



General Certificate of Education

Government and Politics 2151

GOV3B Ideologies

Report on the Examination

2010 examination – June series

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Government and Politics

GOV3B – Ideologies

General

This was only the second GOV3B examination. As would be expected, the cohort for the June exam was significantly larger than that for the first January sitting. The scripts presented for marking ranged from outstanding to poor. Given the two-module structure of the new A2 examination, we would have expected teachers to prepare their candidates across all four of the designated themes. Some teachers did not do this and it was not uncommon to find all of the candidates in some centres tackling the same two topics. The best centres in terms of outcomes tended to be those where teachers had prepared their students across the whole specification. This enabled candidates to point out parallels and contrasts between political philosophies, achieving aspects of synopticity which remain integral to advanced level studies. As was the case in the legacy specification, the best scripts revealed not only impressive subject knowledge but also excellent analytical and critical skills, allied to impressive exam technique.

Topic 1 – Liberalism

This was by some distance the most popular of the four examined themes.

Question 01

This question required candidates to explain why individualism is at the heart of classical liberal thinking. The best answers here revealed not only an awareness of how classical liberals see each being as unique, with the capacity for logical thinking, but also a fine understanding and appreciation of the works and ideas produced and promoted by the great liberal philosophers and economists. Such answers also discussed the role of limited government as structures which allow individuals to develop and prosper, reconciling the rights of individuals with the will of the majority whilst, at the same time, protecting the individual in spheres of both social and economic activity, in a climate of tolerance and mutual respect. At the top end of the range, candidates contrasted these ideas with collectivism and socialist preferences for group activity over individual action.

Question 02

The upper case used for Liberal Democrats in this question should have flagged up that candidates were expected to examine a political organisation rather than a location on the political spectrum. Far too many candidates wrote about why Classical Liberals tended to be suspicious of state power, in contrast to New/Progressive Liberals who clearly saw the need for greater governmental activity in national life, so as to provide opportunity and fairness in the quest for a meritocracy. Such historical approaches were fine in providing a context for further analysis and evaluation, but the essay demanded more than this. Most candidates did recognise where the Liberal Democrat Party has stood, and does stand, on the role of the state in the spheres of management of the economy and social reform, appreciating the evolution of policy and programmes over the last two or so decades and the differences of opinion which exist between the 'Orange Book' Liberal Democrats and those in the Party who hold values and champion policies to the left of this position. The best candidates also recognised the paradox that exists between classical liberalism and progressive liberal preferences for more active government since the early Twentieth Century, and focused on this apparent contradiction in

their essays. It is gratifying to report that some even examined the policies presented in the 2010 Election Manifesto and commented on the policies proposed by the coalition government which has operated since May 2010. Such contemporary analysis is to be applauded.

Topic 2 – Socialism

Question 03

To score well here, candidates needed to contrast Marxist theories on the revolutionary route to socialism with the revisionist gradualistic and democratic path to social and economic change. Candidates also needed to discuss revisionism's toleration of class divisions and acceptance of aspects of capitalism, which contrasts with Marxism's commitment to a classless society and state control of the means of production, distribution and exchange. In doing so, candidates should have come to the conclusion that the Labour Party was clearly more indebted to Bernstein and the like than it was to Marx and Engels. Most students did this to good effect. The differentiators here tended to be quality of language and the comprehension of key philosophical debates in a well formulated historical context.

Question 04

Whilst virtually all of the candidates who tackled this question appreciated the centrality of equality and social justice to socialism, top marks could only be gained by assessing the extent to which these core values remain at the heart of New Labour's political philosophy and policy programmes. In order to achieve such marks, candidates need to focus on the ideas and proposals developed by Blair and his team in the build-up to the 1997 General Election and on the policies actually pursued by New Labour between 1997 and 2010.

