



AP[®] United States Government & Politics 2002 Scoring Commentary

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Question 1

Sample J: 6 points

High: (6 points)

In part (a), the student describes the problem of narrowing the field of candidates, “the President cannot make the appointments that he wants to make” (1 point). The student also describes the greater difficulty getting Senate confirmation in the context of ideological conflict (1 point). Part (a) earns 2 points.

In part (b), the student identifies deal-making as a way to overcome a problem (1 point), and explains how deal-making overcomes the problem in context of the approval process (1 point). The student also identifies the use of public opinion and the media as a way to generate public support (1 point), explained as using an “appeal to the people” to apply pressure to the Senate (1 point). Part (b) earns 4 points.

Sample D: 3 points

Medium: (3 points)

In part (a), the student describes the problem of greater difficulty getting Senate confirmation for appointees (1 point). The use of senatorial courtesy was not accepted as a second problem, as it does not apply to members of the opposition party. Part (a) earns 1 point.

In part (b) the student identifies selection of a compromise candidate, a “more moderate” nominee, as a way to overcome a problem (1 point), and explains how this solution works to overcome the problem (1 point) in context of a specific example. The explanation of the compromise is adequately linked to the approval process in a Democratic Congress. Part (b) earns 2 points.

Sample R: 1 point

Low: (1 point)

In part (a), the student does not describe any problems for the President. Part (a) earns 0 points.

In part (b), the student identifies compromise on choices as a way to overcome a problem (1 point). The student does not explain how the President’s efforts work to overcome the problem. Part (b) earns 1 point.

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Question 2

Sample AA: 5 points

High: (5 points)

The student gives a clear description of the trends shown in the figure: government has decreased spending for children while increasing spending for the elderly (1 point). The student identifies two politically relevant factors: elderly voting (1 point), and political action committee activity (1 point). Two other factors are also identified — the growing elderly population and the fact that children cannot vote — but students can receive credit for only two factors under part (b) of the rubric. The student explains two of the identified factors by saying that representatives “need the support of the elderly to be reelected” (1 point), and that “political activism [referring to PACs] causes concerns of the elderly to be heard” (1 point).

Sample BB: 3 points

Medium: (3 points)

The student describes the trends shown in the figure, conveying that expenditures for children have decreased while those for the elderly have increased (1 point). The student identifies two politically relevant factors — the rising elderly population, “many more elderly people” (1 point), and declining birth rate, “number of children being born has decreased” (1 point). The essay does not include an explanation of how these factors have affected the changing distribution of government benefits.

Sample CC: 2 points

Low: (2 points)

The student describes the trend in the figure with the statement that “the amount of social welfare given out to the elderly has surpassed the amount given to children” (1 point). The student identifies one politically relevant factor with the assertion that there is a “growing population of elderly people” (1 point). Without this clarification, the “aging population” reference in the first paragraph alone would not have been sufficient to identify a rising elderly population.

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Question 3

Sample AA: 6 points

High: (6 points)

The student specifies the winner-take-all aspect of the Electoral College as a feature of the electoral system and says that this is “detrimental” (sic), or an obstacle, to racial minority groups. (1 point). The student explains that all of a state’s electoral votes go to the winning slate (or candidate) and that a minority may not have an impact on the outcome (1 point). The explanation extends to build on the explicit nature of the first point and is confirmed by the last sentence of the essay (2 points).

In part (b), the student identifies the propensity of political parties to build coalitions, as they “adopt policies designed to incorporate the wants and needs of the ethnic minority, while still appealing to members of the majority” (1 point). The student explains that party leaders can “look out for the needs of their race,” and continues later in the essay, “candidate can represent their needs while still [representing] those of others who also follow that party.” These are specific statements that relate how the feature may work to racial minorities’ advantage. (2 points).

Sample BB: 3 points

Medium: (3 points)

The student identifies the electoral system as the institution posing an obstacle, then identifies several devices such as the grandfather clause and literacy tests that have been obstacles (1 point). The student goes on to explain that these obstacles have restricted suffrage of minorities in the past, and each is shown to prevent minorities from voting, thus hindering efforts to achieve political goals (2 points).

In part (b), the student lists the political party system as an institution providing opportunities. No feature of the party system is identified specifically, so neither identification nor explanation points can be awarded for this portion of the essay (0 points).

Sample CC: 1 point

Low: (1 point)

The student presents the electoral system as an American political institution that serves as an obstacle to the realization of racial minorities’ political goals. The student points out that Southern states denied the right to vote based on literacy tests, poll taxes, and grandfather clauses as a feature of the system. (1 point). The student does not offer an explanation (0 points).

In part (b), the student identifies federalism as a facilitating institution for racial minorities, but no feature of the federal system is identified. With no identification, no explanation of a feature can be credited. (0 points).

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Question 4

Sample AA: 8 points

High: (8 points)

The student identifies cynicism, “people’s mistrust in the government” (1 point), and explains how the “Watergate scandal” has encouraged cynicism, leading people to be “less likely to vote” (1 point). The student also identifies the voters’ loss of “efficacy” (1 point), leading people to “believe their vote cannot affect anything” (1 point). Part (a) earns 4 points.

In part (b), the student identifies “a greater amount of media coverage and thus visibility” in presidential elections and explains that it makes voters more “aware and concerned with the issues” (1 point) in presidential than in midterm elections, resulting “in a higher voter turnout” (1 point). The student also identifies “high incumbency rates of Congressmen” as reducing voter turnout in midterm elections (1 point), and contrasts that to presidential elections, in which people feel that “their vote might be felt” (1 point). Part (b) earns 4 points.

Sample BB: 5 points

Medium: (5 points)

The student uses the term “apathetic,” but actually identifies lack of efficacy, “their one vote will not affect the election” (1 point). The student gives no accepted explanation of how it affects voter turnout. Part (a) earns 1 point.

The student identifies greater availability of funds as a reason for disparity in turnout (1 point), and explains how “federal matching funds” help presidential candidate spend more on “advertising and promotion than do Congressional candidate” (1 point). The student also identifies the public perception of Presidential elections as “much more important” (1 point), and explains with the fact that the president “has a much greater chance of single-handedly influencing political decisions” (1 point). Part (b) earns 4 points.

Sample CC: 2 points

Low: (2 points)

The student identifies apathy, “people just don’t care any more” (1 point), and explains how the incumbency factor contributes to this attitude, depressing turnout (1 point). Part (a) earns 2 points.

Part (b) asserts that there has been a “great rise in voting for presidential elections.” This is factually incorrect. The student does not provide any explanation for the relationship between turnout in presidential and midterm elections. Part (b) earns no points.