

2017

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 CollegeBoard

AP Seminar

Free-Response Questions

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PART A

Suggested time — 30 minutes

Directions: Read the passage below and then respond to the following three questions.

1. Identify the author’s argument, main idea, or thesis. (3 points)
2. Explain the author’s line of reasoning by identifying the claims used to build the argument and the connections between them. (6 points)
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of the evidence the author uses to support the claims made in the argument. (6 points)

Write your responses to Part A only on the designated pages in the Free Response booklet.

From “In Greed We Trust”

by John F. Schumaker (*New Internationalist*, July 1, 2004)

Recent years have seen the publication of a wide range of studies casting doubt on whether economic models aimed at increasing personal wealth and consumption are actually conducive to human happiness. In fact, the large-scale General Survey of the United States found that, from the early 1970s to the late 1990s, the percentage of people who are “very happy” actually dropped from 34 percent to 30 percent, despite higher incomes, more possessions and improved living standards.

Such findings are being hailed by social critics as proof that the greed economy is toxic to well-being, and that it is hastening our slide into a collective state of “unhappy consciousness,” as sociologists call it. But they may be missing the main point if, indeed, greed and unhappiness are the fire in the belly of a consumer economy. There is little doubt that the cultural sanctification of greed is creating a deep existential void that cannot be filled—whatever the degree of material indulgence, personal achievement or private gratification. Despite that, this . . . may actually be what is necessary to power greed economics.

The eminent sociologist Zygmunt Bauman writes in an insightful essay, “The Self in a Consumer Society,” that greed itself is changing in order to better serve consumer capitalism. In the past, says Bauman, greed was not constant because people’s desires were still attached to needs and objects, as well as a credible social world, which meant they tended to pause from time to time in satisfaction or reflection. Over time, however, consumer culture has upped “consumptive capacity” by honing its members to be immune to satisfaction, and thus immediately ready to desire the next thing that comes along. . . . In the modern age, “desire desires desire,” which is the basis for our new “constant greed.” . . .

Greed is the backbone of the prevailing “philosophy of more” that supports the profitable “big is beautiful” trend (as with “mini-mansions,” four-wheel drive SUVs, and so on) as well as the worldwide “investment-driven” property boom/bubble. The gluttonous aspect of greed-mindedness carries further short-term advantages by way of increased tendencies toward overconsumption, waste, premature disposal and replacement, needless upgrading and general disregard for conservation.

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Greed drives entrepreneurial investment. It also facilitates the manufacture and commercial exploitation of false needs. It is no wonder that greed enthusiasts insist that nothing can beat greed when it comes to the economy, and that we should not give up on it as the epicentre of economic and social life, or fixate on burst stock-market bubbles, or sticky-fingered Enrons and Worldcoms. . . .

But others point out how greed, and its “dying with the most toys” cultural hero system, is infusing children around the globe with self-destructive degrees of materialism, avarice, and self-preoccupation. The commercialization of childhood is being led by greedy corporations that put profits before social responsibility and children’s health. Over the past two decades, for example, aggressive advertising by the soft-drink industry has seen high-sugar soft-drink consumption double in children aged 6 to 11, a major contributor to the worsening epidemic of childhood obesity and diabetes. Today, with greed still their main moral compass, these companies market an ever-expanding array of caffeinated drinks to children that have health experts worrying about a new wave of youth addiction. . . .

More and more mental-health professionals are saying that greed is not nearly as good for people as it is for economies, with some warning that greed is beginning to overwhelm conscience, reason, compassion, love, family bonds and community. Moreover, existing levels of constant greed are causing clinical depression and despair in many people.

The term “pleonexia” is being used to diagnose pathological greed that can contribute to a host of ills, including stress, burnout, gambling addictions, compulsive shopping, “affluenza” and loss of moral grounding.

American psychologist and greed treatment specialist David Farrugia sees greed as a mistaken, empty, and shortsighted goal that contains many seeds of destruction, in particular those that destroy families and marriages. Beyond that, in his article “Selfishness, Greed, and Counseling,” a chronic orientation toward greed has been shown to result in inflexibility, anxiety, and diminished reality testing, all of which tarnish a person’s overall experience of life.