The best answers differentiated between equality of outcome and equality of opportunity, pointing out New Labour's willing acceptance of market economics alongside its quest for fairness and social inclusion. Policies and programmes were also dealt with to good effect and, where analysis was strong, there was usually a clear critical dimension in the answer. Most candidates concluded that equality and social justice remain strong in New Labour's policies and actions but that these concepts tend to be viewed differently according to where the individual locates himself or herself on the Labour Party's political spectrum. So, for those on the left, these key socialist shibboleths had been at worst abandoned or, at least, watered down by New Labour. Those on the party's right, wished to redefine them to meet the needs and values of voters in the post-Thatcher era.

Topic 3 – Conservatism

Conservatism proved to be the least popular of the four ideological themes.

Question 05

In answering this question, candidates clearly needed to establish that many traditional conservatives viewed individuals as being ill-equipped to make rational decisions regarding the management of society, either because they lacked the intelligence or knowledge to do so or because politics was of little interest to most citizens – essentially the Burkean view. Candidates were also expected to discuss the limited utility of politics in improving society and the human condition, views articulated to good effect by sceptics of the holistic worth of politics such as McMillan, Hailsham and Gilmour. In essence, this question required candidates to recognise the conservative view that man is essentially a flawed creature and that societies operate as organic entities which cannot be deliberately planned according to ideological blue prints.

Question 06

Whilst virtually all of the candidates who attempted this question were able to explain why patriotism and tradition were respected by all, and even venerated by some, conservatives, the discriminators here were the terms 'high value' and 'continues'. 'High value' required a rank ordering of beliefs and concepts so that locations could be found for the two presented in the question. 'Continues' required the candidates to trace their significance from the beginnings of this political philosophy to the present day. The best answers combined the historical and modern situations to very good effect, providing challenging and perceptive arguments about radical Thatcherism and its relationship with tradition, as well as examining the centrality of the two concepts in the post-Thatcher era. Interestingly, a few candidates ventured beyond the UK in analysing the importance of patriotism and tradition in conservatism, by examining how American conservatives attach significance to them as well. Such approaches again reflect the synopticity which is to be expected at A2 level.

Topic 4 – Facism

Unlike the previous three ideologies, fascism was not included in the previous GOV7 specification on ideologies. Nevertheless, many candidates opted for this theme in the January examination, and in the June examination this proved to be the second most popular of the four topics of study.

Question 07

This was generally well handled. Virtually all of the candidates were able to identify the key features of totalitarian systems. They were also able to show the extent to which these features existed in fascist literature and fascist regimes. The best candidates referred to the works of Hannah Arendt and the like, and in doing so, they emphasised how, in such regimes, the state claimed to have total authority and control over every aspect of life, in both the public and private spheres. They also usually pointed out how power in such structures tended to reside in the hands of a single leader or ruling elites. The very best answers also alluded to the systems of organised terror operated by fascist administrations. A few went further in their analysis by emphasising that such features could also be found in totalitarian Marxist regimes as well as in fascist ones.

Question 08

The answers here tended to reveal a clear awareness and understanding of the impact of race on fascist thinking. All too often though, candidates focused on the historical situation, ignoring or paying scant attention to the significance of race in contemporary fascist thinking.

A significant number of candidates focused almost exclusively on Hitler's German National Socialism, which was clearly dominated by racial theories and policies and by actions designed to produce a master race. The best answers, however, pointed out that racism and nationalism were not necessarily one and the same thing, contrasting Mussolini's brand of Italian fascism with the German variant.

Interestingly, many candidates challenged the claim in the question. Whilst they accepted that race was clearly evident in fascism, they also pointed out that there were other key ideas which were central to fascist thinking, such as corporatism, the cult of the leader and the rejection of rationalism in favour of emotionalism. Such responses, when they also included contemporary analysis, secured high marks. Unfortunately, a large number of candidates failed to focus on contemporary fascism even though the question clearly required them to do so. It is nevertheless gratifying to report that a few candidates not only discussed the BNP and earlier fascist movements in the UK such as the National Front, but also extended their analysis to

cover fascism in the United States and Europe, again revealing the synoptic approach which is looked for in advanced studies.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.