

AP AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

3 hours total exam

SECTION 1

55 MC Questions
1 hour, 20 min
*50% of exam score; each
is .91% of exam*

SECTION 2

Four Free Response Questions
1 hour, 40 min. 50% of exam score collectively

Concept Application Question

12.5% of exam
Explain how a political scenario connects to a political concept, institution, procedure, policy or conduct.

Quantitative Analysis Question

12.5% of exam
Analyze data to identify a trend or pattern, develop conclusions, and connect to a political concept.

SCOTUS Comparison Question

12.5% of exam
Compare a non-required SC case to a required one

Argument Essay *12.5% of exam*

Build an essay-style argument incorporating evidence from one or more required foundational documents

Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ's)

Rough breakdown of MCQ topics

15%-22% - Foundations of American Democracy

25%-36% - Interactions Among Branches of Government

13%-18% - Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

10%-15% - American Political Ideologies and Beliefs

20%-27% - Political Participation

What is the format of the MCQ's?

- 30 individual MC questions
- Visual Source Analysis – three sets of 2 stimulus-based questions. MCQ's rooted in a map, political cartoon or informative visual representation of data to analyze
- Text-based Analysis – 2 sets of 3-4 questions.
- MCQ's related to a provided excerpt of a foundation document or primary/secondary text-based source.
- Quantitative Analysis – 5 sets of stimulus-based questions. 2-3 questions each in response to a graph, table or chart

QUESTION 1

Concept Application Question

Explain how a political scenario connects to a political concept, institution, procedure, policy or conduct

2024 Examination (Set-1)

In 1970, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was established in order to more effectively enforce federal environmental protection laws. As an independent agency within the federal bureaucracy, the EPA's mission is "to protect human health and the environment." Throughout its history, the EPA has supported the executive branch by enforcing legislation intended to regulate automobile emissions, increase household recycling, and ban the use of harmful pesticides. Americans have debated how much flexibility the EPA should have to enforce and interpret existing law. Some prefer the EPA to have more flexibility in implementing laws so that it can better protect common interests like clean water and biodiversity. On the other hand, others claim that the EPA has too much flexibility in implementing laws, allowing the agency to impose unnecessary and burdensome regulations that hurt business, and that its flexibility in implementing policy should be limited.

Recent actions are consistent with this debate. For example, under one administration, the EPA interpreted existing environmental laws in new ways, further limiting toxic emissions from automobiles and power plants.

However, under the following administration, the EPA implemented a narrower interpretation, which led to the rollback of recent restrictions in the name of free enterprise and limited government.

After reading the scenario, please respond to A, B, and C below.

- A. Describe the power that the EPA used in the scenario to change how it implemented environmental laws under different administrations.
- B. Explain how the power described in part A could be affected by the president.
- C. Explain how Congress could attempt to influence the actions of the bureaucratic agency in the scenario

2024 Examination (Set-2)

On March 14, 2019, while testifying before a congressional committee, Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross said that “The Department of Commerce is fully committed to administering as complete and accurate a decennial census as we can.” Yet, the Census Bureau (a bureaucratic agency that is part of the Department of Commerce) had not met its deadlines and had failed to submit key documents to the House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Reform at the end of 2020.

Committee Chairperson Carolyn B. Maloney grew concerned after holding a town hall meeting and after reading a New York Times report that listed the census’s many issues. In December 2020, she sent a letter to Secretary Ross, urging him to provide documents and to explain the Census Bureau’s position. Maloney stressed that the secretary had not communicated any of the problems listed in the Times report to the committee.

The Constitution mandates a census every ten years in a manner directed by Congress.

Chairperson Maloney argued that Secretary Ross, by not being transparent with the committee, was stopping Congress from fulfilling its constitutional duty.

After reading the scenario, please respond to A, B, and C below.

- A. Describe the implied power of Congress being exercised in the scenario.
- B. Explain how the media can influence the use of the power described in part A.
- C. Explain how the chairperson’s actions in the scenario might influence someone engaged in retrospective voting

2023 Examination (Set-1)

In 1958, President Dwight D Eisenhower signed the National Aeronautics and Space Act, it established the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and an independent agency within the federal bureaucracy responsible for aeronautics space research and exploration. On September 12, 1962, President John F. Kennedy addressed a stadium crowd of 40,000 people at Rice University. The speech, officially titled :We Choose to Go to the Moon,” came just one year after the Soviet Union launched the first person into space and five years after the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the first satellite into space, the purpose of the speech was to increase support for Kennedy’s proposal to launch a mission to the Moon and explain why this program needed to be a high budget priority, the event was the lead story in The New York Times and was covered in newspapers around the country.

