

Texas A&M University (TAMU) POLS206 American National Government Exam 1 Practice Exam (Sample)

Study Guide



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Questions

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1. Which act was enacted to invalidate many Black Codes and protect civil rights of African-Americans?
 - A. Civil Rights Act of 1964
 - B. Civil Rights Act of 1866
 - C. Equal Pay Act of 1963
 - D. Americans with Disabilities Act
2. What was the primary purpose of the Articles of Confederation?
 - A. Create a strong federal government
 - B. Serve as a framework for cooperation among states
 - C. Establish an executive branch
 - D. Regulate commerce with foreign nations
3. What is the primary role of the judiciary in the United States?
 - A. To enact laws
 - B. To interpret the law
 - C. To enforce laws
 - D. To draft legislation
4. What power does Congress have in relation to treaties?
 - A. To negotiate treaties
 - B. To ratify treaties
 - C. To enforce treaties
 - D. To create treaties
5. Which concept argues that state laws can be formed if not explicitly prohibited by the Constitution?
 - A. Implied powers
 - B. Enumerated powers
 - C. Reserved powers
 - D. Supremacy clause

6. What does the Privileges and Immunities Clause ensure for citizens?
- A. Equal treatment in all states
 - B. Tax exemption
 - C. Access to federal resources
 - D. Right to bear arms
7. Who has the authority to appoint federal judges?
- A. The Senate
 - B. The House of Representatives
 - C. The President
 - D. The Attorney General
8. Which clause in Article IV deals with the privileges and immunities of citizens?
- A. Supremacy clause
 - B. Extradition clause
 - C. Full faith and credit clause
 - D. Privileges and immunities clause
9. Who is eligible to vote in federal elections?
- A. Citizens at least 16 years old
 - B. Only registered political party members
 - C. Citizens who are at least 18 years old
 - D. Permanent residents
10. What are the two major political parties in the United States?
- A. The Democratic Party and the Republican Party
 - B. The Green Party and the Libertarian Party
 - C. The Independent Party and the Reform Party
 - D. The Socialists and the Progressives

Answers

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1. B
2. B
3. B
4. B
5. C
6. A
7. C
8. D
9. C
10. A

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Explanations

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1. Which act was enacted to invalidate many Black Codes and protect civil rights of African-Americans?

- A. Civil Rights Act of 1964
- B. Civil Rights Act of 1866
- C. Equal Pay Act of 1963
- D. Americans with Disabilities Act

The Civil Rights Act of 1866 was enacted to address and invalidate the various Black Codes that were implemented in Southern states following the Civil War. These codes aimed to restrict the rights of African Americans and maintain a system of racial segregation and inequality. The 1866 Act explicitly granted citizenship to all persons born in the United States regardless of race and provided that they should have the same rights as white citizens, essentially aiming to protect the civil rights of African Americans. This act marked a significant step towards equality and laid the foundation for future civil rights legislation. By formally recognizing African Americans as citizens and granting them equal rights under the law, it sought to counteract the discriminatory laws and practices perpetuated by the Black Codes. The other options, while important in their own contexts, do not specifically address the violation of civil rights as a result of the Black Codes. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, for instance, focused on a broader array of discrimination in various sectors, while the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the Americans with Disabilities Act pertain to gender inequality and disability rights, respectively.

2. What was the primary purpose of the Articles of Confederation?

- A. Create a strong federal government
- B. Serve as a framework for cooperation among states
- C. Establish an executive branch
- D. Regulate commerce with foreign nations

The primary purpose of the Articles of Confederation was to serve as a framework for cooperation among the states. After gaining independence, the newly formed United States faced the challenge of unifying the states while maintaining their sovereignty. The Articles of Confederation established a loose confederation of these states, aiming to provide a system through which they could work together on critical issues. This document aimed to facilitate coordination on matters like defense and diplomacy, but it intentionally limited the central government's powers to avoid the kind of tyranny they had experienced under British rule. By focusing on cooperation among states rather than creating a strong federal authority, the Articles reflected the desire for a participatory form of governance where states could maintain their own identities. While other choices mention aspects that are related to the functioning of government, they do not accurately represent the designed purpose of the Articles. For instance, the Articles did not establish a strong federal government, which is why attempts to amend them ultimately led to the creation of the U.S. Constitution. Similarly, an executive branch was nonexistent under the Articles, reflecting the preference for legislative power at that time. Lastly, the regulation of commerce was largely ineffective under the Articles, as the central government lacked the authority to manage trade effectively.

