

# **Political Ideas**

A level Politics

AQA 7152

Unit 3

# Introduce yourself.

## Talk about your

- political beliefs
- plans for life after Bullers



## 1 minute

# The exam

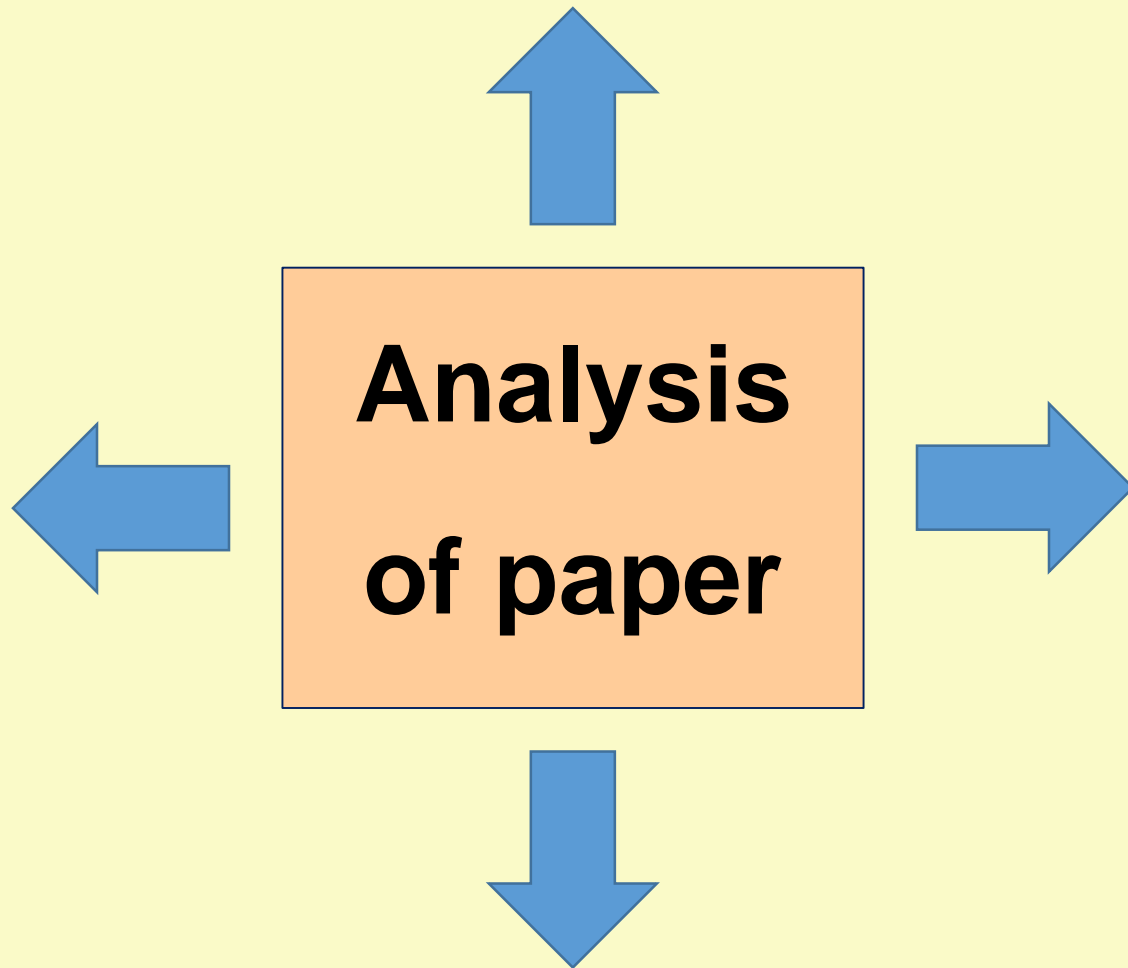


# Unit 3. Political Ideas

Third of your overall  
mark/grade

One 2 hour exam

7172/3



**A-LEVEL  
POLITICS**

(7152)