President Kennedy talked ab out scientific progress and how the space mission represented a major step forward for humankind:

“We choose to go to the Moon in this decade...not because [it is] easy, but because [it is] hard...” Landing a person on the Moon represented an enormous challenge, and many doubted it could be done within a decade. But, on July 20, 1969, NASA astronaut Neil Armstrong became the first person to step foot on the Moon’s surface.

After reading the scenario, please respond to A, B, and C below.

- A. Describe the informal power used by the president in the scenario.
- B. In the context of the scenario, explain how the power described in A could have impacted Congressional oversight.
- C. Explain how NASA could have impacted the implementation of the president’s agenda described in the scenario.

2023 Examination (Set-2)

In 2003, California's Democratic governor Gray Davis' popularity was decreasing due to a budget shortfall and an energy crisis that received widespread coverage in the news. As a result, Republicans in the state initiated a recall election of the governor by gathering over one million signatures.

Recall is an election process by which citizens can vote to remove elected officials before the end of their term. There are provisions for recall elections of state officials in 19 states. In California, citizens initiate a recall election by collecting a minimum number of signatures on a petition, which puts the issue on a ballot in a subsequent election. If a majority of the voters choose to recall the elected official, then that official is removed from office. In California, the recall ballot asks voters two separate questions: Should the governor be recalled? And if so, who should be the new governor?

The front-running candidate to replace Governor Davis was action movie star Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican. Schwarzenegger announced his candidacy on a popular late-night television program, and his celebrity status drew national attention. During his appearance, he said of Davis, "He's failing [California] terribly, and this is why he needs to be recalled." With the understanding that California had more registered Democrats than Republicans, Schwarzenegger strategically focused his campaign on his own personal story as a self-made immigrant and distanced himself from national Republican leaders. In the final vote, Californians voted to recall Governor Davis, and Schwarzenegger was elected as his replacement. Exit polls showed that most voters who favored recalling Davis cited his recent performance as the basis for their vote.

After reading the scenario, please respond to A, B, and C below.

- A. Describe the model of voting behavior that best reflects most voters' choice to recall the governor in the scenario
- B. In the context of the scenario, explain how the media's role as a linkage institution might have affected the voting behavior described in part A
- C. Explain how the electoral process for removing Governor Davis is different from the process for removing a sitting president of the United States.

