

*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 empirical and historical knowledge of the American political system.

1. There is evidence that (measures of) partisan polarization, inequality, and immigration have trended in the same direction in recent years. What should we make of this? Are there possible causal connections? Do they coincide with any institutional changes? Might other trends be added to the mix? Do they have implications for American democracy? Or are these largely spurious or coincidental relationships?
2. The following books were written more than half a century ago, but continue to be regularly included on American politics syllabi and cited in recent research: 1) *The American Voter* (Campbell, et. al., 1960); 2) *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (Key, 1949); 3) *Who Governs?* (Dahl, 1961); 4) *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (Downs, 1957); 5) *Presidential Power* (Neustadt, 1960); 6) *Administrative Behavior* (Simon, 1947). Choose any two of these works and critically evaluate their contributions to our understanding of American politics today.
3. Choose at least two of these features of American politics that scholars of other advanced democracies might describe as unique to the United States. Describe how these features of American politics differs from politics in other democracies. Discuss the various explanations in the literature for why the U.S. has these unique features and how these features may shape other aspects of American politics.
4. Political behavior and institutions are often discussed as two distinct areas of American politics research. Discuss two debates in American politics today where the central questions or positions in the debate depend on our understanding of the interaction between political behavior and institutions.

PART II: The purpose of this section is to examine your facility for applying political science theory and empirical knowledge to important questions about specific features of the American political system.

1. What does political science research tell us about the power of the American president during wartime? What are the empirical bases for these claims and the theoretical microfoundations upon which they are offered? Do you believe that existing research has correctly unearthed the relationship between war and presidential power? Why or why not?
2. What have we learned from the formal and empirical literature in judicial politics on the separation-of-powers, including legislative-judicial interactions? How independent are courts? What beneficial effects are there of an independent court to a legislature?
3. What is the role of political parties in Congress? Has this role changed over time? If so, what might explain the change(s)? Discuss and critique the theoretical and empirical literatures related to these questions.
4. The battle over gay marriage reached a critical resolution recently with the Supreme Court's decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*. What work in political science helps us to understand the rapid evolution of public opinion on this issue and the judiciary's role in resolving the conflict? In what ways is the historical path followed by the debate over gay marriage similar and different from other conflicts over rights in the U.S.?
5. Many scholars who study U.S. elections emphasize the mental shortcuts that voters take when deciding whether to vote and for whom. It has frequently been argued that even if the public is less than rational in its evaluation of candidates, it is at least reasonable. Is this thesis defensible, theoretically and empirically? What are the biggest deficiencies of leading arguments that make reference to mental shortcuts?
6. 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? Should APD become more integrated into the rest of the subfield of American Politics?
7. The role of race in American politics has been fiercely debated in the field. Recently, race has been implicated in major contemporary political issues such as immigration, presidential politics, Supreme Court decisions, and the impact of Hurricane Katrina, among others. How should we assess the role of race in American politics? Discuss the major theoretical, analytical and empirical debates in the literature, including strengths and weaknesses. What are the most

illuminating and promising approaches or frameworks for understanding the impact of race in American politics?

8. Rational choice theorists have long puzzled over why voters would be willing to incur the costs of turning out for an election, when the probability they would cast the decisive vote is close to zero. Discuss both theoretical and empirical approaches to solving this puzzle. How do these approaches help us understand the overtime variation in voter turnout in the U.S.? Provide some logical next steps for the study of turnout.
9. In the aftermath of World War Two, leading political scientists such as V.O. Key, Jr., and David Truman argued that rational interest groups would seek to maintain close ties to both major political parties. Does this pattern persist? If not, why the change? If so, how would you account for group-party persistence in the face of growing polarization?
10. Scholars of urban politics have developed several competing descriptive theories of urban political power. Identify and briefly explain two of these theories. What are the strengths and weakness of each? What evidence do the proponents of each use to support their claims? Which do you believe most accurately describes urban political power and why? In formulating your answer to this last question, explain how one might adjudicate between the two theories you have identified.