

AQA Unit 3A GOV3A: The Politics of the USA

Use this check list to tick off the areas you have revised or RAG rate (red, amber, green) your confidence levels so you can identify which topics need more attention.

Topic 1: The Electoral Process and Direct Democracy	
I can...	
	Describe the main characteristics of presidential and congressional elections and campaigns and the main influences on their outcomes.
	Explain candidate selection and nomination through the primary and caucus system and the role of the national nominating conventions.
	Discuss the debates concerning the workings and outcomes of the Electoral College and its impact on campaigns.
	Explain the significance of money as a factor in electoral success and the impact of the media on campaigns and candidates.
	Describe direct democracy at State level through the use of referendums, initiatives, propositions and recall elections, and debates concerning their use.
	Synoptic skill: Make comparisons with the UK electoral process to illustrate arguments.

Topic 2: Political Parties	
I can...	
	Describe the two main political parties and their differing ideologies, values, policies and traditions.
	Explain the factionalised nature of the parties: the reasons for, and consequences of, their internal divisions and party organisation.
	Explain recent changes to the parties and reasons for these changes
	Discuss debates over party decline or renewal
	Evaluate debates concerning the weakness of US parties.
	Give reasons for two-party dominance and the significance of third parties and independent candidates
	Synoptic skill: Make comparisons with the UK political parties to illustrate arguments.

Topic 3: Voting Behaviour	
I can...	
	Show consideration of the main variables affecting the way people vote in the US and their relative importance.
	Discuss the long-term determinants of American electoral behaviour including socio-economic status, gender, age, race and ethnicity, region and religion.
	Explain the significance of partisan alignment and de-alignment.
	Make Links between the parties and their core voting coalitions.
	Evaluate Recency factors in voting behaviour including differing issues and

	candidates at different elections and their relative importance.
	Explain factors causing change in voting behaviour.
	Explain the causes and consequences of split ticket voting and high levels of abstention.
	Synoptic skill: Make comparisons with the UK voting behaviour to illustrate arguments.

Topic 4: Pressure groups	
I can...	
	Explain the meaning of political pluralism and debates about its extent in the US.
	Outline types and classification of pressure groups including economic, moral, environmental, ethnic, gender and issue based groups, sectional and cause groups.
	Discuss debates concerning the methods and tactics used by pressure groups to influence decision making and the reasons for success or the lack of it.
	Debate the relative power of pressure groups vis-à-vis political parties.
	Explain controversies over the extent of pressure group power in the US.
	Explain the role and significance of Political Action Committees, especially regarding electoral finance
	Synoptic skill: Make comparisons with the UK pressure groups to illustrate arguments.

AQA Unit 4A GOV4A: The Government of the USA

Topic 1: The Constitutional Framework of the US Government	
I can...	
	Explain the nature and significance of the US Constitution and the framework of government that it lays down.
	Explain the importance of the constitutional principles of the separation of powers and checks and balances to the operation of government and the way that these apply in practice today.
	Explain the significance of the Bill of Rights.
	Describe the amendment process.
	Explain The federal system of government and its implications.
	Explain the relationship between the federal government and the states
	Discuss constitutional change and its causes and effects.
	Evaluate debates concerning the importance of the US Constitution to the working of US government today
	Explain the relationship between the Supreme Court and the Constitution
	Synoptic skill: Comparisons with the UK's uncodified constitution and unitary system to illustrate arguments.

Topic 2: The Legislative branch of government: US Congress	
I can...	
	Explain the constitutional role and power(s) of the US Congress
	Explain the composition of Congress and the different terms of office.
	Explain the differences between the House and the Senate and the relationship between the two houses.
	Examine debates concerning the functions, powers and effectiveness of Congress in legislation, oversight and the power of the purse
	Explain the importance of both the party system and the Committee system within Congress.
	Describe the representative role of Senators and Representatives.
	Discuss debates concerning the social composition of Congress.
	Evaluate the relationship of Congress with the Executive Branch of government and the Supreme Court.
	Synoptic skill: Make comparisons with the Westminster Parliament to illustrate arguments.

Topic 3: The Executive branch of government	
I can...	
	Explain the relationship between the Constitution and the executive branch of government
	Discuss debates concerning Presidential power, both formal and informal, and the ability to actually exercise it in both domestic and foreign policy.
	Examine the Limitations and constraints on executive power from the Constitution, Congress and the Supreme Court.
	Consider the debates concerning the main determinants of Presidential/ Congressional relations. The ebb and flow of power.
	Explain the nature of the exercise of power within the executive branch.
	Consider Debates concerning the relative power and influence of the Cabinet and the Executive Office of President.
	Describe the role of the federal bureaucracy and the federal agencies.
	Synoptic skill: Comparisons with the UK Executive to illustrate arguments.