

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

Study Guide



Everything you need from our exam experts!

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Introduction

Preparing for a certification exam can feel overwhelming, but with the right tools, it becomes an opportunity to build confidence, sharpen your skills, and move one step closer to your goals. At Examzify, we believe that effective exam preparation isn't just about memorization, it's about understanding the material, identifying knowledge gaps, and building the test-taking strategies that lead to success.

This guide was designed to help you do exactly that.

Whether you're preparing for a licensing exam, professional certification, or entry-level qualification, this book offers structured practice to reinforce key concepts. You'll find a wide range of multiple-choice questions, each followed by clear explanations to help you understand not just the right answer, but why it's correct.

The content in this guide is based on real-world exam objectives and aligned with the types of questions and topics commonly found on official tests. It's ideal for learners who want to:

- Practice answering questions under realistic conditions,
- Improve accuracy and speed,
- Review explanations to strengthen weak areas, and
- Approach the exam with greater confidence.

We recommend using this book not as a stand-alone study tool, but alongside other resources like flashcards, textbooks, or hands-on training. For best results, we recommend working through each question, reflecting on the explanation provided, and revisiting the topics that challenge you most.

Remember: successful test preparation isn't about getting every question right the first time, it's about learning from your mistakes and improving over time. Stay focused, trust the process, and know that every page you turn brings you closer to success.

Let's begin.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help you study more effectively and approach your exam with confidence. Whether you're reviewing for the first time or doing a final refresh, here's how to get the most out of your Examzify study guide:

1. Start with a Diagnostic Review

Skim through the questions to get a sense of what you know and what you need to focus on. Your goal is to identify knowledge gaps early.

2. Study in Short, Focused Sessions

Break your study time into manageable blocks (e.g. 30 - 45 minutes). Review a handful of questions, reflect on the explanations.

3. Learn from the Explanations

After answering a question, always read the explanation, even if you got it right. It reinforces key points, corrects misunderstandings, and teaches subtle distinctions between similar answers.

4. Track Your Progress

Use bookmarks or notes (if reading digitally) to mark difficult questions. Revisit these regularly and track improvements over time.

5. Simulate the Real Exam

Once you're comfortable, try taking a full set of questions without pausing. Set a timer and simulate test-day conditions to build confidence and time management skills.

6. Repeat and Review

Don't just study once, repetition builds retention. Re-attempt questions after a few days and revisit explanations to reinforce learning. Pair this guide with other Examzify tools like flashcards, and digital practice tests to strengthen your preparation across formats.

There's no single right way to study, but consistent, thoughtful effort always wins. Use this guide flexibly, adapt the tips above to fit your pace and learning style. You've got this!

Questions

- 1. 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**
- 2. What does the Establishment Clause prevent?**
 - A. The government from supporting any official religion**
 - B. Religious practices in public schools**
 - C. Taxation for religious institutions**
 - D. The government from endorsing free speech**
- 3. What principle does federalism emphasize?**
 - A. Concentration of power in the national government**
 - B. Division of power between national and state governments**
 - C. Equal power across all state governments**
 - D. Subordination of state laws to international treaties**
- 4. What was the primary purpose of the Espionage Act of 1917?**
 - A. To promote international espionage**
 - B. To prevent unauthorized disclosure of classified information**
 - C. To enhance public access to military information**
 - D. To penalize acts against state laws**
- 5. Which legislation was the first major legislative compromise dealing with slavery?**
 - A. Missouri Compromise**
 - B. Emancipation Proclamation**
 - C. Compromise of 1850**
 - D. Thirteenth Amendment**

- 6. What is required to override a presidential veto?**
- A. A simple majority in one house of Congress**
 - B. A two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress**
 - C. A unanimous vote from the Supreme Court**
 - D. A three-fifths majority in the Senate**
- 7. What event led to the drafting of the Constitution?**
- A. The signing of the Declaration of Independence**
 - B. The weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation**
 - C. The Civil War**
 - D. The American Revolution**
- 8. What does a bill of attainder do?**
- A. Declares a person guilty without a trial**
 - B. Imposes taxes without congressional approval**
 - C. Changes laws retroactively**
 - D. Establishes state courts**
- 9. How many justices are on the Supreme Court?**
- A. Seven**
 - B. Eight**
 - C. Nine**
 - D. Ten**
- 10. What principle ensures that each branch of government can check the powers of the others?**
- A. Federalism**
 - B. Separation of Powers**
 - C. Checks and Balances**
 - D. Judicial Review**

Answers

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

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Explanations

1. 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.