**Specification**

For teaching from September 2017 onwards  
For A-level exams in 2019 onwards

Version 1.1 28 January 2020

# The specification

[A-level Politics  
Specification Specification  
for first teaching in 2017  
\(\[aqa.org.uk\]\(http://aqa.org.uk\)\)](#)

[AQA | Politics |  
Subject content |  
Political ideas](#)



# Core ideologies

- 1. liberalism
- 2. conservatism
- 2. socialism

**What do you think  
the key idea of  
each one is? Each  
in one word only!**

**Human nature**

**Society**

**The state**

**Economy**

**4**



1. What do you think humans are (like)?

2. How do you think society should be organised?

3. What is the role, if any, of government and its institutions?

4. What beliefs do have about the economy (taxation, spending, etc.)

Each answer is,  
in effect, one of  
your **political**  
**ideas**

Your answers are,  
as a constellation,  
your **political**  
**ideology**: clusters  
of ideas

**5+**

**thinkers**

**Older,  
traditional  
versions**



**development (over time)**

**Newer,  
modern  
versions**

# Optional ideologies

- 1. nationalism
- 2. feminism
- 3. multiculturalism
- 4. anarchism
- 5. ecologism

**Again, what do you think the key idea of each one is? Each in one word only!**

# Homework

Research **one** of the optional ideologies,  
and prepare a **short presentation** (2-3  
minutes) on it.

For: Monday 12 September 2022.

A level = **Politics**

Unit = **Political** ideas

**So, what is politics?**

(a) What does politics mean to you?

(b) How would you define politics?

# Politics



## What is politics?

*Professor Christina Boswell, University of Edinburgh*

We often refer to something as being 'political', or 'all about politics', to mean it boils down to a power struggle between people or groups. The idea is that politics is a process of manoeuvring to assert rival interests.

Of course, this notion of competition over interests or power is very relevant to politics with a capital 'P', or party politics. Indeed, we might start by defining politics as a process of competitive claims-making by rival parties, with the aim of mobilising support to put these programmes into action. But beyond this broad definition, it's useful to unpack what this competition is about and the way in which it plays out. Both of these questions will help us develop a rather more nuanced (and hopefully less cynical!) view of politics.

First, what is politics about? One of the classic answers to this question is that politics is about who gets what, when and how. On this view, politics is essentially about settling contestation over the distribution of material goods. This may have been a fair characterisation of politics in the post-World War II era – an era that saw the rolling out of progressive taxation and welfare provision by a relatively centralised state and a party political system based on a traditional left-right ideological cleavage.

Yet the notion that politics is solely, or mainly, about distribution has been challenged over the past three or more decades. The increasing salience of 'post-ideological' contestation around values and lifestyles suggests that politics is as much, or arguably more, about identity and culture as it is about material resources. Much of our contemporary political debate revolves around issues that are not neatly categorised as left or right, such as the environment, gender and sexual rights, immigration and security.

"Political contestation is as much about cultural identity and recognition, as it is about allocating material resources"

Another challenge to this classic view comes from the 'ideational turn' in studies of politics. Scholars have shown how politics is as much

about contestation over ways of framing or narrating policy problems, as it is about struggles over distribution. Of course, the two may not be easily distinguishable: different ways of framing problems may have profound consequences for distribution. But the point is that politics is a battle of ideas, in which participants attempt to control the narrative through tapping deep-rooted values and beliefs, rather than invoking objective self-interest. This recognition of the importance of narratives chimes with debates on 'fake news' and the potential for significant divergence in the way rival political groups frame policy issues.

The second question is about the process of politics: how are these rival claims translated into policy? In multi-party democracies, the obvious answer to this is through winning elections, which allows parties to implement their programmes.

But this rather transactional account is misleading. Electoral competition tends to create a 'bidding war', in which rival parties promise ever more appealing programmes. Voters often assume that these programmes can be straightforwardly implemented – as if they are consumers choosing a product. But in reality, manifesto claims are often discarded or watered down in the face of limited resources, viability, or political veto. What results is disappointment and disillusionment in democratic politics.

