

*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. Be sure while doing so to answer the specific question asked.

1. The median voter theorem is one of the most well-known ideas in political science. In the U.S. two party system where the two major party candidates compete in most constituencies, the theorem predicts that the winner will be closer to the median voter. This leads as well to predictions about the relationship between public opinion and policymaking. The empirical evidence, however, especially recently, has not always matched the predictions. Review the empirical evidence regarding the median voter theorem in U.S. politics. Might the theory apply only to certain *contexts*? What explanations do you find most plausible for explaining the discrepancies between the theoretical prediction and the empirical evidence? Address both elections and policymaking.
2. Some might argue that the election of Donald Trump is the kind of outcome that the Constitution was designed to guard against, or to constrain its possibly dire effects. Do you agree or disagree? Would the American Founders agree? How can American institutions respond to the Trump presidency? To what extent have they done so? Do American politics scholars have anything useful to say about how Congress, the courts, and the bureaucracy have acted under the current administration?
3. A fashionable criticism of U.S. politics today is to complain about what some see as a growing political inequality that compounds the obvious growth in economic inequality. How unequal is political representation in the US? Unequal along what lines? What is the theory? What are the signs? What is the scope? And is there a case that political inequality has been either over- or under-hyped in the political science literature?

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. Be sure to answer the specific question asked.

4. Party identification and ideological identification have become increasingly intertwined. Four or five decades ago, there was barely a correlation between the two in the mass public. What were the dynamics of this change within the mass public. Did elites play a role? What caused what? How can we do better at figuring this all out?
5. What answers has the discipline offered to questions concerning the conditions under which Congress will delegate to the bureaucracy and what form that delegation will take? Critique the approaches and suggest an agenda for future research.
6. Identify a theoretical debate in the Congress literature that could be suitably evaluated in the context of state legislatures. Explain the competing sides of this debate and develop and justify a feasible research design. Be sure to consider whether features of the state context will strengthen or weaken your research design.
7. Senate Republicans have had a very narrow majority in the 115th Congress. Yet, they have been called upon to take action on an aggressive and sweeping legislative program that seeks to undo many of the policies of the Obama administration and previous administrations. What do the vicissitudes of Republican efforts to "repeal and replace Obamacare" tell us about leading theories of legislative politics and the supermajoritarian nature of the Senate. Your essay should draw on relevant political science theories, works, and empirical evidence.
8. Bruce Ackerman has argued that the United States was founded three times: at its origins, during the Civil War and Reconstruction, and again during the New Deal. How would you assess such a claim? What is its import? How could such a claim be validated; indeed, can it? What are its implications for the study of participation, opinion, institutions, and policy design? Is such a schematic compatible with the tradition of electoral realignment?
9. The theory of linked-fate is a concept that has been used to explain homogeneity in minority public opinion. The concept has also been used to consider the strengths or weaknesses of racial/ethnic group solidarity. Much of the literature assumes that link-fate operates similarly across racial and ethnic groups. Assess the viability of the theory of linked fate across different groups and explain why there is variation in the explanatory power of linked fate across different racial and ethnic groups.

10. While most political observers believe that interest groups have significant influence on policy, the empirical evidence connecting interest group activity to policy outcomes has been difficult to uncover or has been met with considerable skepticism. What are the theoretical and empirical challenges with identifying the influence of interest groups on policy? Your answer should highlight specific works that have advanced our understanding of this topic.
11. If we scroll back time to as recently as early 2015, very few if any observers would have predicted the next president to be Donald J. Trump. Taking into account the political science literature's leading theories about public opinion, voting, parties, and the structure of elections, to what extent does Trump's election upend conventional thinking about US politics and compel urgent revision? Contrarily, to what extent can Trump's triumph be accounted for as, actually, an extension of normal politics? Or is it just a one-off?
12. Consider the role courts play in our system of "checks-and-balances." How much do the federal courts constrain the other branches? How much are they constrained by them? How powerful are the U.S. federal courts in policymaking? Should we expect the Supreme Court to play a significant role in checking the Trump administration and/or Republican Congress? Are current judicial interventions with respect to Trump's policies the norm or unusual? Invoke historical examples as appropriate.