2022 Examination (Set-1)

2022 Examination (Set-2)

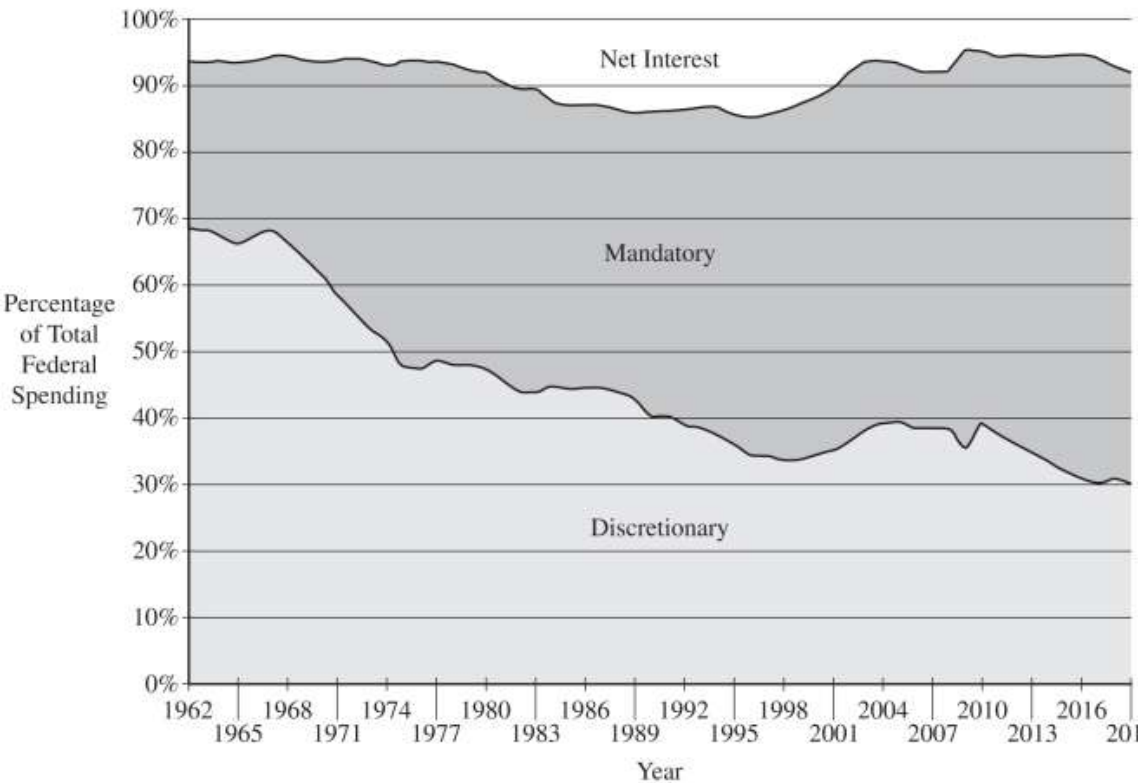
QUESTION 2

Quantitative Analysis Question

Analyze quantitative data to identify a trend or pattern, develop a conclusion for the visual representation, and explain how it connects to a political concept, institution, process, policy, or practice.

2024 Examination (Set-1)

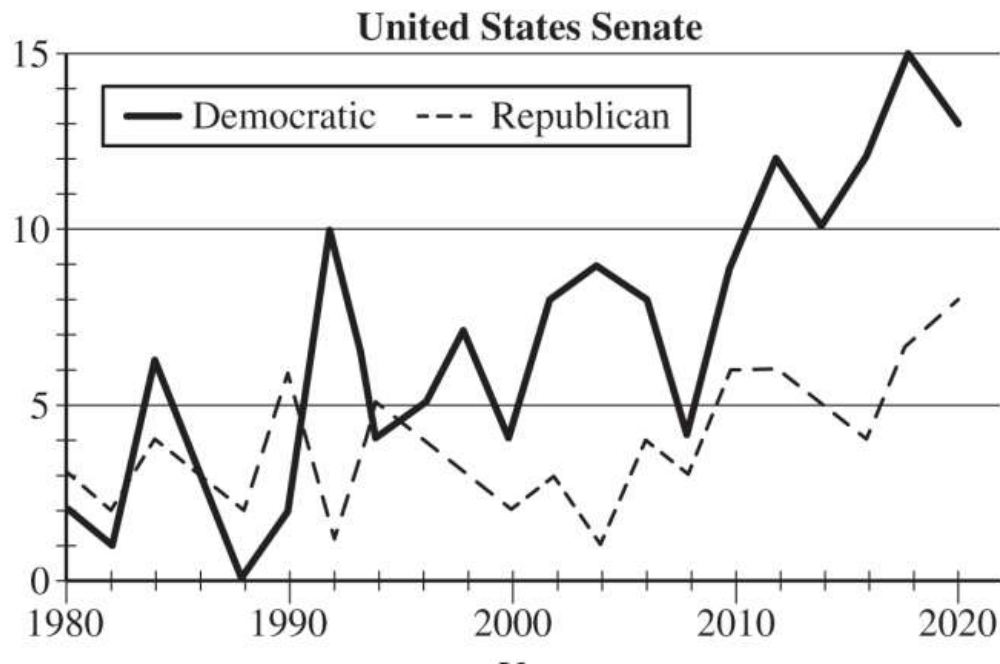
**COMPOSITION OF FEDERAL SPENDING FOR FISCAL YEARS
1962–2019**



Use the line graph to answer the questions

- A. Identify the type of spending that
- B. comprised the greatest percentage of the federal budget in 2016.
- C. Describe the difference in the trends in mandatory versus discretionary spending as illustrated in the graph.
- D. Draw a conclusion about Congress's budgetary choices based on trends in the data.
- E. Explain how an interest group might respond to trends shown in the graph.

