

Notes on the AP U.S. Government and Politics Practice Exam

Introduction

This section provides a description of how the questions in the AP Practice Exam correspond to the components of the course framework included in the *AP[®] United States Government and Politics Course and Exam Description*. For each of the questions in the AP Practice Exam, the disciplinary practice, enduring understanding, and learning objective from the course framework are indicated.

In addition, the multiple-choice and free-response questions include the following features:

- For multiple-choice questions, the correct response is indicated with a justification for why it is correct. There are additional explanations that address why the other responses are incorrect.
- Free-response questions include scoring guidelines that explain how students can use required and illustrative knowledge learned in the AP U.S. Government and Politics course to answer the questions.

The AP U.S. Government and Politics Exam is 3 hours long, and includes both a 1 hour and 20 minute multiple-choice section, and a 1 hour and 40 minute free-response section. Student performance on these two parts will be scored, compiled, and weighted to determine an AP Exam score.

Section	Question Type	Number of Questions	Timing	Percentage of Total Exam Score
I	Multiple-choice	55 questions	1 hour and 20 minutes	50%
II	Free-Response	4 questions	1 hour and 40 minutes	50%
		• Concept Application	20 minutes (suggested)	12.5%
		• Quantitative Analysis	20 minutes (suggested)	12.5%
		• SCOTUS Comparison	20 minutes (suggested)	12.5%
		• Argument Essay	40 minutes (suggested)	12.5%

Free-Response Section

Section II of the exam consists of four questions that prompt students to:

- **Concept Application:** Respond to a political scenario, explaining how it relates to a political principle, institution, process, policy, or behavior
- **Quantitative Analysis:** Analyze quantitative data, identify a trend or pattern, draw a conclusion from the visual representation, and explain how the data relate to a political principle, institution, process, policy, or behavior
- **SCOTUS Comparison:** Compare a nonrequired Supreme Court case with a required Supreme Court case, explaining how information from the required case is relevant to that in the nonrequired one
- **Argument Essay:** Develop an argument in the form of an essay, using evidence from one or more required foundational documents

All five big ideas as well as the required content presented in all five units of instruction are subject to being assessed in Section II as a whole. At least one free-response question will assess one or more learning objectives that pertain to public policy. All four free-response questions are weighted equally; however it is recommended that students spend 20 minutes of exam time on each of the first three questions, and 40 minutes on the argumentative essay.

In the argumentative essay question students are given a prompt that can have more than one possible response. They will be asked to write a defensible claim or thesis that responds to the question and establishes a line of reasoning (the response cannot earn a point for simply restating the prompt).

They must then cite and describe one piece of evidence from a list of foundational documents. To earn additional points students must identify a second piece of specific and relevant evidence, making sure they explain how or why both pieces support the claim or thesis. To complete their essay students must identify an opposing or alternative perspective, demonstrate a correct understanding of it, and refute, concede, or rebut that perspective.

Time Management

Students need to learn to budget their time wisely so that they can complete all parts of the exam. They will be able to move from Section I to Section II only after the 1 hour, 20 minutes for Section I is completed and their responses to the multiple-choice questions are collected.

Time management is especially important with regard to Section II, which consists of four essay questions. It is recommended that students spend 20 minutes on each of the first three questions, for a total of one hour, and then an additional 40 minutes to develop and write the argumentative essay in response to question four. Even though proctors will announce the time remaining in this section, students are not forced to move from one question to another.

Students often benefit from taking a practice exam under timed conditions prior to the actual administration.