



**General Certificate of Education**

**Government and Politics 2151**

**GOV3B Ideologies**

**Report on the Examination**

*2011 examination – January series*

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## **Government and Politics**

### **GOV3B – Ideologies**

#### **General**

Each of the four themes proved popular with a balance of responses across all topics.

#### **Question 01**

Virtually all of the candidates who attempted this question appreciated that liberalism was closely associated with freedom and tolerance and that such values went hand-in-glove with accepting economic and social diversity. Only the best candidates however developed their answers so as to also explain the significance of political diversity, ie political pluralism – systems where states function essentially as referees, adjudicating in disputes and debates between competing parties, groups and individuals. At the top end of the range candidates made it clear that such political pluralism is characterized by a diversity of groups and parties which co-exist in a participatory civic political culture.

#### **Question 02**

The best responses combined political philosophy with political practice. Most candidates knew why the protection of human rights and the promotion of constitutional reform were at the heart of liberal thinking. When discussing human rights, many candidates referred to the centrality of rights and freedoms in liberal political philosophy. A large number of candidates also revealed a sound knowledge and awareness of the key philosophical works in the field. Candidates should be aware, however, that this unit is not just about political philosophy. Indeed, in order to illustrate the importance of rights to liberals, candidates should also have discussed how the Liberal Party, and more recently the Liberal Democrats, have been responsible for the passage of legislation to improve and protect human rights. Furthermore, even when out of office, these parties have championed ideas and have advocated programmes which have then been accepted and even embraced by other parties in this sphere. For top marks, candidates needed to support their claims with hard policy examples. The same points apply to the constitutional reform aspect of the question. Here again most candidates revealed a pleasing awareness of liberalism's commitment to political systems based on codified constitutions operating via checks and balances intended to prevent excessive centralization of power and overbearing executives. Here too there was much evidence of the scholarly works which have been produced by liberal political philosophers over the years on constitutional issues and questions. High level 3 and level 4 marks were characterised by a good knowledge of policies and programmes advocated or delivered by the Liberal Party/Liberal Democrats in their quest to promote and achieve constitutional reform. The best candidates were able to synthesize theory and practice to impressive effect.

#### **Question 03**

Candidates were required to recognise that the term 'utopian' refers to political systems/societies which are 'perfect'; they represent an ideal. Most candidates appreciated this, indeed the best answers were developed in such a way to emphasise that socialism, in its quest for a society based on equality and fairness, was indeed idealistic rather than practical. Many used historical examples of such utopian communities which, whilst worthy, failed in practice, eg Robert Owen's New Lanark experiment. Some candidates also discussed how the desire to achieve a classless society aspiring to equality of outcome had never been

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successfully achieved in actual socialist systems, largely because those who advocated such systems failed to recognise or accept the innate imperfections in mankind and the biological competitiveness which appears to militate against total equality. In stark contrast, conservatives recognised these traits all too readily, as a number of candidates were very keen to point out.

#### **Question 04**

This question required candidates to make clear the key values and beliefs which are associated with traditional socialism before undertaking an analysis/evaluation of the extent to which the Labour Party agenda since the 1990s was/is indebted to socialism. The weakest candidates made somewhat generalized and superficial points about these core values. The best candidates in contrast, produced comprehensive accounts of socialism's traditional values, even going so far as to discuss both the common ground and stark differences which distinguished the democratic and revolutionary schools of socialism. A few fell into the trap of producing descriptive chronologies of the policies and programs advocated and/or delivered by the Labour Party over the course of the Twentieth Century. Such responses failed to score highly on AO2 because much of this information was not central to the actual question. The best answers were not only strong on policy content but also on analysis, pointing out clearly where elements of socialist thinking did influence the New Labour agenda and where policies and actions owed more to liberal and social democratic values than they did to traditional socialism. A few candidates extended their analysis to Labour post-Brown, citing Miliband's claim that his core values sprung from socialism, whilst recognising that such pronouncements could not as yet be substantiated by firm policy illustrations.