3. What is the primary role of the judiciary in the United States?

- A. To enact laws
- B. To interpret the law
- C. To enforce laws
- D. To draft legislation

The primary role of the judiciary in the United States is to interpret the law. This function is essential in ensuring that laws are applied consistently and fairly within the judicial system. The judiciary evaluates cases brought before the courts, interpreting statutes, regulations, and constitutional provisions to determine how they apply to specific situations. This role is fundamental in safeguarding rights, resolving disputes, and ensuring that the intent of the law is upheld. Interpreting laws also involves the judiciary's power of judicial review, which allows courts to assess the constitutionality of legislative and executive actions. This reflects the concept of checks and balances inherent in the U.S. government, ensuring that no branch exceeds its authority. The other options describe functions that are typically associated with different branches of government. Enacting laws is primarily the responsibility of the legislative branch, while enforcing laws falls to the executive branch. Drafting legislation is also a function of the legislative branch, where elected representatives create and propose new laws. In contrast, the judiciary's focus is squarely on interpretation, making it a distinct and critical component of the overall governance structure.

4. What power does Congress have in relation to treaties?

- A. To negotiate treaties
- B. To ratify treaties
- C. To enforce treaties
- D. To create treaties

Congress has the power to ratify treaties, which is a crucial function outlined in the U.S. Constitution. Once a treaty is negotiated and signed by the President, it must be submitted to the Senate for ratification. This process requires a two-thirds majority vote in the Senate, underscoring the system of checks and balances that prevents any single branch of government from wielding excessive authority. This power to ratify ensures that both the executive and legislative branches are involved in foreign policy decisions, reflecting the belief that such significant agreements should not rest solely with the President. It's a critical aspect of ensuring democratic oversight of international commitments made by the United States. While Congress does not hold the power to negotiate treaties directly—that responsibility lies primarily with the President—its role in ratification allows it to maintain influence over the nation's foreign affairs.

5. Which concept argues that state laws can be formed if not explicitly prohibited by the Constitution?

- A. Implied powers
- B. Enumerated powers
- C. Reserved powers
- D. Supremacy clause

The concept that state laws can be formed if not explicitly prohibited by the Constitution is known as reserved powers. This is grounded in the Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which states that powers not delegated to the federal government nor prohibited to the states are reserved for the states or the people. This means that states have the authority to create laws and regulations that fall within their jurisdiction, provided those laws do not conflict with federal laws or the Constitution. Implied powers refer to the authority granted to the federal government to implement actions that are not explicitly outlined in the Constitution but are necessary to carry out its enumerated powers. Enumerated powers are those explicitly listed in the Constitution as belonging to the federal government. The supremacy clause establishes that federal law takes precedence over state laws when there is a conflict. Therefore, reserved powers specifically highlight the autonomy of states to legislate in areas not federally regulated, making it the correct answer.

6. What does the Privileges and Immunities Clause ensure for citizens?

- A. Equal treatment in all states
- B. Tax exemption
- C. Access to federal resources
- D. Right to bear arms

The Privileges and Immunities Clause is found in Article IV, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution and is designed to ensure that citizens of one state are not discriminated against when they are in another state. This means that individuals have the right to enjoy the same privileges and immunities in other states as they do in their own state. This clause aims to promote national unity and prevent states from treating out-of-state citizens unfairly, thereby guaranteeing a baseline of equal treatment for citizens as they travel and engage with different states within the union. The other choices do not accurately reflect the purpose of the Privileges and Immunities Clause. For instance, tax exemption is not a guarantee provided by this clause; instead, taxation is typically a matter determined by state law. Access to federal resources is also not specifically addressed by the Privileges and Immunities Clause, as it pertains more to federal governance and funding mechanisms. The right to bear arms is protected under the Second Amendment, rather than being connected to the Privileges and Immunities Clause. Thus, the clause specifically ensures equal treatment for citizens across state lines.

