



Rushcliffe Spencer Academy

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Preparing for Year 12 Politics

We want you to begin your Year 12 Studies feeling prepared and confident. Therefore, you will be tasked with completing a range of Summer Work for the subjects you plan to continue studying. If you are unsure which subjects you might want to study, you should complete work for the subjects you are considering. This will help give you a "taster" of the subject, in place of the taster lessons you would normally be receiving face-to-face. **You should expect to spend a minimum of 15 hours on each subject.** All work should be submitted to your teacher in September; however, not all will require feedback.

Key knowledge and skills

This will ensure you do not forget some of the skills and knowledge developed during your GCSE studies

We will be looking at political ideologies, Politics in the UK and in the US

Task A- See how well you do on the quiz below on the USA as Geography will be relevant here too!!
<https://www.sporcle.com/games/g/states>

Task B- Political Parties, you must answer the following for **FOUR UK** political parties of your choice.

1. Name and symbol of Political Party
2. Leader of Party
3. Four key policies from the 2024 General Election.
4. Share of the vote/Number of seats won in 2024.

Repeat all 4 points for the elections of 1979 and 1997.

Task C- Find out the **composition of Parliament (The Houses of Commons)** and then write a short paragraph as to whether you think Parliament is **representative** or not backing your answer up with evidence.

1. How many MPs in total?
2. How many from each party?
3. How many men/women?

Key Skills Development

This will focus on ensuring you are continuing to develop the skills needed, particularly during this longer break from school

Task E - There will be lots of new vocabulary to learn so start a glossary- Here are the first lot of words to create definitions for that we can add to over the course:

- Constitution
- Devolution
- Direct democracy
- Federalism
- First Past the Post
- Legislature
- Mandate
- Manifesto
- Parliamentary sovereignty
- Partisan dealignment
- Proportional Representation
- Referendum
- Statute law
- Unitary

Task F - Have a go at the quiz below to find out where you are on the political spectrum. There is some tricky vocab here, so make sure you look it up when you need to and make a note/sketch of where you end up. <https://www.politicalcompass.org/test>



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- How many from ethnic backgrounds? - What's the age range and average age? - What about educational/employment background? How has this changed over the last 2 Parliaments/elections? - Now do the same for the House of Lords Task D- Read the attached article from 'Politics Review' magazine and complete the task to explain how and why political participation has changed.	
Research and/or wider reading <i>An opportunity to begin looking in more depth at the subjects you have chosen, preparing for the greater independence required in Year 12</i> - We normally go on visits to both Parliament and the Supreme Court in London. Find 10 interesting facts about the UK Supreme Court- Where is it? Who's in it? Any famous cases? - Make sure you read a newspaper/check a news website/watch the news at least once a week and find 4 articles linked to this course that interest you. Print them out or copy links and be ready to say why you chose them in September! *There are some suggestions in the 'opportunities' box below	Submission Pieces <i>These pieces will be submitted to your teacher the first lesson in September for review and feedback</i> 4 News articles to discuss - Political Parties information - Statistics and judgement paragraph on Parliament - Analysis of 2024 voting behaviour - How and why political participation has changed. 10 Facts about the UK Supreme Court.



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Supra-Learning Opportunities

Activities which will broaden your knowledge and understanding of the wider world of your subject. Things to inspire and enjoy when you have a moment!

Watch

The news!!

(iplayer)

Have I got news for you

Andrew Marr- History of Modern Britain

Trump Takes on the World

(NetFlix)

Vice

Suffragette

The Thick of it

House of Cards

Knock the House Down (documentary)

13th (documentary)

(All 4)

The Deal

Brexit- The Uncivil war

(Amazon Prime)

Bowling for Columbine (documentary)

(Youtube)

