



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

Government and Politics

GOV3B

(Specification 2150)

Unit 3B: Ideologies

Report on the Examination

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Unit 3 (GOV3B): Ideologies

TOPIC 1 - Liberalism

Question 1

Liberty was explained well by the vast majority of students, but only the better answers effectively linked liberty with individual responsibility. A few students restricted their answers to classical liberalism and tackled individual responsibility from a Smilian perspective, citing help from others as being weakening whilst self-help was strengthening. The best answers compared this view of individual responsibility with the views promoted by the likes of T.H. Green and the New Liberal School, claiming that individuals should not consider themselves to be completely free, merely to pursue their own interests; individuals also had a social obligation and responsibility to consider the needs and welfare of others.

Question 2

To secure high marks in this question, students needed to compare and contrast how the Classical and New/Progressive schools of liberalism viewed the role of the state in **both** the social and economic spheres. The best answers contrasted the Classical School's laissez faire approach to economic management with the more interventionist strategies advocated by Keynes and others. These answers focused not only on the theoretical dimensions of these theories but also on their impact on political thinking and actual policy in both the Liberal Party as was, and the Liberal Democrats in recent decades. With regards to the social sphere, students at Level 3 and above were not only familiar with the great works and theories produced by advocates of limited government but also with the works of Progressives such as Green, Booth, Rowntree and Beveridge, who favoured a more extensive role for government as a key institution in combating poverty and promoting opportunity. The best answers were balanced and strong on analysis and evaluation, whereas the weaker answers tended to focus excessively on only one of the two themes. These also typically lacked an awareness of great works and actual policies.

TOPIC 2 - Socialism

Question 3

This question required students to show an awareness and understanding of the different types of equality advocated by socialists, ie the traditional Left's championing of equality of outcome with the Democratic Socialist and, even more so, the Social Democratic preference for equality of opportunity. Whilst the best answers were strong on both socialist history and actual policies, the weaker answers tended to be generalised and somewhat simplistic. Again, at Levels 3 and 4 answers revealed a pleasing knowledge and awareness of key thinkers and key works.

Question 4

This question could not be adequately tackled without students first explaining what capitalism entailed as an economic system. Most students were able to outline the Marxist critique of capitalism and its advocacy of revolution to create a classless society where the means of production, distribution and exchange lay with the state. At the top end of the range, students pointed out that this radical Leftist approach was not embraced by most socialists in the UK in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the exception of groups such

as the S.D.F. Instead, the Labour Party in particular advocated an accommodation with capitalism in its quest of a fairer society. References were made to the Fabians and Revisionist Socialists and their impact on the thinking and actions of the actual Labour governments such as Attlee's, Wilson's and Callaghan's. A few students referred to Labour's 1983 manifesto as a departure from the economic and industrial policies pursued by these aforementioned governments. Most were aware of the Kinnock and Smith moves to the centre but the vast majority of students focused more closely on Blair and New Labour's Third Way and on the policies which clearly revealed a social democratic accommodation with capitalism at the expense of the socialist rejection of it. The weaker answers again were somewhat generalised and lacked clear historical dimensions, theoretical knowledge and an appreciation of the actual policies pursued by Labour when in government. Virtually all of the students came to the conclusion that the statement presented in the question was essentially correct. At the very top of the range, students contended that parties and movements on the Far Left upheld the fundamentalist critique of capitalism and a desire to see it abolished. They also recognised the marginality of such views.

TOPIC 3 - Conservatism

Question 5

The justifications for private property made by Conservatives are manifold. Virtually all of the students who attempted this question appreciated how conservatives saw property ownership as a basic right. Most also explained how property provided a tangible indicator of the benefits of thrift and hard work. Furthermore, there was a general appreciation that Conservatives saw property as providing owners with not just a stake in society but also as an economic asset that could be converted into cash or passed on to others as the holder saw fit. The best answers not only articulated such traditional Tory support for private property but they also revealed a clear awareness of the New Right's neo-liberal championing of private property as a way of reducing the role of the state via schemes such as the right to buy and as a vehicle for promoting popular capitalism. A few students interpreted this question in a somewhat different way – basically presenting a case for the private ownership of business and utilities and against nationalisation. This is not what the question was about but some marks could nevertheless be gained if the answers presented valid arguments in defence of private property albeit as businesses rather than homes.

Question 6

From the outset, a clear description of traditional Conservative beliefs and values needed to be provided before an analysis and evaluation could be undertaken as to the extent to which these continue to feature in the policies and programmes advocated by the contemporary Conservative Party. Virtually all students were able to do this but obviously not all to the same level. As was apparent in previous answers, the strongest students possessed a firm knowledge and appreciation of the key thinkers, this time in the context of traditional Tory values. They also revealed some knowledge of the development of these ideas during the late 18th and 19th centuries. The weaker scripts viewed 'contemporary' as the Conservative Party under Cameron. Most however took a wider perspective, citing how Thatcher appeared to break with many traditional Tory values with her New Right economic and social agendas whilst still remaining in the traditionalist fold in her views and policies on the family, law and order and foreign policy. Overall, the years between Thatcher's demise and Cameron's acquisition of the party's leadership received short shrift. Some students, however, provided excellent analysis of where Major, Hague, Duncan-Smith and Howard deviated from, and remained constant to, traditional Conservative values. Understandably, much of the discussion centred on the Cameron era. The best answers here were strong on policies and programmes and on where they were very much in the Conservative tradition and where

they continued to be influenced by Thatcherism. These answers also sensibly explained how coalition government necessitated compromise. At the bottom end of the range, students tended to make sweeping statements that were neither supported by factual evidence or substantive illustration.

TOPIC 4 - Fascism

Question 7

The majority of students who tackled this question were able to describe the key ideas associated with the Enlightenment, particularly its rationalist approach to problem solving. The most basic responses contended that fascism was little more than a movement which espoused irrationalism. The better answers provided a clear fascist critique of the Enlightenment, pointing out fascism's preference for action over theorising and its strong emphasis on myths and emotions. They also showed a strong understanding of fascism's contempt for the liberal democratic systems which emerged from this period and its preference for strong leadership, social Darwinism and ultra-nationalism. Again, at the top end pleasing knowledge and awareness of key thinkers and their works was evident in the answers produced, as was their impact on the actions and policies associated with the likes of Mussolini and Hitler.

Question 8

Very few students were unable to cite and expand upon the core ideas and values associated with fascism. The weaker students however did little more than repeat the points they had already made in question 07. But the question clearly required the students not only to be able to address the above but also to examine the extent to which these values were indeed alien to the British political tradition. To do this, students needed to reveal a clear awareness of the key features of the British political culture in their answers, emphasising its participatory nature and civic features in the process. In doing so, recognition of processes and institutions were the hallmarks of good answers. The best responses clearly indicated how fascism was largely at variance with this political culture, citing how the ideas, programmes and policies championed by extreme right wing parties and movements in the UK from the 1930s onwards were rejected by the overwhelming majority of British people. Interestingly, some students contended that certain aspects of fascism could be viewed as existing in British politics and society, eg the glorification of warfare and national identity and antipathy towards groups whose ethnicity and religious and cultural practices were seen to be at odds with, and, furthermore, potential threats to, the dominant white, Christian culture. At the bottom end of the range students simply asserted that fascism must be alien to British politics as fascists had never won any parliamentary seats. Far more in the way of analysis and evaluation than this was clearly required and expected.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

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