**Which is more important - the Senate or the House? (15 marks)**

If we search through the Constitution we won't find any specific reference to one house or the other being more important. The two chambers are theoretically equal, each having exclusive powers and both having joint powers. Joint powers include the power to initiate amendments with a two-thirds vote of each house, to tax and to make laws. All bills must pass through both houses equally. If the Senate gets called the 'Upper' house, this is not accurate - at least not officially. In effect, both chambers have real importance, yet we can see evidence that they may not be equal, both in theory and in practice.

The Senate can claim to be more important for a number of reasons. Senators are elected for 6 years, not 2. Senators represent the whole state, not just part of it. The Senate is smaller and Senators therefore become more prominent. Senators have been serious Presidential or Vice Presidential candidates. Obama was a senator, and Biden also. Their opponent John McCain is still a senator, as was the Democrat contender in 2016 Hillary Clinton, in addition to having been a member of Obama’s cabinet as Secretary of State. House members become senators, but not usually the other way round. Strong candidates for the presidency may also be state Governors, but they do not come from the House of Representatives. The Constitution gave exclusive and higher status roles to the Senate, such as conducting impeachment trials, ratifying treaties and agreeing to executive and judicial appointments. The very title has more importance. Senators are seen as more experienced politicians. They are on average older than their counterparts in the House, and have an older minimum age to be selected, according to the Constitution.

Arguments to say that the House is more important may be as follows. No bill can become law unless the House agrees to it. That makes it at least co-equal in legislation. It's also true that finance bills have to start in the House. The Speaker is next in line to the presidency, after the Vice President. The House tends to deal with issues that are of day-to-day importance to the electorate. Two-year terms make them closer to the voters in their area. The House is mentioned first in the Constitution. It is the House that decides on an impeachment trial. If there is no decision in the Electoral College, the House has to choose the President.

In conclusion, much depends on particular points of view. There is little doubt that if a Washington politician has ambitions for higher things, then the Senate will provide a better springboard. The number of Senators who have come from the House attests to the relative importance of the Senate. Transfer from the Senate to the House is hardly a common occurrence. In addition the obvious wish for Senators to represent a stabilising check on the House was expressed at the time of the writing of the Constitution in that Senators were to be older, more experienced, and not elected by the people. The very title "Senate" suggests a greater stature than that of the House. In the end, however, neither part of the Congress can function effectively without the other.