Long Walk to Finchley

Inside the Commons

Podcasts

The Rest is Politics

The News Agents USA

Read

The Guardian, (Financial) Times or Telegraph newspapers

Private Eye

New Statesman

Get the BBC/ New York Times/Washington Post app

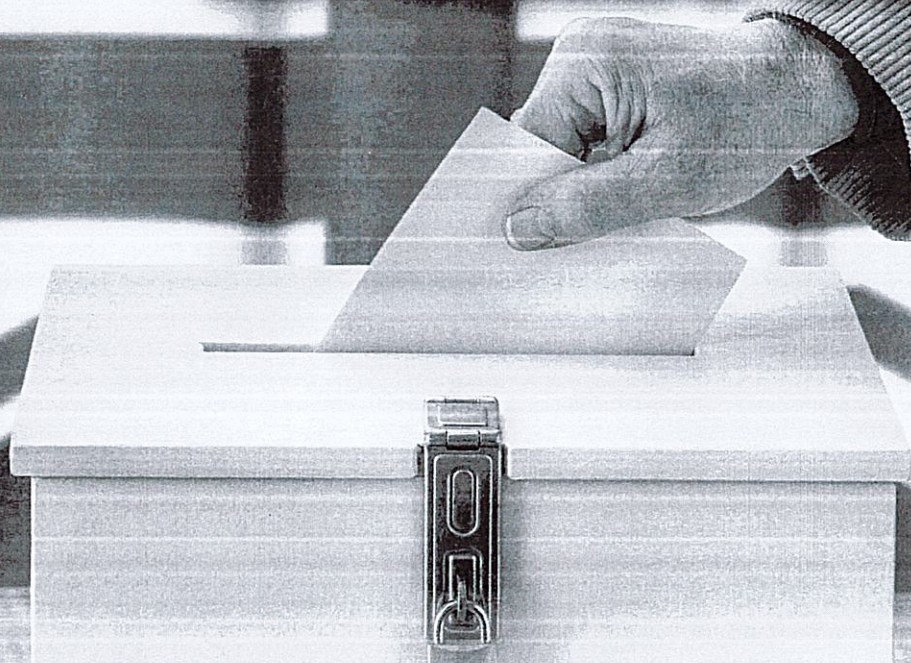
Animal Farm/1984- George Orwell

Fire and Fury- Michael Wolff

Atlas Shrugged - Ayn Rand

This website makes a weekly quiz- so have a go! <https://www.tutor2u.net/politics>

Democratic



Paul Fairclough

Has the nature of political participation changed?

Paul Fairclough examines the scope and extent of political participation in the UK, as well as considering the view that the past two decades may in fact have witnessed a 'change' in the nature of participation as opposed to a 'decline'

The early years of the twenty-first century have seen intense debate surrounding the health of democracy in the UK. Much of this discussion naturally focused on the apparent free-fall in recorded levels of political participation — prompted, in large part, by the record low turnout seen at the 2001 general election and in declining rates of UK party membership.

What is political participation?

The term political participation refers to those activities through which citizens seek to influence the individuals, institutions and processes that shape their everyday lives. In recent years it has become common to divide such activities into those which are more 'formal' or traditional, and those which are 'informal' (Box 1).

Just as it was a decline in formal participation that prompted talk of a 'participation crisis' a decade or so ago, it is the emergence of a wider range of informal activities that could be seen as driving the title of this article. As Noreena Hertz wrote in the *Independent* in 2001: 'It's not about apathy...while voting is waning, alternative forms of political expression...are all on the rise.'

Exam context

This article is required reading for AS students. It focuses on the following aspects of the specifications:

Edexcel

Unit 1 Democracy and political participation

AQA

Unit 1 Participation and voting behaviour

OCR

Unit F851 UK parliamentary elections.

participation

Box 1 Formal and informal participation

Formal participation: the election of representatives, voting in referendums, membership of political parties and attending public meetings.

Informal participation: includes a range of 'bottom-up', grassroots activities, e.g. online activism such as signing a petition, purchasing or boycotting products for political reasons, and discussing politics with friends and family.

Source: adapted from Houses of Parliament (2015), POSTnote Number 498

The decline in formal participation

The decline in formal participation is most clearly illustrated both by reference to the historically low levels of electoral turnout witnessed at recent elections and by the apparently terminal decline in mainstream party membership.