One of the challenges for political science, then, is to chart and understand these changes in the nature of politics. We need to understand that political contestation is as much about cultural identity and recognition, as it is about allocating material resources and to make sense of the disappointment in politics generated by the gap between the transactional view and the messier reality. Only by elucidating these trends can we develop institutions that can renew democratic debate and trust in politics. No mean feat in the current political climate, but definitely worth our best effort.

# Read Boswell (2020)

[What is politics? | The British Academy](#)

## How is politics characterised?

# **The origins of politics**



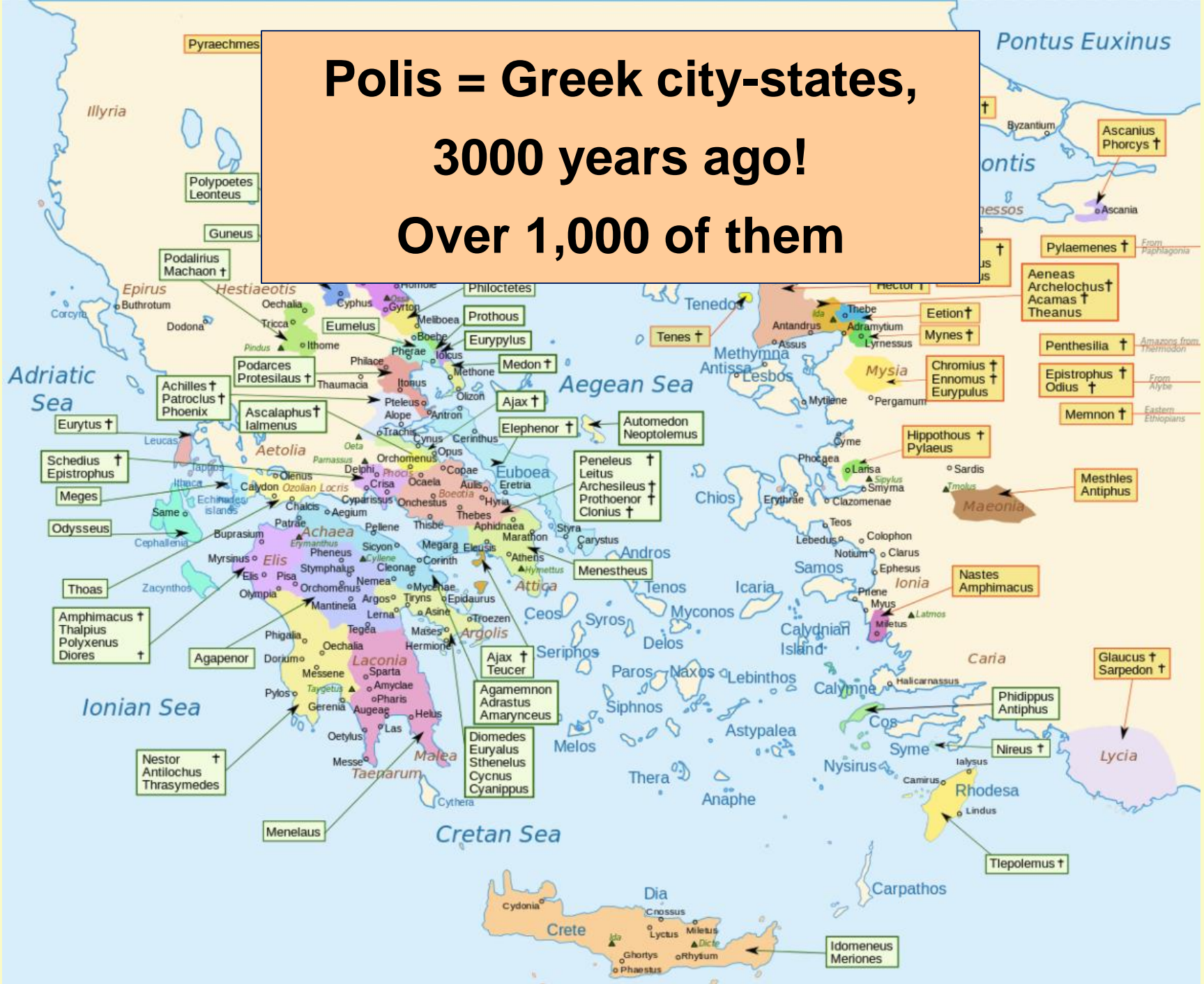
# The polis



Mountains in Argolis.	Salamis.	Muscion.	Phyx.	Parthenon.	Athena Promachos.	Erechtheion.	Mt. Korydalis.
Peninsula of Munychia.	Peiraios.	Olympieion.	Stature and arch of Hadrian.	Theatre of Herodes.	Odeion of Perikles. (?)	Akropolis.	Prytaneion.