WOMEN CANDIDATES FOR SENATE BY PARTY, 1980-2020

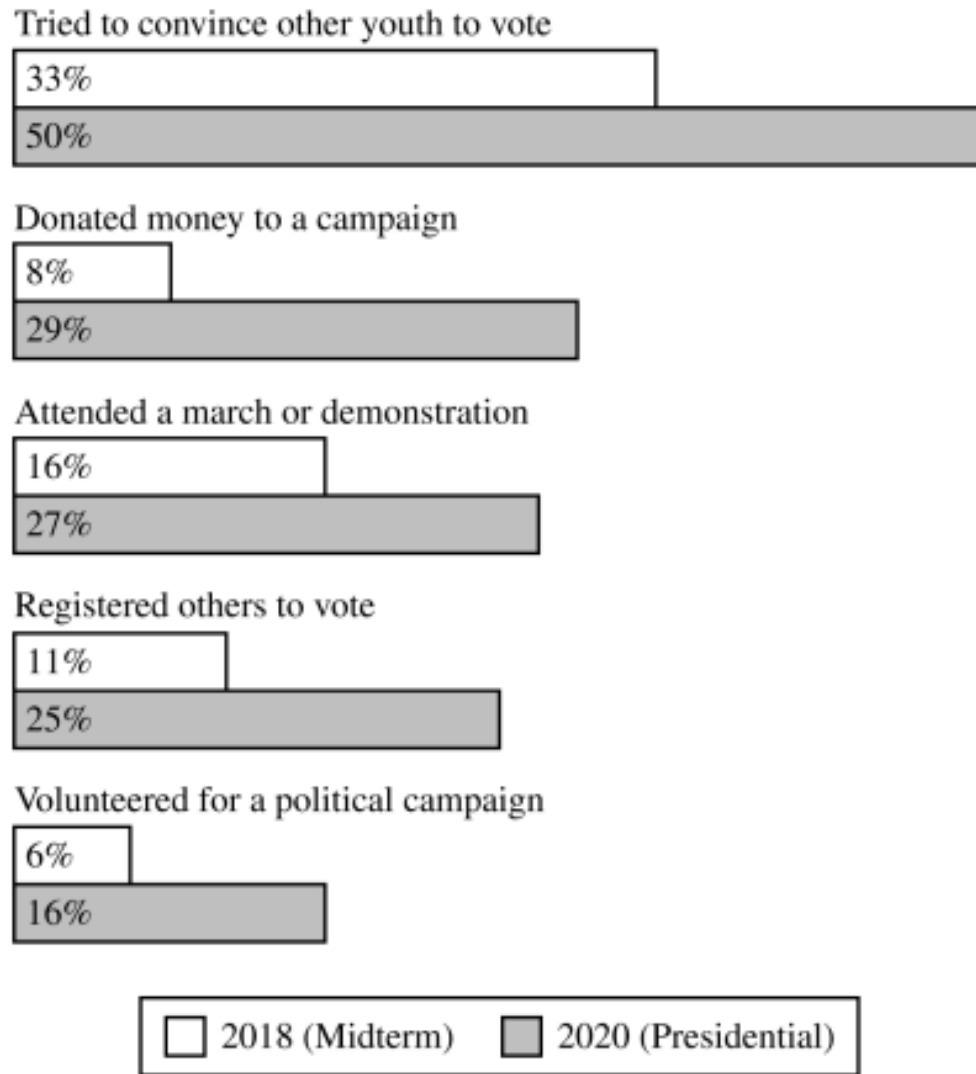


Use the line graph to answer the questions.

- Identify the year with the fewest number of Democratic women candidates for the Senate.
- Describe the difference in an overall trend in Democratic and Republican women candidates for the Senate as illustrated in the graph.
- Draw a conclusion that explains an overall trend shown in the graph.
- Explain how the data in the graph might affect political participation.