2. What does the Establishment Clause prevent?

- A. The government from supporting any official religion**
- B. Religious practices in public schools**
- C. Taxation for religious institutions**
- D. The government from endorsing free speech**

The Establishment Clause, part of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, establishes a foundational principle in American governmental structure regarding religion. It prevents the government from establishing an official religion or favoring one religion over another. This was designed to ensure the separation of church and state, allowing individuals the freedom to practice any religion—or none at all—without government interference or support. This understanding aligns closely with the historical context in which the clause was created, intending to protect against the governmental endorsement or support of specific religious practices or beliefs, which could undermine the pluralistic nature of society. As such, the government cannot engage in activities that could be seen as promoting religion or religious institutions in a way that undermines or conflicts with the rights of individuals to their own beliefs.

3. What principle does federalism emphasize?

- A. Concentration of power in the national government
- B. Division of power between national and state governments**
- C. Equal power across all state governments
- D. Subordination of state laws to international treaties

Federalism emphasizes the division of power between national and state governments, which is a foundational aspect of how the United States government operates. This system allows for multiple levels of government to coexist, each with its own responsibilities and authority. By creating this separation, federalism seeks to balance the power so that neither level—state nor national—becomes too dominant. This structure also promotes local governance and caters to the diverse needs of various states while maintaining a unified nation. The division of authority enables states to implement laws and policies tailored to their specific circumstances, fostering local control and innovation. Federalism thus serves not only to limit the power of the central government but also to empower state and local governments to function independently within their jurisdictions. The other choices focus on various misconceptions about federalism: the concentration of power would undermine the very essence of federalism, equal power does not accurately represent the varying powers of state governments, and subordination of state laws to international treaties does not reflect the balance of power that federalism aims to achieve between different levels of government.

4. What was the primary purpose of the Espionage Act of 1917?

- A. To promote international espionage
- B. To prevent unauthorized disclosure of classified information**
- C. To enhance public access to military information
- D. To penalize acts against state laws

The primary purpose of the Espionage Act of 1917 was to prevent unauthorized disclosure of classified information. This legislation was enacted during World War I as a response to concerns about national security and the potential for espionage activities that could undermine the war effort. The act aimed to criminalize various forms of interference with military operations and to safeguard sensitive governmental communications from being disclosed without authorization. It reflects a historical context in which the U.S. government sought to protect its military strategies and sensitive information in a time of conflict, making the need for such protections particularly urgent.

5. Which legislation was the first major legislative compromise dealing with slavery?

- A. Missouri Compromise**
- B. Emancipation Proclamation**
- C. Compromise of 1850**
- D. Thirteenth Amendment**

The Missouri Compromise is recognized as the first significant legislative compromise addressing the issue of slavery in the United States. Enacted in 1820, this agreement was aimed at maintaining a balance between free and slave states as new territories were added to the Union. It allowed Missouri to enter as a slave state while Maine was admitted as a free state, effectively maintaining the sectional balance between North and South at that time. The compromise also established a geographical boundary (36°30' latitude) that determined where slavery would be prohibited in the western territories. Understanding the impact of the Missouri Compromise is crucial, as it set a precedent for future negotiations and compromises on the contentious issue of slavery, which would ultimately lead to more complex bills such as the Compromise of 1850. However, the Emancipation Proclamation, issued by Abraham Lincoln in 1863, and the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery entirely in 1865, were later responses to the growing tensions around slavery rather than early compromises.

6. What is required to override a presidential veto?

- A. A simple majority in one house of Congress**
- B. A two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress**
- C. A unanimous vote from the Supreme Court**
- D. A three-fifths majority in the Senate**

To override a presidential veto, a two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress is required. This means that both the House of Representatives and the Senate must pass the bill again with at least two-thirds of their members voting in favor after the president has vetoed it. This high threshold ensures that overriding a veto is a challenging process, requiring significant bipartisan support. The framers of the Constitution included this provision to maintain a system of checks and balances, ensuring that the legislative branch retains some power over the executive branch even when there is disagreement. This requirement reflects the idea that to overturn a decision made by the president, there should be substantial consensus among the representatives of the people. Other options do not fulfill the constitutional requirements for overriding a veto. A simple majority in one house would not be sufficient, and a unanimous vote from the Supreme Court is not relevant since the Court does not participate in the legislative process. Additionally, a three-fifths majority is often associated with cloture in the Senate rather than veto overrides.