#### **Question 05**

Candidates generally provided good explanations as to why conservatives oppose change. Many correctly asserted that the very word 'conserve' means to keep things as they are and that Peel, in his Tamworth manifesto, claimed that the purpose of the Tory Party was to 'conserve all that was good in British politics'. Most also asserted that conservatives believe that change for change's sake could actually be damaging. There were numerous references to Burke and to the respect which conservatives have always held for established institutions such as the Church, the Monarchy and the House of Lords on the grounds that they have successfully stood the test of time. The discriminator in this question was the term 'generally'. At the top end of the range, candidates asserted that conservatives would be prepared to embrace change if this was thought to be absolutely necessary, citing Disraeli's advocacy of 'One Nation Conservatism', the Party's acceptance of many of Attlee's reforms in the post-war period and Thatcher's New Right agenda. They also recognised that, with the exception of Thatcher, change should be at a cautious pace.

#### **Question 06**

This question elicited few poor responses. Virtually all candidates were able to explain why, and illustrate how the Conservative Party has, since the mid-1970s, tended to advocate values and execute policies which promote state control in the social sphere and free enterprise in the economic sphere. There were many strong responses on the social authoritarian views and policies championed by Thatcher as opposition leader and Prime Minister. There was also sound coverage of her rejection of state ownership and Keynesian demand management techniques in favour of supply side economics and monetarism. Most candidates, having discussed values and policies in the Thatcher era, went on to discuss social and economic policies in the Cameron-led Conservative Party, almost always overlooking the values and policies advocated by the Conservative Party between 1990 and 2005. A significant number of candidates ignored the existence of Major, Hague, Duncan-Smith and Howard. Student awareness of social and economic policies under Cameron's leadership was either extremely good or highly generalised. Many recognised the policy compromises necessitated by

membership of the current coalition and the enduring legacy of certain aspects of Thatcherism in the early Twenty-First Century.

### **Question 07**

This proved to be a testing question for a number of candidates. Many candidates possessed a firm and clear understanding of the term – essentially how populism is meant to provide a legitimate guide to action for leaders and the support for the ideas and values of the common people in contrast to the selfish interests of narrow bourgeois elites. Populism was also described as a style of politics where rulers emphasised an abstract feature of society that seemed to underlie all social grievances, thereby diverting attention from more pressing political issues.

Unfortunately some candidates scored more by default than design in this question, producing generalised answers which were somewhat vague on the actual meaning of the concept. A few simply ignored the question and moved to question 08. It should be noted that all of the major studies and key articles on fascism recognise the centrality of populism to this ideology. It would appear that some centres are teaching the 'isms' rigidly against the key concepts for each ideology in the GOV 3B specification. A levels require candidates to be synoptic and candidates are expected to show an awareness of concepts and ideas which have been acquired as a consequence of studying the whole specification rather than a single unit over a 4 module programme.

### **Question 08**

To achieve good marks on this question, candidates were required not only to recognise the extent to which obedience on the part of citizens to both the leader and the state were central to fascist ideology in both theory and practice, but also to explain why such obedience was proffered. Most candidates discussed the uncritical support which many Italians and Germans gave to Mussolini and Hitler, citing their charismatic qualities as partial reasons for such behaviours. The best answers were strong on philosophy and antecedents. The works of Goethe, Nietzsche and Gentile figured prominently at the top end of the range, as did an awareness of the importance of romanticism, irrationality and mythology in elevating the role of leaders and the status of the state to supreme positions in fascist regimes. It is gratifying to note that whilst many candidates appreciated the psychological bond which led to blind support for leaders in these fascist structures, many also recognised that such obedience was often based on fear rather than respect; disobedience often resulted in imprisonment or death. Interestingly, a minority of candidates argued that there were other values and ideas which were also central to fascism, such as integral nationalism, corporatism, the glorification of war and racialism and anti-semitism. Some candidates even discussed neo-fascism and contemporary fascism. Here the major assertion was racism, islamophobia and extreme nationalism were more significant than obedience to the state and leader. Level 4 marks could nevertheless be achieved without such contemporary information.

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

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