2023 Examination (Set-1)

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF 18-24 YEAR OLDS, 2018 AND 2020 ELECTION CYCLE

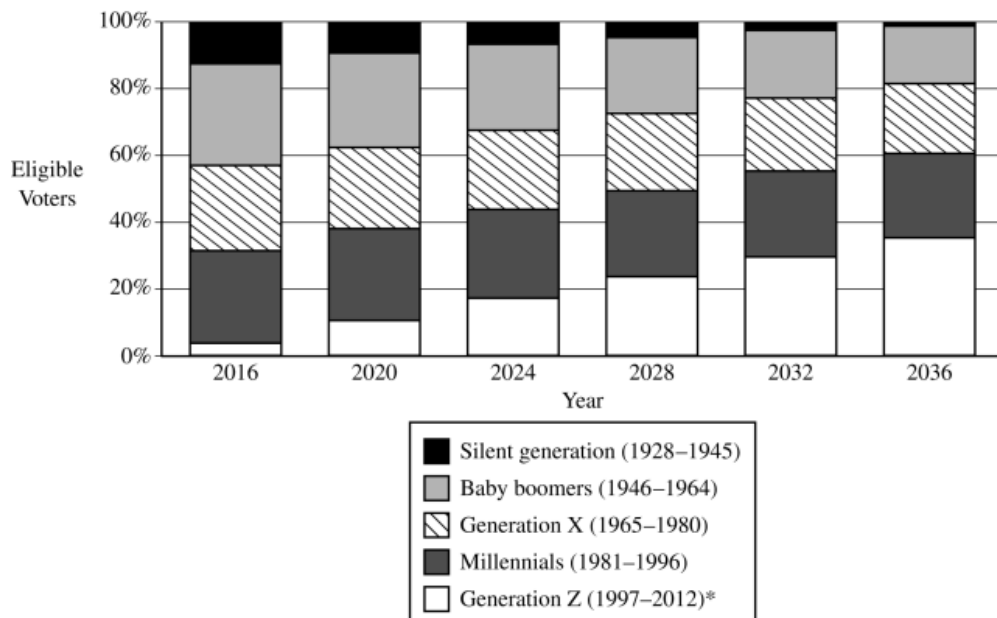


Use the bar graph to answer the following questions.

- A. Identify the form of political participation that saw the largest change between the 2018 and 2020 elections, as shown in the bar graph.
- B. Describe the difference in overall participation between the midterm and presidential elections, as shown in the bar graph.
- C. Draw a conclusion about how linkage institutions might have contributed to the difference in political participation between the midterm and presidential elections, as shown in the bar graph.
- D. Explain how the different levels of political participation, as shown in the bar graph, might demonstrate the concept of political efficacy.

2023 Examination (Set-2)

**PERCENT OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS BY GENERATION,
2016-2036**



Use the data to answer the following questions

- Identify the generation that is projected to have the lowest percentage of eligible voters in 2028, as shown in the bar graph.
- Describe the trend over time in the data, as shown in the bar graph.
- Draw a conclusion about how a trend in the data could affect a 2023 president candidate's strategy to mobilize eligible voters.
- Explain how life cycle effects, as shown in the bar graph, could influence a candidate's policy platform.

2022 Examination (Set-1)

2022 Examination (Set-2)

QUESTION 3

SCOTUS Comparison Question

Compare a non-required Supreme Court case to a required one, demonstrating how the data in the required one is related to that in the non-required one.

2024 Examination (Set-1)

Katzenbach v. McClung (1964)

Beginning in 1927, the McClung family owned a restaurant that served barbecue and other foods to patrons. Their restaurant was located about eleven blocks from an interstate highway and obtained about half of its supplies from out of state. Even though the restaurant had an indoor seating capacity of over 200, it refused to seat African Americans and restricted them to take-out orders.

Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination in places of public accommodation. It was passed based on economic activity, given the travel of African Americans between states. However, the McClungs' sued to prevent the enforcement of the Civil Rights Act. They argued that because the restaurant purchased half of its food from an in-state supplier, Congress could not regulate it because its activities were local in nature.

After a district court ruled in favor of the restaurant, the federal government appealed to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court, in a unanimous decision, held that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was constitutional, upholding Congress' power to prohibit discrimination when it poses a significant burden to interstate commerce. The Court reasoned that because the restaurant purchased about half of its food from an out-of-state supplier and because Congress sought to resolve the problem of discrimination that was a national issue, Congress had the power to enact the legislation that regulated the restaurant.

