reform of British political culture to address the concerns and aspirations of young people. The passage of the Representation of the People Act in 1969 that saw the legal voting age lowered from 21 to 18 reflected changing attitudes during the immediate post-war period towards young people and also acknowledged a wider transformation in how people understood the rights, roles and responsibilities of young adults. The challenges facing young people in the 21st century highlight the need to embrace and encourage debate about the appropriateness of 'votes at 16' as part of a wider consideration of changing terms of youth and adult citizenship.

With this in mind, the Politics Studies Association and Democratic Audit have initiated a series of blogs that are linked to the 'Beyond the Youth Citizenship Commission: Young People and Politics' project. One contributor, Dr Craig Berry, has called for a referendum on lowering the voting age to further stimulate a national conversation about the role and contribution of young people in our polity. We hope that political parties of all hues might take up this call. Until then, we offer this collection of opinion pieces that seek to extend the terms of reference informing debates about the lowering the voting age and encourage a more holistic consideration of the complexities of youth citizenship reform.

### ***For: A referendum on lowering the voting age would generate a wider national debate about youth participation in democracy, by Craig Berry***

Young people are far less likely to vote than other age groups. It is of course too simplistic to say there is an automatic – or any – correlation between low turnout and the economic woes that today's young people are experiencing. Age cohorts do not vote in blocs, and to suggest otherwise would be to ignore evidence that members of different generations care about each other, perhaps just as much as they do fellow members of their own age cohort.

Equally, however, this does not mean that it does not matter that fewer young people are expressing their democratic preferences. Crucially, population ageing means that, even if they were, they would still be 'out-voted' by other cohorts. This is a very recent (and intensifying) trend that may be helping to undermine an 'unwritten rule' of representative democracy that those whose lives are affected for longest by the outcomes of the democratic process have the greatest influence at the ballot box. I believe lowering the voting age to 16, or even merely holding a referendum on this issue, may be part of the answer.

#### **Voting matters**

There is little evidence that young people are any more apathetic about politics than any other age group. A sense of powerlessness, of not being able to enact change through the ballot box, is a more cogent explanation than contentment for non-voting. Yet that does not make it okay, because representative democracy is a numbers game. Formal electoral processes are not the only way to exercise influence in a liberal democracy, but they are the most important. And it is no good retorting that non-voters have *chosen*

not to vote (even though that is largely correct) because large-scale non-cooperation will surely, before long, start to threaten the legitimacy of democracy.

I base this argument on the under-observed reality that there has never existed a representative democracy, in any large society, without a pyramid-shaped age distribution, that is, a society where the young outnumber the old. The people who will probably be affected for longest, and at a crucial life-stage, by the outcomes of the democratic process have the most influence at the ballot box. This does *not* mean that all young people vote (or even think) in the same way, but it does mean that those seeking elected office have to consider the resonance of their positions and the potential impact of their policies on this group. It also makes young people a key target market for the media through which public debate is conducted.

We will very soon experience, if we are not already, representative democracy in a society with a very different age distribution. In 1991 the median voter was aged 44, and ten years later they were aged 45. At the 2010 general election, the median voter was aged 46, and by 2021 this will have risen to 47. Twenty years later, the median voter will be 50 years old. But these figures do not take into account voter turnout; the median *actual* voter was 49 in 2010 and, if current turnout rates persist, will be 52 as soon as 2021 (see Berry, 2012 for the full analysis). Crossing our fingers in hope that democracy will retain widespread support in these demographic circumstances is not sufficient. Clearly we cannot and should not seek to reverse the increase in life expectancy that lies behind population ageing, but we can seek to mitigate the impact of ageing by protecting the status of young people in formal democratic processes.

### **Voting at 16 matters**

Innovative methods of voting have been utilised by electoral authorities in the UK, albeit seemingly with mixed success in terms of increasing turnout. But such innovations have not been judged over a long enough timeframe, and have been limited in nature. Voting by post, text message and online should be available at every election, and heavily promoted, and elections should ideally take place over more than a single weekday. This is not about simply making it easier to vote – with the connotation being that anyone too lazy to vote by the traditional method does not deserve to vote – but rather recognising that traditional methods of voting are out-of-step with the lifestyles and working practices of many of today's young people. Voting should not be easy, but we have to acknowledge that it has become more difficult for some groups than others.