In Greed We Trust, New Internationalist 2004, www.newint.org. Reprinted with permission.

END OF PART A
GO ON TO PART B.

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Part B

Suggested time — 90 minutes

Directions: Read the four sources carefully, focusing on a theme or issue that connects them and the different perspectives each represents. Then, write a logically organized, well-reasoned, and well-written argument that presents your own perspective on the theme or issue you identified. You must incorporate at least two of the sources provided and link the claims in your argument to supporting evidence. You may also use the other provided sources or draw upon your own knowledge. In your response, refer to the provided sources as Source A, Source B, Source C, and Source D, or by the author’s name.

Write your response to Part B only on the designated pages in the Free Response booklet.

Source A

From “Are Food Deserts to Blame for America’s Poor Eating Habits?”
by Joe Cortright (*The Atlantic*, November 9, 2015)

It’s a plausible hypothesis: Poor people in the United States suffer from measurably worse nutrition because they have such limited access to good food. Confronted with a high concentration of poor diet choices (fast food and processed food in convenience stores) and with few markets offering fresh fruit and vegetables, the poor end up eating a less healthy diet. In this view, bad diets are a problem with the urban environment—the lack of good food in poor neighborhoods.

But while there are certainly urban neighborhoods that lack good grocery options, is there any evidence that close physical access to food—as opposed to other factors like income or education—strongly determines healthy eating? That view deserves some skepticism.

A recent study by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture summarized in the *Chicago Policy Review* concludes that after controlling for differences in education and income, variations in physical access to food explain less than 10 percent of the variation in consumption of healthy foods. The researchers also find that the opening of new, healthier supermarkets in neighborhoods has very little effect on what nearby residents eat.

This new study reinforces earlier research that questioned whether the physical proximity to healthier eating choices is the root cause of poor nutrition and hunger.

Studies show that there is no apparent relationship between a store’s mix of products and its customer’s body-mass index. . . .

Physical proximity alone is not likely to be a strong explanation of variations in diet. Judged by proximity to grocery stores, nearly all of rural America is a food desert. . . .

City dwellers, particularly those in the biggest, most dense cities tend to live closest to supermarkets and have the best food access. WalkScore used its data and models to develop some clear images of who does (and doesn’t) have a good grocery store nearby. They estimate that 72 percent of New York City residents live within a five-minute walk of a grocery store. At the other end of the spectrum, only about 5 percent of residents in Indianapolis and Oklahoma City have that convenience. When it comes to walking, this data shows the real food deserts are in the suburbs. . . .

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. . . [C]ombining neighborhood income and physical proximity muddles the definition of food access. First, and most important, it acknowledges that income, not physical distance, is the big factor in nutrition. Both of these methods imply that having wealthy neighbors or living in the countryside means that physical access to food is not a barrier. Second, it is an individual’s household income, not her neighbor’s income, that determines whether she can buy food. Third, these methods implicitly treat low-income families differently depending on where they live. For example, PolicyMap excludes middle-income and higher-income neighborhoods from its definition of “limited supermarket access” areas—and therefore doesn’t count lower-income families living in these areas as having poor food access.

The fact that both of these systems use a different yardstick for measuring accessibility in rural areas suggests that proximity isn’t really the issue. . . .

When it comes to food access, the focus should be on poverty, not grocery store location. The argument here parallels that of the Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen, who pointed out that the cause of starvation and death in famines is seldom a physical lack of sufficient food, but is instead the collapse of the incomes of the poor. Sen’s conclusion was that governments should focus on raising incomes if they wanted to stave off hunger, rather than stockpiling or distributing nutritious food.

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Source B

From “The Green Revolution, Peace, and Humanity”
by Norman Borlaug (Nobelprize.org, December 11, 1970)

Civilization as it is known today could not have evolved, nor can it survive, without an adequate food supply. Yet food is something that is taken for granted by most world leaders despite the fact that more than half of the population of the world is hungry. Man seems to insist on ignoring the lessons available from history.

Man’s survival, from the time of Adam and Eve until the invention of agriculture, must have been precarious because of his inability to ensure his food supply. During the long, obscure, dimly defined prehistoric period when man lived as a wandering hunter and food gatherer, frequent food shortages must have prevented the development of village civilizations. Under these conditions the growth of human population was also automatically limited by the limitations of food supplies. . . .

