

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. 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); 7) *Public Opinion and American Democracy* (Key, 1961). Choose any two of these works and critically evaluate their contributions to our understanding of American politics today.
2. Drawing on relevant theoretical and empirical literatures, what did the 2016 presidential elections reveal about the state of the American republic and democracy? What would you emphasize as the most important aspects or themes?
3. In the U.S., most adult citizens are able to vote for various elected office, making this country a democracy, at least nominally. Now, evaluate the U.S. by the stricter standard that every voice should have equal weight when it comes to influence over public policy. To what extent does the United States meet this standard? Where deficient, what can be done to equalize political influence?

**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. Assess the influence of chief executives (i.e., presidents and governors) in American politics. What formal and informal powers do they possess? To what extent and under what circumstances can these powers be leveraged to shape policymaking? In your answer discuss the various approaches scholars have used to study executive influence. Have some of these approaches been more fruitful than others? If so, why?
2. 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 president and/or the Republican controlled Congress in the coming years? Invoke historical examples as appropriate.
3. With the conclusion of the 2016 elections, political observers have begun looking forward towards the 2018 midterm elections. What political forces should we expect to influence the outcomes of that election? Write an essay describing the current state of research regarding midterm elections.
4. In recent work on conundrums of American democracy, much emphasis has been placed on polarization. Over the arc of the country's history since the Civil War, how significant has this factor been in shaping legislative productivity? Which other factors help explain effective lawmaking? In that mix, how much emphasis should be placed on the degrees of division separating both governing elites and citizens?
5. Federalism was often thought to have been eroded as a principle of governance by the expansion of the national administrative state in the 1930s and 1940s. Is this understanding persuasive? Which indicators would you use to answer this question, and what assessment would you make of the contemporary status of federalism situated more broadly within the American experience?
6. Various theories of political representation have been used to explain how legislators go about representing minority interests. In reviewing the literature on political representation, explain the similarities and differences in minority representation and non-minority representation, and assess whether having a minority and non-minority representative makes a difference in the representation of minority interests.

7. What are some of the ways in which interest groups attempt to influence public policy? What have theoretical models of lobbying explained, and where might more progress need to be made?
7. Senate Republicans will have a very narrow majority (only one or two seats) in the 115th Congress. Yet, they will be called upon to take action on an aggressive and sweeping legislative program that seeks to undo many of the policy accomplishments of the Obama administration. Given the supermajoritarian nature of the Senate, how do you see this playing out? Can Democrats use the filibuster effectively to prevent policy reversals? Or will Republicans seek to change rules that empower minorities to block legislation and nominations in the Senate? Your essay should draw on relevant political science theories and empirical evidence to support your argument.