One option that requires further consideration is that of lowering the voting age to 16. This is ostensibly a different kind of 'solution' to those discussed above, in that it seeks to increase the number of young people in the electorate, rather than increase turnout among the existing electorate. On this basis, however, lowering the voting age is not particularly useful. At the 2010 general election, the median potential voter would have been a year younger, but assuming 16 and 17 year-olds voted at the same rate as those aged 18-24, the median actual voter would have been no younger.

There are three main objections to lowering the voting age. Firstly, that voting at 16 should not be classed as a human right because most internationally recognised rights frameworks (rightly) treat people aged under-18 as children. Secondly, that 16 and 17 year-olds lack the maturity to exercise their vote responsibly. Both are valid objections, to some extent, although I believe both are wrong. Voting should be among the *first* rights that we bestow upon our fellow citizens, not the *last*.

The third main objection is that 16 and 17 year-olds are not likely to vote, so we would risk entrenching the habit of non-voting. This argument, however, is not particularly sophisticated. In fact, evidence from Norway and Austria tells us 16 and 17 year-old first-time voters are more likely to vote than older first-time voters, and people that vote in the first election they are eligible to vote in are more likely to vote in the future. In contrast to the conventional wisdom, while by 18 disaffection may have taken root among young people, a positive inclination to vote may be more evident among 16 and 17 year-olds, and therefore lowering the voting age would lead to higher turnout among all young people, as it enables a habit of voting to form.

### **Show of hands?**

Inevitably, we cannot escape the fact that allowing 16 year-olds to vote is a contentious issue. In contrast to the enfranchisement of women, there is as yet no consensus that the ability to vote is a basic right for 16 year-olds. As such, as long as opinion remains divided, a referendum (in which 16 and 17 year-olds would be



included) would be a useful way to settle the issue. It is worth noting that the voting age in the Scottish independence referendum will be 16.

It is entirely possible, or even probable, that UK voters would choose *not* to lower the voting age. But this does not mean the referendum would have been a futile exercise. Given that extending the franchise to 16 and 17 year-olds would not have a large impact on electoral demographics, the proposition should be considered in terms of its impact on the tendency to vote among young people in general. As such, a referendum could have an instrumental value beyond the actual plebiscite. The referendum would surely generate a national conversation (and front-page coverage) about the political participation of young people, the kind of conversation currently limited to the academy, a handful of non-governmental organisations and, to some extent, young people themselves.

### ***Against: 16 and 17 year olds are not fully autonomous, and therefore should not be allowed to vote, by Dan Degerman***

In September of this year, the Scottish people will take a decision regarding the future of their nation and its relationship with the rest of the United Kingdom. While nationalists and unionists are currently entangled in a fierce battle for their desired result, until recently, the shape of the electorate itself was a key point in the debate.

The question of who should be allowed to vote in a democratic referendum may seem anachronistic to citizens of a society where seemingly everyone, regardless of sex, race or class has equal political say. Closer scrutiny, however, reveals that the UK denies some of its citizens right to formal participation. The voting rights of individuals with mental disorders are constrained, and incarcerated convicts are denied the right completely. Significantly, individuals under the age of 18 are systematically disenfranchised.

The basis of this practice is the supposition that minors lack the somewhat opaque capacities necessary to manage the complexities of democratic participation. The generally accepted purpose of voting in democratic referenda is to legitimize governmental power. By authorizing a government through the electoral process, citizens express their consent to its power. Legitimate consent, however, can only be given by self-governing individuals. Thus, put differently, the consensus has been that minors lack the autonomy requisite to be able to grant legitimate political consent.

In the autumn of 2013, parliament passed into law the *Scottish Independence Referendum (Franchise) Act 2013*, which lowered the age of electoral majority for the referendum to 16, potentially setting precedence for decreasing the voting age in future elections. Some of the voices in favour of this reform argued that it was justified because it would raise voter participation. Obviously increasing the size of the electorate is certain to raise absolute participation numbers. Yet, this fact is irrelevant because it fails to demonstrate that adolescents have a right to vote. Others attempted to assert this right. Youth interest groups have argued that since 16 year-olds are allowed to express consent in some situations, such as sexual relations, they should be permitted to consent in political elections as well. It should hardly be necessary – although it evidently is – to point out that ability in one sphere of social life need not imply any rights in another.

The stronger arguments for voting-age reform relies on scientific evidence. There is some neuroscientific research which suggests that by the time adolescents are 16, their brain is sufficiently developed to support adult-like reasoning capabilities. Such arguments reflect the growing importance of neuroscience in the political and legal discourse. However, they fail to prove that adolescents are autonomous. Coarse neurobiological maturity.

demonstrates only that adolescents have the potential to become – not that they are – autonomous. Autonomy is itself is difficult to define. However, scholars generally agree that self-rule requires both positive capacities, such as particular cognitive capabilities; and negative freedoms, such as freedom from coercion. Beyond this there is little consensus. However, since we are interested in a specifically democratic form of autonomy, we can turn to actual democratic and legal conventions for two minimal criteria with which a useful conception of autonomy must correspond: 1) Democratic sensibilities demand that a majority of persons in a

society either do or can reach the threshold necessary for democratic participation. 2) Legal and cultural praxes suggest that autonomy is not an all-or-nothing matter, but that it may obtain in different degrees. For example, in Scotland, a child under 12 cannot be prosecuted for a criminal offence; the drinking age is 18; and the age of sexual consent is 16.

To consider whether adolescents should have the right to vote, we must find a construct of autonomy that conforms to these criteria. Given the aforementioned proliferation of neuroscience in politics, it would also be preferable if it were compatible with scientific evidence. One construct that appears to rise to the challenge is the self-maintenance model of autonomy, developed by Professor Alvaro Moreno Bergareche and colleagues at the University of the Basque Country.

In this view, autonomy is the adaptive self-maintenance of identity through interaction with the environment. A person's engagement with the environment generates an increasing number of physical and mental constraints, such as abilities, desires, values and beliefs. Identity is the totality of these constraints at a given point in a person's life. As someone engages with their environment, they simultaneously change their environment. Consequently, the feedback from the environment to the person changes, which engenders new constraints or alters old ones by strengthening or weakening them, leading to yet more changes in the environment. A more complex system, with a large number of strong constraints, will be a more autonomous system, since any single action will have less of an impact on the identity of the system. Complexity, in effect, makes it easier to self-maintain identity.

This conception acknowledges that humans are intrinsically social beings that exist in the context of intricate cultural structures. These structures demand complex, extrinsic behaviour of the humans within them in exchange for protection and care they provide. We become autonomous within these societies through social interactions with other humans and in relation to the social responsibilities we have. Therefore, any questions regarding particular thresholds of autonomy, such as voting age, must be answered in the context of a given society.

In light of this construct, in evaluating whether people are autonomous, we must take into account three factors: biological maturity, social interaction and time. It may be the case that the neurobiological maturity of the average 16-year old is identical to that of an 18-year old. However, a 16-year-old lacks access to a range of important opportunities for social interactions that an 18-year-old has. For example, particular levels of schooling or work experience, legal ownership of particular items, the right to drink, the right to drive, and parental emancipation. Let us call such items *technologies of autonomy*: social artefacts that enable individuals to generate new and culturally particular constraints and to effectively maintain and develop an identity within their environment. Since adolescents are denied access to the social resources that might permit their biological potential to germinate, they cannot be autonomous. Therefore, they do not have a right to vote.

The British 19th century legal scholar, James Fitzjames Stephen once wrote that "power precedes liberty." Rights, as he saw it, were only useful insofar as people had the capability to exercise them effectively. This seems to hold true for the right to vote as well. The act of voting is meaningless unless it is carried out by individuals who have the power to govern their own actions. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the government to empower voters to render decisions that are in the voters' own interest. However, in the contemporary British discourse, this responsibility seems to have been replaced by a focus on granting people rights that they have not been taught how to use.

More at:

- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-50207481>
- <https://www.theweek.co.uk/104447/should-the-voting-age-be-lowered-to-16>
- <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/should-the-voting-age-be-lowered-to-16-a8882731.html>