- A. Identify the constitutional clause that is common to both *United States v. Lopez* (1995) and *Katzenbach v. McClung* (1964).
- B. Explain how the facts in *United States v. Lopez* and *Katzenbach v. McClung* resulted in different holdings.
- C. Explain how the decision in *Katzenbach v. McClung* reflects the democratic ideal of natural rights

2024 Examination (Set-2)

Cohen v. California (1971)

In 1968 Paul Cohen wore a jacket displaying an obscene anti-war statement while entering a Los Angeles courthouse. Cohen was arrested and charged under a California statute that prohibited “maliciously and willfully disturb[ing] the peace and quiet of any neighborhood or person [by] offensive conduct.” Cohen asserted that he wore the jacket in protest of the Vietnam War. Cohen was convicted in a Los Angeles court and sentenced to 30 days in jail.

In the subsequent case *Cohen v. California* (1971), the Court ruled in a 5–4 decision in favor of Cohen, overturning his conviction. In the majority opinion, Justice John Marshall Harlan rejected the argument that the state could restrict the words on Cohen’s jacket as offensive conduct. Harlan reasoned that “[O]ne man’s vulgarity is another’s lyric,” warning that “government might soon seize upon the censorship of particular words as a convenient guise for banning the expression of unpopular views.”

- A. Identify the civil liberty that is common to both *Schenck v. United States* (1919) and *Cohen v. California* (1971).
- B. Explain how the facts in *Schenck v. United States* and *Cohen v. California* resulted in different holdings.
- C. Explain how the decision in *Cohen v. California* reflects the democratic ideal of limited government

2023 Examination (Set-1)

Cantwell v Connecticut (1940)

Newton Cantwell and his sons, who were Jehovah's Witnesses, went door-to-door in a New Haven, Connecticut, neighborhood to distribute pamphlets about their religion and encourage people to join their church. The men did not have a permit to solicit door-to-door. A Connecticut state court convicted the Cantwells of violating an ordinance that stated "[n]o person shall solicit money, services, subscriptions or any valuable thing for any alleged religious, charitable or philanthropic cause... unless such cause shall have been approved by the secretary of the public welfare council."

Cantwell and his sons challenged the conviction, arguing that they did not need to obtain a permit because their activities were protected by the United States Constitution. The Connecticut Supreme Court upheld the conviction, finding that the statute was in the public interest and that it protected against fraud. The Cantwells' appealed to the United States Supreme Court. In a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court ruled in the Cantwells' favor, holding that the United States Constitution prohibited states from making laws like the one in question in New Haven. The Court reasoned that the First Amendment gives citizens the right to believe, as well as the right to act on those beliefs, and regarding the right to act, laws may not deny or limit the right to preach or disseminate religious views.

- A. Identify the First Amendment clause that is common to both *Wisconsin v Yoder* (1972) and *Cantwell v Connecticut* (1940)
- B. Explain how the facts in *Wisconsin v Yoder* and *Cantwell v Connecticut* resulted in the Supreme Court issuing similar holdings in both cases.
- C. Explain how the facts of *Cantwell v Connecticut* (1940) illustrate the Court's need to balance government power and the rights of citizens.

2023 Examination (Set-2)

Zelman v Simmons-Harris (2002)

In response to low academic performance at public high schools in lower-income sections of Cleveland, the Ohio legislature enacted a program that allowed the use of public funds for private school tuition. Parents who showed financial need could obtain vouchers of up to \$2,500 a year for tuition at participating private schools. Both religious and nonreligious private schools could participate in the program, and in the first year, 96% of voucher recipients opted to attend religious schools.

A group of Ohio taxpayers, which included Doric Simmons-Harris, filed a lawsuit against the public school system, claiming the use of public funds for religious institutions was unconstitutional. The local federal district court ruled in favor of Simmons-Harris. After the Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit upheld the ruling, Sarah Zelman, the Superintendent of Public Instruction in Ohio, appealed the ruling to the Supreme Court.

In a 5-4 vote on the subsequent case *Zelman v Simmons-Harris* (2002), the Supreme Court held that the public funding of a school voucher program that includes religious schools was constitutionally permitted. In the majority opinion, Chief Justice William Rehnquist reasoned that the program “...provides benefits directly to a wide spectrum of individuals, defined only by financial need and residence in a particular school district. It permits such individuals ... genuine choice among options public and private, secular and religious.”