But today we should be far wiser; with the help of our Gods and our science, we must not only increase our food supplies but also insure them against biological and physical catastrophes by international efforts to provide international granaries of reserve food for use in case of need. And these food reserves must be made available to all who need them—and before famine strikes, not afterwards. Man can and must prevent the tragedy of famine in the future instead of merely trying with pious regret to salvage the human wreckage of the famine, as he has so often done in the past. We will be guilty of criminal negligence, without extenuation, if we permit future famines. Humanity cannot tolerate that guilt. . . .

In summarizing the accomplishments of the green revolution during the past three years, I wish to restate that the increase in cereal production, rice, maize, and wheat, especially in wheat, has been spectacular and highly significant to the welfare of millions of human beings. It is still modest in terms of total needs. Recalling that fifty percent of the present world population is undernourished and that an even larger percentage, perhaps sixty-five percent, is malnourished, no room is left for complacency. It is not enough to prevent the currently bad situation from getting worse as population increases. Our aim must be to produce enough food to eradicate all present hunger while at the same time striving to correct malnutrition. To eliminate hunger now in the developing nations, we would need to expand world cereal production by thirty percent. If it were, however, as simple as increasing the total world production by thirty percent, regardless of where the production is to be expanded, it could be accomplished rather rapidly by expanding it in the United States, Canada, Australia, Argentina, and Russia. But this would not necessarily solve the hunger problem of the developing world because their weak economies will not permit them to expand their food imports by thirty percent. Worse still, even if present production could be expanded rapidly by thirty percent in the developing countries—which I believe is possible based on recent progress of the green revolution—so as theoretically to eliminate hunger, the hunger problem as it now exists still would not be solved. There remains the unsolved social-economic problem of finding effective ways to distribute the needed additional food to the vast underprivileged masses who have little or no purchasing power. This is still the great unsolved problem with which the economists, sociologists, and political leaders must now come to grips.

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Source C

From *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*
by Eric Schlosser (2001)

Over the last three decades, fast food has infiltrated every nook and cranny of American society. An industry that began with a handful of modest hot dog and hamburger stands in southern California has spread to every corner of the nation, selling a broad range of foods wherever paying customers may be found. Fast food is now served at restaurants and drive-throughs, at stadiums, airports, zoos, high schools, elementary schools, and universities, on cruise ships, trains, and airplanes, at K-Marts, Wal-Marts, gas stations, and even at hospital cafeterias. In 1970, Americans spent about \$6 billion on fast food; in 2000, they spent more than \$110 billion. Americans now spend more money on fast food than on higher education, personal computers, computer software, or new cars. They spend more on fast food than on movies, books, magazines, newspapers, videos, and recorded music—combined. . . .

. . . The whole experience of buying fast food has become so routine, so thoroughly unexceptional and mundane, that it is now taken for granted, like brushing your teeth or stopping for a red light. It has become a social custom as American as a small, rectangular, hand-held, frozen, and reheated apple pie. . . .

The extraordinary growth of the fast food industry has been driven by fundamental changes in American society. Adjusted for inflation, the hourly wage of the average U.S. worker peaked in 1973 and then steadily declined for the next twenty-five years. During that period, women entered the workforce in record numbers, often motivated less by a feminist perspective than by a need to pay the bills. In 1975, about one-third of American mothers with young children worked outside the home; today almost two-thirds of such mothers are employed. As the sociologists Cameron Lynne Macdonald and Carmen Sirianni have noted, the entry of so many women into the workforce has greatly increased demand for the types of services that housewives traditionally perform: cooking, cleaning, and child care. A generation ago, three-quarters of the money used to buy food in the United States was spent to prepare meals at home. Today about half of the money used to buy food is spent at restaurants—mainly at fast food restaurants. . . .

