

*Majors in American politics should answer **ONE** question from part I and **TWO** questions from part II (2 hours for each question, 6 hours total).*

*Minors in American politics should answer **ONE** question from part I and **ONE** question from part II (2 hours for each question, 4 hours total).*

PART I: The purpose of this section is to examine your capacity to apply political science theory to general questions in American politics. In doing so, you are expected to demonstrate broad knowledge of the American political system. However, your first priority should be to answer the specific question asked.

1. Scholars of American politics are increasingly concerned about the emergence of authoritarianism and democratic backsliding in the United States. What empirical evidence is there regarding these concerns? What theories might help us understand the emergence of authoritarianism and democratic backsliding in the U.S. and whether the current trends are as troubling as some claim?
2. Since Donald Trump's entry into the presidential election seven years ago, our understanding of U.S. politics has changed. How did [should] Trump's dominance of the political dialogue and his political success affect political scientists' understanding of U.S. democratic politics? Are there hints in the history of political science ideas that we should have seen it coming?
3. In recent years, colleagues in international and comparative political studies have sought to consider ways in which domestic politics are shaped by geopolitics and matters of international political economy; and, in turn, how these issues of national security and global economics affect domestic politics. Would you suggest orienting the American subfield in parallel ways? If so, what questions would you place front and center? How would you propose to investigate these questions? To what theory and empirical scholarship would you turn?
4. The median voter theorem (MVT) is one of the most well-known ideas in political science. The deep divisions and polarization that appear to characterize American politics today have raised some questions about the theorem's applicability to the current political circumstances. How well does the MVT work for explaining recent electoral and legislative outcomes in American Politics? Describe some important empirical and theoretical departures from the basic MVT, as well as some possible paths forward. Does the theorem seem more applicable to certain settings in American politics than others?

PART II: The purpose of this section is to test your ability to apply political science theory and empirical knowledge to important questions about specific features of the American political system. Be sure to answer each part of the question.

1. According to Converse, only a small proportion of the "mass public" has a sense of "what goes with what" (i.e., how different issue positions are related to each other) and express ideologically consistent views on such issues. Now that the parties have staked out divergent positions on issues such as abortion and gun rights, is Converse's appraisal still accurate? If so or if not, what are the electoral consequences of recent policy shifts in these issue domains?
2. The literature on race, ethnicity, and politics has highlighted when and how descriptive representation can benefit voters of color. What are some possible tensions between descriptive and substantive representation? What do existing findings tell us about these tensions?
3. The Supreme Court is now firmly in the hands of a strong conservative majority, with even a vote to spare. Does this drastically simplify the commonly studied topics in judicial politics -- any bargaining within the Court itself and in the judicial hierarchy? What complications are there? What might not be so simple after all? How powerful or limited will this new supermajority be?
4. Consider the expected passage of another big Biden bill, along with the previous infrastructure bill, along with the delayed path in getting to this point. How do these fit into our understanding of policymaking in and between Congress and the President? How typical or different are they? What theories and evidence help us understand the outcomes and implications?
5. There are arguably many "dilemmas" of democracy. One "dilemma of democracy," so to speak, concerns the question: Should government policies follow public opinion? How would you approach answering this question? What are the considerations that you would bring to bear on it, including any empirical evidence? How important is this question for understanding the state of American democracy?
6. Joe Manchin has recently been in the headlines for allegedly killing and then reviving potentially landmark legislation to address climate change. This is striking evidence of his "pivotality" as the median voter in the U.S. Senate on matters where a simple majority can act without having to overcome a filibuster. Yet Manchin has steadfastly opposed attempts to eliminate the filibuster for legislation, which effectively makes the senator at the 60th percentile of the ideological distribution the pivot (undoubtedly a Republican who is very unlikely to support main Democratic agenda items). What theory and evidence helps us understand why Manchin would choose not to support a

procedural maneuver that would make him the pivotal voter on all legislative business (not just on reconciliation bills)?

7. The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* means that states will now be responsible for setting their own abortion policies. To what extent should we expect these policies to conform to constituent opinion? A strong answer should draw from the literatures on responsiveness, political parties, interest groups, and American political institutions.
8. Studies of American political behavior emphasize the role of political partisanship as a motivating force. Still, even with today's polarization, self-styled "Independents" make up about one third of the electorate, with exact numbers varying with the survey house. What do we know about Independent voters, today and historically? Discuss some of the open questions / debates about Independent voters. How might the answers to these questions / debates affect our understanding of American politics?
9. What can we say about the media and its connection to "democratic competence"? How do findings of limited effects versus substantial effects bear on the question of the public's and leaders' democratic competence? What kind of "effects" here should we be talking about?
10. American Political Development (APD) is widely viewed as a distinct field of inquiry within political science. What are the features of APD that mark it as unique among the various fields of inquiry in American Politics? What are the advantages and disadvantages to the APD approach? How might APD make progress in the future? Discuss specific insights that APD provides about the current state of U.S. politics that other approaches do not provide.