Turnout

Although turnout at UK general elections has recovered somewhat following the record low of 59.4% in 2001, it has yet to return to the levels seen in earlier decades. The 66.2% turnout recorded at the 2015 general election is significantly lower than the 77.7% seen in 1992 — or even the average 73.4% turnout at the last parliamentary elections across EU-15 countries. Moreover, turnout at other major UK elections (Table 1), and also at second-order elections, is often lower still.

The 84.6% turnout at the Scottish independence referendum was one of the highest ever seen in the UK. The turnout for the 2016 EU referendum was also high at 72%. However, other referendums have had much lower turnouts, with the 42.2% witnessed at the UK-wide AV referendum in 2011 being more typical.

Party membership

In much the same way as electoral turnout has declined significantly since the early 1990s, membership of the three

Table 2 Individual party membership (000s)

Year	Conservative	Labour	Lib Dem
1951	2,900	876	—
1983	1,200	295	138*
1992	500	280	101
2001	311	272	73
2010	177	193	65
2015	150	270	61

*SDP–Liberal Alliance

Source: adapted from House of Commons Library Briefing Paper SN05125

main UK-wide parties has also tailed-off markedly since the heyday of the 'big two' back in the 1950s (Table 2). Although the Labour Party had steadied the ship somewhat by 2015, the long-term trend in mainstream party membership is clearly on a downward spiral.

Moreover, the efforts of the main UK-wide parties to try to reach out to a wider audience through the use of devices such as open primaries in candidate-selection have met with only limited success. Not even the Conservative's innovation in offering a £1 'supporter' or 'friend' category alongside the normal £25 standard membership has been enough to push the total number of party 'backers' back above the 250,000 mark.

Explaining the decline in formal participation

A mistrust of politicians and political institutions

Some have seen the decline in formal participation as reflecting a widespread loss of confidence in the very offices of state and institutions that those more conventional modes of political participation serve (Box 2). Put simply, if individuals place no trust or faith in the institutions that they are being asked to elect, why would they see any value in casting a ballot?

Box 2 Drivers of political disengagement

- Scandals such as the 2009 MPs' expenses crisis
- Negative media representation of politics
- Unrealistic public expectations of standards of behaviour in public life and levels of public services
- A perceived lack of accountability arising from the transfer of some decision-making powers away from UK elected officials, e.g. UK-based QUANGOs and the EU

Source: adapted from Houses of Parliament (2015), POSTnote Number 49

Table 1 Turnout at selected elections, 2014–2016

Year	Election	% Turnout
2014	European Parliament elections	35.3
2015	UK general election	66.2
2016	Scottish Parliament election	55.6
2016	Welsh Assembly election	45.3
2016	Northern Ireland Assembly election	54.9
2016	London mayoral election	45.3

Changes in political culture and political identities

The seismic shifts in the socioeconomic landscape that have taken place since the zenith of UK parties in the 1950s, accompanied by the rise of a 24-hour mass media and the emergence of new media, have resulted in a fundamental shift in UK political culture. Whereas political activity once tended towards 'collective' action and focused on 'responsibilities', such as the duty to vote, political participation in an online age routinely operates on the level of the 'individual' and is focused on 'rights'. Thus, while political parties and trade unions (which serve to 'aggregate' and 'articulate' the views of a mass-membership) have declined, single-issue pressure groups, direct action, and online activities have prospered.

Although the sheer scale of the RSPB's operations (Box 3) have routinely been cited in this context, it is to the internet and social media that we must turn if we are to gain any real understanding of the nature of contemporary political participation in the UK:

“The Internet, in no small part, has created a more reflexive political citizen, one who has been given the tools to express dissatisfaction throughout all facets of their life. Collective action underpinned by a developed ideology has been replaced by project-orientated identities and connective action.”

Max Halupka (2016) 'Don't knock clicktivism',
Democratic Audit

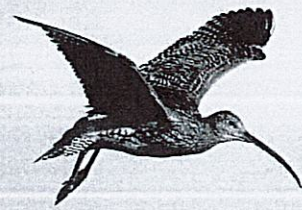
Understanding the new political participation

Political consumerism

This form of political participation, said to have been employed at some time or another by more than a third of UK citizens, involves consumers using their buying power (or non-buying power) to effect societal changes directly (i.e. without government involvement) or indirectly (i.e. by exerting pressure on government). Whereas boycotts are clearly nothing new, there has been a rise in so-called 'buycotts', where citizens use their purchasing power to actively support certain products or services. Such behaviour — as seen in support for ethically managed investment funds, organic farming and the Fairtrade movement — has

'Clicktivist' features have become an easy way of participating in politics

Box 3 The RSPB in 2016



- Over a million members — including more than 200,000 youth members
- A staff of over 2,000 people supported by about 13,000 volunteers — at least six volunteers for every paid member of staff
- £99 million available annually for charitable purposes
- A UK headquarters, three national offices and nine regional offices

expanded significantly as internet access and social media usage has grown.

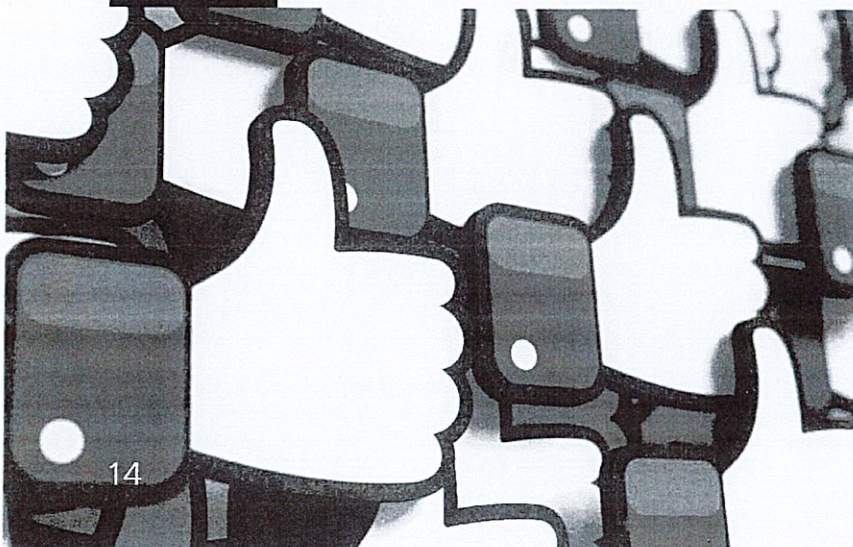
'Clicktivism'

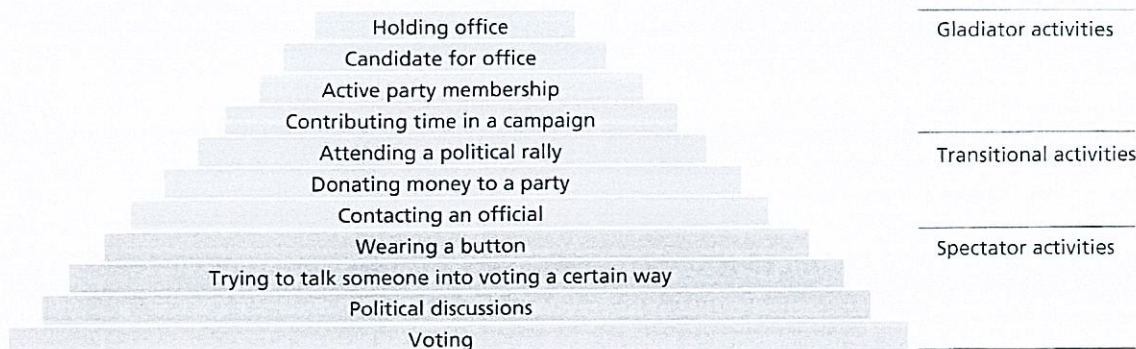
While many existing state, private institutions and other groups have moved online as a means of engaging a mass audience and cutting paper and office costs, 'clicktivism' refers to the more intuitive, low-intensity participation that arises from the proliferation of single-click 'flagging' buttons present on the main social media platforms (e.g. the 'like' feature) and the ability, with only a little more effort, to share political content with one's friends or 'followers' (e.g. the 're-tweet'). As Max Halupka writes in his article 'Don't knock clicktivism': 'For the most part, clicktivism is seen in derogatory terms, feel-good, "easy" activism. A lazy or overly-convenient alternative to the effort and legitimacy of traditional engagement.'

Quite where such online activities would fit into the 'gladiator/spectator' model advanced by Milbrath and others (Figure 1) is open to question. We should nonetheless remember that political participation should be measured not only in terms of 'quantity', but also in terms of 'quality'.

E-petitions

The UK government has looked to piggy-back on this explosion in social media usage through a revamped online petitions facility (Box 4), launched as part of its wider e-democracy strategy. One might see the willingness of health secretary Jeremy Hunt to return to the negotiating table with the BMA as evidence, in part, of the influence of such government-facilitated e-petitions. While the poll to 'Consider a vote of no confidence in Jeremy Hunt, Health Secretary' (335,443 signatures) has understandably not been debated in Parliament (perhaps for fear of opening the back-door to the popular recall of government ministers), the petition to require 'Jeremy Hunt to resume meaningful





Source: Ruedin (2007), adapted from Milbrath (1965)

Figure 1 Political participation: 'gladiators' and 'spectators'

Box 4 UK government and Parliament online petitions

10,000 signatures to get a government response:

- 283 have received a response
- 21 are awaiting a response

100,000 signatures to be considered for debate in Parliament:

- 32 have been debated
- 4 are awaiting debate
- 11 were not debated

Source: figures taken from <https://petition.parliament.uk> at 14 September 2016

Box 5 Participation under two different forms of democracy

Majoritarian democracy: where the government is based on the majority support of those who inhabit a given territory. This form of democracy has the potential to see minorities marginalised and excluded from the policy-making process.

Consultative or participatory democracy: where a more conventional representative democracy incorporates elements of direct democracy — such as public inquiries, referendums, citizens' assemblies or elements of e-democracy — with a view to engaging the broader citizenry in the policy-making process.

contract negotiations with the BMA' (120,538 signatures) was debated in Parliament on 21 March 2016. Following the vote to leave in the EU referendum in June 2016, an e-petition was launched to trigger a second referendum. At the time of writing it had 4,146,953 signatures and was debated in Parliament on 5 September 2016.

'Hactivism'

Where the physical direct action of the 1990s — against fox hunting, vivisection, and the government's road-building programme — was widely seen as representing an extreme manifestation of regular pressure group activity, so hacktivism is positioned at the margins of online political participation. Groups such as Anonymous have moved against corporations, governments and other 'establishment' institutions by taking control of or editing their websites (their 'public face'), or by launching denial of service attacks designed to block or crash their servers. Such highly decentralised, virtual campaigns have proven almost impossible to counter effectively.

Conclusions

While it might be tempting to see the UK as being in transition from a more conventional 'majoritarian democracy' towards a more 'consultative' or 'participatory' form (Box 5), with all that would entail, the last decade

has in fact seen something rather different. Far from being driven by any central government desire to engage citizens through e-democracy, informal online activity has largely emerged and evolved organically, from the grassroots. Formal institutions often appear at a loss as to how to harness what is, by any measure, a considerable groundswell of latent participatory energy. Such a reality is clearly problematic in a nation where the legitimacy and mandate of the government has traditionally been measured through the ballot box, as opposed to the web-hit count or the re-tweet tally.

Exam focus



Using this article and other resources available to you, answer the following question.

How, and why, has political participation changed in the UK?

Paul Fairclough is deputy headmaster at Sedbergh School, having previously been a head of politics for 20 years. He has authored numerous articles and a wide range of books including *AS UK Government & Politics* (4th edn) with Philip Lynch (ed. Eric Magee) published by Hodder Education (www.hoddereducation.co.uk).