In the early 1970s, the farm activist Jim Hightower warned of “the McDonaldization of America.” He viewed the emerging fast food industry as a threat to independent businesses, as a step toward a food economy dominated by giant corporations, and as a homogenizing influence on American life. In *Eat Your Heart Out* (1975), he argued that “bigger is *not* better.” Much of what Hightower feared has come to pass. The centralized purchasing decisions of the large restaurant chains and their demand for standardized products have given a handful of corporations an unprecedented degree of power over the nation’s food supply. Moreover, the tremendous success of the fast food industry has encouraged other industries to adopt similar business methods. The basic thinking behind fast food has become the operating system of today’s retail economy, wiping out small businesses, obliterating regional differences, and spreading identical stores throughout the country like a self-replicating code.

America’s main streets and malls now boast the same Pizza Huts and Taco Bells, Gaps and Banana Republics, Starbucks and Jiffy-Lubes, Foot Lockers, Snip N’ Clips, Sunglass Huts, and Hobbytown USAs. Almost every facet of American life has now been franchised or chained. From the maternity ward at a Columbia/HCA hospital to an embalming room owned by Service Corporation International . . . a person can now go from the cradle to the grave without spending a nickel at an independently owned business. . . .

A hamburger and french fries became the quintessential American meal in the 1950s, thanks to the promotional efforts of the fast food chains. The typical American now consumes approximately three hamburgers and four orders of french fries every week. But the steady barrage of fast food ads, full of thick juicy burgers and long golden fries, rarely mentions where these foods come from nowadays or what ingredients they contain. The birth of the fast food

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industry coincided with Eisenhower-era glorifications of technology, with optimistic slogans like “Better Living through Chemistry” and “Our Friend the Atom.” . . . The leading fast food chains still embrace a boundless faith in science—and as a result have changed not just what Americans eat, but also how their food is made.

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Source D

From “Fast Food Still Major Part of U.S. Diet”
by Andrew Dugan (*Gallup*, August 6, 2013)

How often, if ever, do you eat at a fast-food restaurant, including drive-through, take-out, and sitting down in the restaurant—every day, several times a week, about once a week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, or never?

	Every day %	Several times a week %	About once a week %	Once or twice a month %	A few times a year %	Never %
Jul 10–14, 2013	3	16	28	33	15	4
Dec 8–10, 2006	3	20	33	25	15	4
Jul 7–9, 2003	4	17	31	30	13	5

These findings come from Gallup’s annual Consumption poll, conducted July 10–14, 2013, and seem to suggest that many Americans are reducing, but not totally eliminating, their fast-food intake.

Fast food has long been a staple of many Americans’ diets, but widespread concerns related to the nutritional value of the food linger. . . .

Overall, do you think that most of the food served in fast-food restaurants is very good for you, fairly good for you, not too good for you, or not good at all for you?

	Very good %	Fairly good %	Not too good %	Not good at all %
Jul 10–14, 2013	2	20	48	28
Jul 7–9, 2003	1	22	53	23

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Young Eat Fast Food Most Often; Low-Income Individuals, the Least

*Frequency of Eating Fast Food, Among Select Groups
July 10–14, 2013*

	At least weekly %	Once or twice a month %	A few times a year or never %
18 to 29 years old	57	33	8
Men	53	31	15
Hispanic people	53	27	16
Black people	52	37	11
Annual income \$75,000 or more	51	28	21
Annual income \$30,000 to \$49,999	51	32	15
Annual income \$50,000 to \$74,999	50	32	18
30 to 49 years old	47	33	21
Non-Hispanic White people	46	33	21
50 to 64 years old	44	33	23
Women	42	34	23
Annual income \$20,000 to \$29,999	42	42	16
65 years and older	41	32	26
Annual income less than \$20,000	39	36	23

Most Weekly Fast-Food Eaters Believe the Food Is Not Good for You

*Perceptions of Fast Food by Frequency of Fast-Food Consumption
July 10–14, 2013*

	All Americans %	At least weekly %	Once or twice a month %	A few times a year or never %
Very good	2	2	1	1
Fairly good	20	23	18	14
Not too good	48	54	47	38
Not good at all	28	19	33	43

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Implications

A large swath of the public believes food served at fast-food restaurants is not good for them. . . . Nonetheless, a huge share of Americans continue to visit fast-food drive-throughs or dining rooms, suggesting that the appeal of the product—be it the relatively low cost, the taste, or the convenience—outweighs the health concerns.

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**STOP
END OF EXAM**

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