7. What event led to the drafting of the Constitution?

- A. The signing of the Declaration of Independence
- B. The weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation**
- C. The Civil War
- D. The American Revolution

The drafting of the Constitution was a direct response to the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation. After gaining independence, the newly formed United States operated under the Articles, which provided a loose framework for governance. However, it soon became apparent that the Articles were inadequate in addressing the needs of the country, leading to significant challenges. Key issues included the federal government's lack of power to tax, regulate commerce, and enforce laws. These limitations resulted in economic turmoil, inter-state conflicts, and an inability to respond effectively to domestic and international issues. Shays' Rebellion, an uprising by Massachusetts farmers protesting economic injustices, underscored the weaknesses in this system and highlighted the need for a stronger central government. The desire to rectify these shortcomings was a primary motivation for the Constitutional Convention in 1787, where the leaders of the nation came together to draft a new governing document—the Constitution—that would establish a more effective federal structure capable of addressing the complexities of the new nation.

8. What does a bill of attainder do?

- A. Declares a person guilty without a trial**
- B. Imposes taxes without congressional approval
- C. Changes laws retroactively
- D. Establishes state courts

A bill of attainder is a legislative act that specifically targets an individual or group, declaring them guilty of a crime and imposing punishment without the benefit of a trial. This practice is prohibited by the U.S. Constitution because it undermines the principle of due process and the right to a fair trial, core tenets of the American legal system. By declaring a person guilty without a trial, a bill of attainder bypasses judicial proceedings and the protections they offer, making it an abuse of legislative power. This prohibition safeguards individuals against the arbitrary actions of the government, ensuring that all persons have the right to be heard in a court of law before being convicted of any offense.

9. How many justices are on the Supreme Court?

- A. Seven
- B. Eight
- C. Nine**
- D. Ten

The Supreme Court of the United States is composed of nine justices. This structure has remained consistent since 1869. The number of justices is established by Congress, and while it could be altered, any change would require legislative action. The nine justices typically include one Chief Justice and eight Associate Justices. This composition allows for a balanced deliberation and decision-making process, as cases discussed often involve complex legal issues that benefit from diverse perspectives. The nine-member court structure is essential for maintaining stability and continuity in the court's functioning and its role in the interpretation of law.

10. What principle ensures that each branch of government can check the powers of the others?

A. Federalism

B. Separation of Powers

C. Checks and Balances

D. Judicial Review

The principle that ensures each branch of government can check the powers of the others is known as Checks and Balances. This concept is integral to the structure of the U.S. government as it creates a system where legislative, executive, and judicial branches have the authority to limit each other's powers and prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful. For instance, the legislative branch can pass laws, but the executive has the power to veto those laws. Additionally, the judicial branch can interpret laws and may determine whether they are constitutional, providing a critical oversight role. This system promotes accountability and encourages collaboration among the branches, thereby safeguarding democratic governance. Similar concepts such as Separation of Powers are related, but they focus on the distinct roles and responsibilities assigned to each branch without emphasizing the interaction and mutual oversight that Checks and Balances illustrates. Federalism pertains to the distribution of power between national and state governments, while Judicial Review specifically refers to the power of the courts to assess the constitutionality of laws and executive actions, which is just one aspect of the broader Checks and Balances framework.

Next Steps

Congratulations on reaching the final section of this guide. You've taken a meaningful step toward passing your certification exam and advancing your career.

As you continue preparing, remember that consistent practice, review, and self-reflection are key to success. Make time to revisit difficult topics, simulate exam conditions, and track your progress along the way.

If you need help, have suggestions, or want to share feedback, we'd love to hear from you. Reach out to our team at hello@examzify.com.

Or visit your dedicated course page for more study tools and resources:

<https://tamu-pols206-exam1.examzify.com>

We wish you the very best on your exam journey. You've got this!