



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
January 2012**

**Government and Politics**

**GOV3B**

**(Specification 2150)**

**Unit 3B: Ideologies**

***Report on the Examination***

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## **Unit 3 (GOV3B): Ideologies**

### ***General***

All four questions were popular with Liberalism and Fascism attracting the largest number of responses. In some centres, virtually all the students tackled the same two ideological themes. This would seem to indicate that some teachers may not be teaching the whole specification, a practice which can prove costly when questions invite students to utilise knowledge which cuts across single ideological themes. It is gratifying to report once again that some students produced outstanding scripts which would not have been out of place at undergraduate level. There were few very poor scripts. A minority of students approached the exam with the intention of reproducing prepared answers, even if they are not central to the questions before them. In such cases, where marks were awarded, these marks were achieved more by default than design. It goes without saying that such practices should be discouraged.

### **TOPIC 1 - LIBERALISM**

#### ***Question 1***

On the whole this question was well answered. The vast majority of the students had little difficulty in describing the theory of natural rights, with the best students recognising that these were usually perceived to be God-given and inalienable. Sound examples of such rights were often included and references were made to politicians and political philosophers who spoke about and wrote on their centrality to liberal value systems and liberal political systems. A few confused natural rights with civil rights. The very best answers discussed whether such rights occur 'naturally' or flow from membership of a specific polity.

#### ***Question 2***

This question required students to assess the extent to which the core beliefs and values associated with Liberalism sit easily in the value systems held by conservatives and social democrats. Virtually all of the students appreciated what liberalism's core values were and are. To score high marks however, students needed to reveal where the two schools of liberalism, classical and new/progressive, converged and diverged. Only by doing so could students effectively evaluate Liberalism's compatibility with conservatism and social democracy. The best answers contained not only impressive historical perspectives but also a keen awareness and understanding of how the different schools of liberalism have impacted upon conservative and social democratic values, programmes and policies from Peel to the current day. Some students confused social democratic thinking with Socialist thinking. Most, however, were able to distinguish between social democracy and democratic socialism, particularly in the context of the ideas and policies advocated and pursued by the Labour Party from its inception through to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. At the top end of the ability range, a number of students challenged the claim, pointing out that on certain beliefs and issues, liberalism appeared to be incompatible with both conservatism and social democracy.

## **TOPIC 2 - SOCIALISM**

### **Question 3**

Most students understood that fraternity essentially means ‘the brotherhood of man’ - an affirmation of the inherent worth of all humanity, regardless of class, nation, colour, creed or gender. They also appreciated how such a view of humans is central to both socialist theory and socialist values. Students also generally pointed out that such a conception of ‘man’ tended to produce social systems and structures based on co-operation and communality which promote and foster collaboration, rather than competition and selfish individualism. The majority of students produced good to very impressive answers. A small minority, however, had no real understanding of the term’s meaning or of its significance in socialism. This was most likely because they had not been taught the term or because they did not register it in their reading. A few students ignored question 03 completely and simply tackled question 04. This is recognised as bad examination practice and should be discouraged.

### **Question 4**

To do well here, students needed to outline the core beliefs and values associated with socialism. They also needed to distinguish between revolutionary socialism and democratic socialism. Most were able to do this. AO2 marks were gained according to how well students were able to assess socialism’s impact on the British polity from the early utopian socialists to the present day. The majority of students focused on democratic socialism, pointing out how the Marxist variant had never significantly taken root in the UK. Most based their analysis on how socialist the Labour party had actually been since its inception, focusing particularly on the Attlee government as an example of socialism in practice and on Labour’s general move rightwards (with the exception of the Foot years 1979-1982) on the party thereafter.

The best answers also recognised the influence of Liberalism on Labour’s programmes and policies, with many discussing the significant impact made by Keynes and Beveridge in particular and progressive Liberalism in general. Some students argued that New Labour’s policies on social inclusion and constitutional reform also reflected a continued adherence to Socialism, whilst here too Liberalism’s influence should not have been overlooked. The general conclusion arrived at by most students was that Socialism had been a force at certain times but that its influence had never been particularly strong and that since the Thatcher era its influence had waned. The very best scripts intelligently asserted that in its pure form, Socialism had never really been a force in British politics, not only by examining the Labour Party’s track record over the years, but also by pointing out how little impact Far Left Marxist-inspired movements and organisations have had on British politics and society beyond the realm of certain academic circles.