- A. Identify the clause in the First Amendment that is common to both *Engel v Vitale* (1962) and *Zelman v Simmons-Harris* (2002)
- B. Explain how the facts in *Engle v Vitale* and *Zelman v Simmons-Harris* led to different holdings in the two cases.
- C. Explain how the holding in *Zelman* might affect educational policy in states with legislatures that support the ruling.

2022 Examination (Set-1)

2022 Examination (Set-2)

QUESTION 4

Argument Essay

Build an essay-style argument incorporating evidence from one or more required foundational documents.

2024 Examination (Set-1)

Over time, there has been conflict between the president and Congress over their roles in domestic policy making. Develop an argument as to whether the president or Congress should have more power over domestic policy making.

Use at least one piece of evidence from one of the following foundational documents:

- Federalist No. 51
- Federalist No. 70
- Article I of the United States Constitution

In your response, you should do the following:

- ✓ Respond to the prompt with a defensible claim or thesis that establishes a line of reasoning.
- ✓ Support your claim with at least TWO pieces of specific and relevant evidence.
 - One piece of evidence must come from one of the foundational documents listed above.
 - A second piece of evidence can come from any other foundational document not used as your first piece of evidence or it may be from your knowledge of course concepts.
- ✓ Use reasoning to explain why your evidence supports your claim or thesis.
- ✓ Respond to an opposing or alternate perspective using refutation, concession, or rebuttal.

2024 Examination (Set-2)

Both interest groups and social movements provide avenues for political participation. Develop an argument as to whether interest groups or social movements better reflect the participatory model of democracy.

Use at least one piece of evidence from one of the following foundational documents:

- Federalist No. 10
- The First Amendment of the United States Constitution
- “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”

In your response, you should do the following:

- ✓ Respond to the prompt with a defensible claim or thesis that establishes a line of reasoning.
- ✓ Support your claim with at least TWO pieces of specific and relevant evidence.
 - One piece of evidence must come from one of the foundational documents listed above.
 - A second piece of evidence can come from any other foundational document not used as your first piece of evidence or it may be from your knowledge of course concepts.
- ✓ Use reasoning to explain why your evidence supports your claim or thesis.
- ✓ Respond to an opposing or alternate perspective using refutation, concession, or rebuttal

2023 Examination (Set-1)

The federal government and the states each play an important role in public education. Take a position on whether the federal government or the states are more effective in ensuring educational opportunities for all students.

Use at least one piece of evidence from one of the following foundational documents:

- Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution
- Tenth Amendment of the United States Constitution
- Article I of the United States Constitution

In your response, you should do the following:

- ✓ Respond to the prompt with a defensible claim or thesis that establishes a line of reasoning.
- ✓ Support your claim with at least TWO pieces of specific and relevant evidence.
 - One piece of evidence must come from one of the foundational documents listed above.
 - A second piece of evidence can come from any other foundational document not used as your first piece of evidence or it may be from your knowledge of course concepts.
- ✓ Use reasoning to explain why your evidence supports your claim or thesis.
- ✓ Respond to an opposing or alternate perspective using refutation, concession, or rebuttal

2023 Examination (Set-2)

An important feature of a democratic republic is that it represents the will of the people. Take a position on whether constitutional checks and balances or citizen participation in social movements is more effective in ensuring the people's will is represented.

Use at least one piece of evidence from one of the following foundational documents:

- Federalist No. 10
- Letter from a Birmingham Jail
- Article I of the United States Constitution

In your response, you should do the following:

- ✓ Respond to the prompt with a defensible claim or thesis that establishes a line of reasoning.
- ✓ Support your claim with at least TWO pieces of specific and relevant evidence.
 - One piece of evidence must come from one of the foundational documents listed above.
 - A second piece of evidence can come from any other foundational document not used as your first piece of evidence or it may be from your knowledge of course concepts.
- ✓ Use reasoning to explain why your evidence supports your claim or thesis.
- ✓ Respond to an opposing or alternate perspective using refutation, concession, or rebuttal.

2022 Examination (Set-1)

2022 Examination (Set-2)

ACCESS PAST AP EXAM QUESTIONS

<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-united-states-government-and-politics/exam/past-exam-questions>