7. Who has the authority to appoint federal judges?

- A. The Senate
- B. The House of Representatives
- C. The President
- D. The Attorney General

The authority to appoint federal judges is vested in the President of the United States, as outlined in Article II, Section 2 of the Constitution. This section grants the President the power to nominate judges to the Supreme Court and other federal courts. However, it is important to note that these appointments are subject to the advice and consent of the Senate, meaning the Senate must confirm the President's nominees through a voting process. The reasoning behind this structure is to ensure a system of checks and balances, where the Executive Branch (the President) has the authority to nominate judges, but the Legislative Branch (the Senate) provides oversight and confirmation to prevent any potential abuse of power. This balance is crucial to maintaining judicial independence while also ensuring accountability to the elected branches of government. In contrast, the House of Representatives, as a part of the Legislative Branch, does not have any role in the appointment process for federal judges. The Attorney General, while a key figure in the Department of Justice, also does not hold the authority to appoint judges. Thus, the President is the correct answer with respect to who has the authority over federal judicial appointments.

8. Which clause in Article IV deals with the privileges and immunities of citizens?

- A. Supremacy clause
- B. Extradition clause
- C. Full faith and credit clause
- D. Privileges and immunities clause

The Privileges and Immunities Clause in Article IV of the U.S. Constitution is specifically designed to protect the rights of citizens as they travel between states. This clause ensures that citizens of one state are entitled to the same privileges and immunities as citizens of another state when they are within the borders of that state. Its purpose is to promote national unity and prevent discrimination against out-of-state citizens by ensuring they are afforded the same legal protections and rights as local residents. This mechanism helps foster a sense of equality and fairness across state lines, making it integral to the functioning of a cohesive federal system. The clause plays a crucial role in upholding civil rights, particularly in terms of legal rights, access to public services, and protection from discriminatory laws that might otherwise restrict the freedoms of citizens traveling or moving to different states.

9. Who is eligible to vote in federal elections?

- A. Citizens at least 16 years old
- B. Only registered political party members
- C. Citizens who are at least 18 years old
- D. Permanent residents

The eligibility to vote in federal elections in the United States is determined by the requirement that individuals must be citizens who are at least 18 years old. This age requirement is established by the 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which was ratified in 1971. The amendment was a significant change in voting rights, aimed at lowering the voting age from 21 to 18 to ensure that younger citizens could have a voice in the political process, especially during the time of the Vietnam War when many young people were being drafted for military service. Other options present various groups that are not eligible to vote. For example, while individuals may be 16 years old, they do not meet the age requirement stipulated by the Constitution. Additionally, voting is not restricted solely to members of a political party; unaffiliated voters can also participate in federal elections, depending on state laws regarding primaries. Permanent residents, who are not U.S. citizens, do not have voting rights in federal elections, as voting is reserved for U.S. citizens only. These factors highlight why the option indicating citizens who are at least 18 years old is the correct choice in determining who can vote in federal elections.

10. What are the two major political parties in the United States?

- A. The Democratic Party and the Republican Party
- B. The Green Party and the Libertarian Party
- C. The Independent Party and the Reform Party
- D. The Socialists and the Progressives

The correct answer identifies the two major political parties in the United States as the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. These parties have historically dominated the political landscape since the mid-19th century, shaping American politics, governance, and public policy. The Democratic Party generally advocates for progressive policies, including social justice, health care reform, and environmental regulations, while the Republican Party typically supports conservative values, emphasizing limited government, lower taxes, and free-market principles. In contrast, the other options refer to parties that, while they may have influence or represent specific interests, do not have the same level of establishment power or widespread electoral success as the Democratic and Republican Parties. The Green Party and the Libertarian Party are considered third parties, but they have not achieved the same level of visibility or influence in mainstream politics. Similarly, the Independent Party and the Reform Party, along with the Socialists and Progressives, also represent alternative political views but do not match the dominance and historical prominence of the two major parties.