## **TOPIC 3 - CONSERVATISM**

### **Question 5**

This question produced mixed responses. The best answers argued that the concept ‘organic society’ refers to societies which develop ‘naturally’ and are not mechanistic or ideological constructs. A significant number of students also appreciated how the organic theory of society could be explained by the organistic analogy. Most students referred to such societies as entities with a strong sense of history and recognisable social structures and hierarchies which had stood the test of time. A minority of answers revealed no understanding of the term and whilst these were often ‘wordy’ they contained little if any information which served to answer the actual question.

### **Question 6**

Pragmatism, as a term, was well understood. The good to strong answers were able to show how flexible Conservatism was, and is, by referring to how Conservatives were able to adapt their philosophies, programmes and policies to meet new challenges as and when such changes were deemed necessary. Many answers provided clear discussions of Disraeli's One Nation Conservatism and awareness of the values and policies associated with 'Butskellism' in the post-war era. Many contended that Cameron's move to the centre and his willingness to work in a coalition government serves as modern evidence of Conservatism's pragmatism. The conventional view of Thatcherism was that it was essentially ideological rather than pragmatic, with the New Right agenda driving policies and programmes at the expense of 'common sense' conservatism. At the top end of the range, a number of students also asserted that Thatcher acted pragmatically when the situation required, as evidenced by her rejection of a number of Keith Joseph's most radical policy proposals and a willingness to deal (in secret) with the IRA during the hunger strikes whilst publicly rejecting such an approach for resolving this difficult situation. A few also impressively argued that Heath's u-turns, which deviated from his ideological Selsdon programme, also illustrated conservative pragmatism. Few focused on conservatism post-Thatcher and pre-Cameron. The general conclusion was that pragmatism was indeed a hallmark of Conservatism and that Conservatism's endurance could best be understood and explained by this flexibility and rejection of ideological blueprints in favour of practical solutions to political, economic and social problems and concerns.

## **TOPIC 4 - FASCISM**

### **Question 7**

Most students experienced few difficulties in explaining the 'cult of personality' – that is the granting of power to authoritative figures on the basis of their undoubted and unchallenged leadership qualities which were essentially charismatic. The 'cult' infers blind and unquestioned obedience to the leader who assumes almost god-like status as illustrated by Hitler and Mussolini. This granting of power, the best students noted, reflected a lack of confidence in the ability of liberal democratic systems to resolve chronic economic and social problems by conventional means. In return for their obedience, the subordinate masses expected to experience significant social and economic improvements in their lives, albeit at the expense of individual political freedom. The strongest answers pointed out that such 'personality cults' were not only features of fascist societies but were also evident in totalitarian left-wing systems.

### **Question 8**

On the whole, the nationalism aspect of this question was handled to much better effect than the socialism aspect. The majority of students were able to explain nationalism's centrality to fascist thinking and action with the best students describing the fascist variant as being a form of 'ultra-nationalism' which was usually both expansionist and xenophobic and rooted in Social Darwinism. There were some excellent references to works produced by ultra-nationalist political philosophers and political activists. A blend infers the mixing of elements to produce a new product. Whilst most students were able to describe socialism's beliefs and values, few successfully evaluated the extent to which socialism was/was not integral to fascism. At a superficial level, students spoke of Nazism as a philosophy associated with Hitler's notion of national socialism and of Mussolini's early flirtations with socialism. Few answers successfully evaluated how socialism might be said to fit into this right-wing ideology, if it did at all. On a broad level, a number of students discussed fascism's contempt for the free-market economic systems and the individualism associated with

unregulated capitalism, but they did not go much further than this. The best answers, whilst appreciating the statism associated with both fascism and communism, also recognised fascism's contempt (even hatred) towards Marxism and the political structures and systems emanating from it with its theoretical championing of internationalism and rationalism in contrast to fascism's extreme nationalism and irrationalism. Most concluded that whilst elements of both nationalism and socialism could be seen in fascism, the former exerted far greater influence than the latter.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website: <http://www.aqa.org.uk/over/stat.html>.

### **Converting Marks into UMS marks**

Convert raw marks into marks on the Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) by using the link below.

**UMS conversion calculator** [www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion](http://www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion)