Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) Chapter 1: Political Theory: An Introduction - Notes, Important Questions and MCQs (2026-27)

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These Class 11 Political Theory Chapter 1 notes cover “Political Theory: An Introduction” from the NCERT textbook Political Theory (2026-27): different views of politics, what political theory is about, important political thinkers, putting political theory into practice and why we should study political theory – with tables, Q&A, 10 MCQs and a free PDF.

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Chapter Overview

People often see politics as scheming or self-interest, but in its true sense politics is the process by which a society makes collective decisions and pursues a common good. It concerns how governments are formed and run, and how people negotiate and work together for shared goals.

Political theory examines the ideas that underpin political life – freedom, equality, justice, rights, democracy and secularism. Drawing on thinkers from Socrates and Plato to Gandhi and Ambedkar, it clarifies concepts, examines their meaning in practice and helps citizens think critically about political questions.

Important Topics and Concepts

What is Politics?

- Common negative views: politics as manipulation, power games or corruption.
- Positive view: politics is any activity through which people decide collectively, resolve conflicts and pursue a common good.
- It includes what governments do and how people relate to governments and each other.
- Every society needs politics to manage diversity and make decisions.

What Do We Study in Political Theory?

- Political theory deals with ideas and principles – freedom, equality, justice, democracy, secularism.
- It examines the meaning of these concepts and how they are linked.
- Thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Marx, Gandhi and Ambedkar have argued about these ideas.
- It also studies how these ideas shape institutions like constitutions and laws.

Key Thinkers

- Socrates and Plato: questioned commonly held beliefs; Plato wrote about the ideal state and justice.
- Aristotle: studied constitutions and the nature of political life.
- Rousseau: argued for freedom as a fundamental right.
- Karl Marx: linked freedom to economic equality.
- Mahatma Gandhi: in Hind Swaraj discussed true freedom (swaraj) and non-violence.
- B.R. Ambedkar: championed rights and dignity for the oppressed and social justice.

Putting Political Theory into Practice

- Political theorists clarify meanings – e.g. freedom or equality – by examining how they are used.
- They look at the implications of ideas in real situations (e.g. reservations, free speech).
- Theory helps resolve conflicts between values, such as freedom and equality.
- It connects abstract principles with policies and laws.

Why Should We Study Political Theory?

- Prepares citizens to participate thoughtfully in politics.
- Helps examine our own ideas and prejudices critically.
- Useful for future politicians, bureaucrats, lawyers and journalists.
- Encourages reasoned debate and tolerance of different views.
- Equips us to evaluate policies and public claims.

Thinkers and Their Ideas

Most-asked table.

Thinker	Key idea
Socrates	Question accepted beliefs
Plato	Ideal state and justice

Thinker	Key idea
Aristotle	Study of constitutions; man as political animal
Rousseau	Freedom as fundamental right
Karl Marx	Freedom linked to economic equality
Mahatma Gandhi	Swaraj and non-violence (Hind Swaraj)
B.R. Ambedkar	Dignity, rights and social justice for the oppressed

Views of Politics

View	Meaning
Negative	Scheming, power games, self-interest
Positive	Collective decisions for the common good
Institutional	Working of governments and institutions
Everyday	Negotiation in families, communities, workplaces

Important Definitions and Terms

Term	Meaning
Politics	Collective decision-making for a common good
Political theory	Study of political ideas and principles
Freedom	Absence of constraints and ability to develop
Equality	Equal worth and treatment of people
Justice	Giving each person their due
Democracy	Rule by the people
Hind Swaraj	Gandhi’s 1909 text on self-rule
Swaraj	Self-rule
Concept	General idea used in political thinking
Citizen	Member of a political community with rights

Short Answer Questions

Q1. What is politics in its positive sense?

A process of collective decision-making to achieve a common good.

Q2. What does political theory study?

Ideas and principles like freedom, equality, justice and democracy.

Q3. Name two Indian thinkers studied in political theory.

Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar.

Q4. What was Rousseau’s main idea?

Q5. What did Marx emphasise?

That freedom requires economic equality.

Q6. Which book did Gandhi write on swaraj?

Hind Swaraj.

Q7. Why is political theory useful for citizens?

It helps them think critically and participate responsibly.

Q8. How do theorists clarify concepts?

By examining how words like freedom are used and what they imply in practice.

Long Answer Questions

Q1. Explain the meaning of politics.

Often seen negatively as scheming and power games.

Properly, it is collective decision-making for a common good.

Involves government, institutions and citizens.

Helps manage conflicts and diversity.

Present in everyday life – families, schools, workplaces.

Q2. Why should we study political theory?

To understand political concepts clearly.

To examine our own beliefs critically.

To participate as informed citizens.

Useful for professions like law, journalism, administration.

To appreciate different viewpoints and debate rationally.

Q3. How do political theorists put theory into practice?

Clarify meanings of key concepts.

Examine how ideas are used in real life.

Assess policies such as reservations or free speech.

Resolve conflicts between values.

Link principles to laws and institutions.

MCQs with Answers

1. Politics in its positive sense means(a) manipulation (b) collective decision-making (c) corruption (d) warAnswer: (b) collective decision-making

2. Hind Swaraj was written by(a) Nehru (b) Gandhi (c) Ambedkar (d) TagoreAnswer: (b) Gandhi

3. Freedom linked to economic equality was stressed by(a) Rousseau (b) Marx (c) Plato (d) MillAnswer: (b) Marx

5. Political theory mainly studies(a) statistics (b) ideas and principles (c) geography (d) biologyAnswer: (b) ideas and principles

6. Champion of dignity for the oppressed in India(a) Ambedkar (b) Plato (c) Hobbes (d) LockeAnswer: (a) Ambedkar

7. Swaraj means(a) self-rule (b) foreign rule (c) no rule (d) military ruleAnswer: (a) self-rule

8. Studying political theory helps citizens to(a) avoid politics (b) think critically (c) memorise dates (d) pay taxes onlyAnswer: (b) think critically

9. Who questioned commonly accepted beliefs in Athens?(a) Socrates (b) Marx (c) Gandhi (d) RousseauAnswer: (a) Socrates

10. Rousseau considered freedom(a) unnecessary (b) a fundamental right (c) economic only (d) dangerousAnswer: (b) a fundamental right

Quick Revision Points

- Politics: negative vs positive views.
- Political theory: concepts and principles.
- Thinkers: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Marx, Gandhi, Ambedkar.
- Theory into practice: clarify and apply.
- Why study: citizenship, critical thinking, careers.

Chapter Summary

Politics, rightly understood, is the collective activity through which societies make decisions and pursue the common good. Political theory studies the ideas behind this activity – freedom, equality, justice, rights, democracy and secularism – drawing on thinkers from ancient Greece to modern India.

Political theorists clarify concepts and apply them to real issues, helping resolve value conflicts. Studying political theory makes us thoughtful citizens who can examine our own beliefs and engage in reasoned debate.

Exam Tips and PYQ Pattern

- Learn the thinker–idea table.
- Contrast negative and positive views of politics.
- Give real-life examples of political concepts.
- Write 5 reasons for studying political theory.
- Use Gandhi and Ambedkar examples for Indian context.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is this chapter in the 2026-27 CBSE syllabus?

Yes. It is part of the NCERT Class 11 Political Science textbook “Political Theory”, prescribed in the CBSE 2026-27 syllabus.

Yes. Use the free PDF link at the top of this page – no signup needed.

What is political theory?

The study of political ideas and principles such as freedom, equality, justice and democracy.

Why should students study political theory?

It helps them think critically, understand political concepts and participate as informed citizens.

Conclusion

Political Theory: An Introduction opens the world of political ideas. Learn the thinkers table, practise the Q&A here and save the free PDF for revision.

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Author Bio: Written and reviewed by the Nextoper Editorial Team, a group of CBSE political science educators who build chapter notes directly from the NCERT textbook and past board paper patterns.

Freshness Note: These notes follow the NCERT Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) textbook, Political Theory (NCERT reprint 2026-27, rationalised syllabus), and the CBSE syllabus for the 2026-27 session. Last checked on 25 November 2026.