

AP U.S. Government and Politics Exam

Exam Overview

The AP U.S. Government and Politics Exam is three hours long, divided into two sections as shown in the table below.

| Section | 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% |

Time Management

Students need 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 one hour and 20 minutes time 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 4. 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.

Exam Components

Multiple-Choice Questions

Section I of the AP U.S. Government and Politics Exam consists of 55 multiple-choice questions, including:

- Quantitative Analysis: Analysis and application of quantitative-based source material
- Qualitative Analysis: Analysis and application of text-based (primary and secondary) sources
- Visual Analysis: Analysis and application of qualitative visual information
- Concept Application: Explanation of the application of political concepts in context
- Comparison: Explanation of the similarities and differences of political concepts
- Knowledge: Identification and definition of political principles, processes, institutions, policies, and behaviors

Multiple-choice questions will contain four answer options. A student's total score on the multiple-choice section is based on the number of questions answered correctly. Points are not deducted for incorrect answers or unanswered questions.

Free-Response Questions

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 relates 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.