Sikelia.	Long Walls.	Portico of the Olympieion.	Gardens and Temple of Aphrodite.	Theatre of Dionysos.	Serapeion.	Eleusinion.	Temple of Zeus Panhellenos and Hera. (?)
Stadium.	Temple of Kronos and Rhea. (?)	Bridge over the Ilissos.	Roman Thermae.	City gate.	(Country house.)	Delphinion. (?)	



**Polis = Greek city-states,  
3000 years ago!  
Over 1,000 of them**



- Urban area, walled
- Citizens = (male) dwellers
- Surrounding countryside
- Public spaces
- Government buildings
- Temples, esp. acropolis
- Culture, trade, politics



- **Corinth**
- **Thebes**
- **Rhodes**
- **Argos**
- **Athens**
- **Sparta**





# Sparta



- **Led by two hereditary kings**

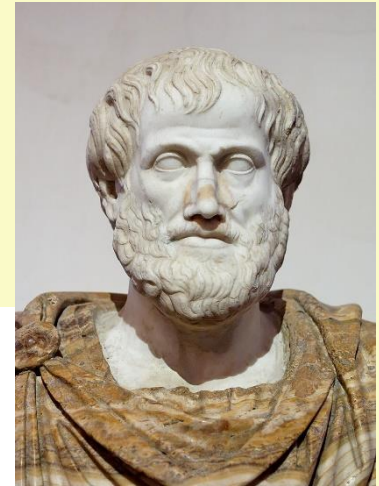
# Athens



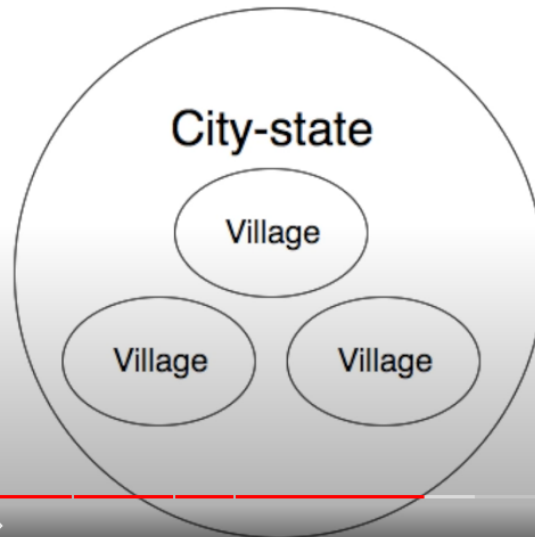
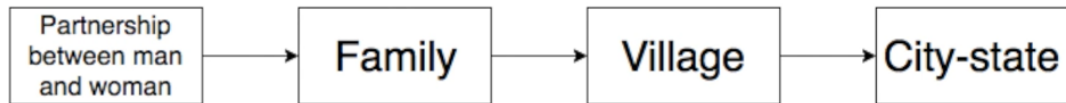
- **Each male citizen voted!**

# Optional Homework

# Aristotle



## Aristotle's Origins of the City-State



Part → Whole  
Village → City-state



[Aristotle - Politics | Political Philosophy - YouTube](#)



