

Texas A&M University (TAMU) POLS206 American National Government Exam 2 Practice (Sample)

Study Guide



Everything you need from our exam experts!

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SAMPLE

Questions

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1. What is one criterion used by parties to determine the number of delegates sent to each state?
 - A. Party loyalty
 - B. State's geographical location
 - C. Age of voters
 - D. Voting history
2. According to the Constitution, how is the number of electoral votes per state determined?
 - A. By the state's population alone
 - B. By the total number of counties
 - C. By the number of congressional members
 - D. By the state's land area
3. What primarily determines the margin of error in public opinion polling?
 - A. Size of the population
 - B. Size of the sample
 - C. Type of question asked
 - D. Demographic diversity of the sample
4. What is a "faithless" elector?
 - A. An elector who votes according to their belief
 - B. An elector who votes against their party's choice
 - C. An elector who does not cast a vote
 - D. An elector chosen by the Supreme Court
5. What method did state legislatures originally use to choose electors?
 - A. By popular vote
 - B. By random selection
 - C. By appointment from the governor
 - D. By selecting electors directly

6. What is the primary goal of lobbying as defined in American politics?
- A. To influence public policy to promote or protect group interests
 - B. To educate the public on governmental processes
 - C. To enhance governmental transparency and accountability
 - D. To advocate for fewer regulations on businesses
7. What impact does winning the "money primary" have on a candidate?
- A. It guarantees their election success
 - B. It indicates strong fundraising capability and campaign viability
 - C. It ensures a high number of public endorsements
 - D. It automatically secures their party's nomination
8. What can be said about public opinion regarding the war in Iraq?
- A. It has remained stable over time
 - B. Public opinion has shifted to indicate that more people believe it was not worth fighting
 - C. Public opinion is largely indifferent about the issue
 - D. Opinions on the war have become more favorable
9. One reason public opinion is not a reliable guide for governing is that:
- A. It is consistent and stable
 - B. It is based on a representative sample
 - C. Opinions can be based on ignorance
 - D. It reflects only elite views
10. In what way might political machines affect overall government spending?
- A. They would likely cut government spending
 - B. They typically do not impact spending levels
 - C. They could increase spending through job creation
 - D. They would promote balanced budgets

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. What is one criterion used by parties to determine the number of delegates sent to each state?

- A. Party loyalty
- B. State's geographical location
- C. Age of voters
- D. Voting history

The correct answer focuses on party loyalty, which is a significant criterion for determining the number of delegates a state sends to a national convention. Political parties aim to reward and mobilize their most loyal supporters when allocating delegates, as these individuals are often more likely to engage with the party, vote in elections, and participate in party activities. By reflecting party loyalty in the delegate allocation process, parties can ensure that they are representing those who are most invested in their political platform and goals. Other factors like a state's geographical location, age of voters, and voting history can influence political dynamics and strategic considerations, but they do not directly dictate the number of delegates allocated to a state. Geographical location could affect campaigning strategies or voter demographics, age of voters might inform policy priorities, and voting history can indicate trends in electoral support, yet these factors do not play a formal role in delegate distribution within party rules.

2. According to the Constitution, how is the number of electoral votes per state determined?

- A. By the state's population alone
- B. By the total number of counties
- C. By the number of congressional members
- D. By the state's land area

The number of electoral votes per state is determined by the number of congressional members that the state has, which is the correct answer. Each state receives a number of electoral votes equal to the total number of its Senators (always two, regardless of population) plus the number of its Representatives in the House. The House of Representatives' membership is based on the population of the state, as measured by the most recent decennial census. Thus, if a state's population increases and it gains more Representatives, its electoral vote count will also increase. This system was designed to balance the influence of populous states with less populous ones, reflecting both the democratic principle of representation based on population and the equal state representation in the Senate. Other options do not reflect how electoral votes are allocated; for instance, they do not take into account the constitutional structure of Senate and House representation.

3. What primarily determines the margin of error in public opinion polling?

- A. Size of the population
- B. Size of the sample
- C. Type of question asked
- D. Demographic diversity of the sample

The margin of error in public opinion polling primarily depends on the size of the sample. In statistical terms, the larger the sample size, the more accurately it reflects the views of the overall population. This is because a larger sample reduces the impact of random variation, leading to more reliable estimates of public opinion. As the sample size increases, the margin of error decreases, meaning the results are believed to be closer to the actual population parameter. This concept is rooted in the principles of probability and statistics, where larger samples are less susceptible to anomalies and can provide a more precise estimate. In contrast, while the size of the population does matter in certain contexts, the way polling works means that it's the sample size that directly influences the margin of error. The type of question asked and demographic diversity can affect the interpretation of results, but they do not inherently change the mathematical calculation of the margin of error. Therefore, the sample size is the key factor in determining how confident one can be in the polling results.

4. What is a "faithless" elector?

- A. An elector who votes according to their belief
- B. An elector who votes against their party's choice
- C. An elector who does not cast a vote
- D. An elector chosen by the Supreme Court

A "faithless" elector is defined as an elector who votes against their party's choice in the Electoral College. In the U.S. presidential election system, electors are typically pledged to vote for the candidate of the political party that selected them. However, a faithless elector deviates from this pledge and chooses to cast their vote for a different candidate, regardless of the expected party loyalty. This can happen for various reasons, including personal beliefs or protest against the chosen candidate. The phenomenon of faithless electors highlights the tension between the electoral system and the individual decision-making of electors. While most electors tend to honor their commitments, instances of faithless electors, although rare, can affect the outcome of the election under specific circumstances. Understanding this concept is crucial for comprehending the dynamics of the Electoral College and the potential consequences of individual electoral decisions.

5. What method did state legislatures originally use to choose electors?

- A. By popular vote
- B. By random selection
- C. By appointment from the governor
- D. By selecting electors directly

State legislatures originally selected electors directly as part of the electoral process established by the Founding Fathers in the Constitution. This method was intended to give state legislatures a significant role in the selection of electors for the Electoral College, which then cast votes for the President and Vice President. The rationale behind this approach was rooted in a desire to balance the influence of the population with that of the states, ensuring that the states retained substantial power in the federal system. The direct selection of electors by state legislatures reflected a time when the framers were wary of direct democracy and the potential for mob rule. By allowing legislatures to choose electors, the system aimed to ensure that those elected to the presidency would be individuals who had garnered the support of the state's political leadership. Over time, this method of selection evolved, and most states shifted to a popular vote system for choosing electors, reflecting changes in public attitudes towards democracy and representation.

6. What is the primary goal of lobbying as defined in American politics?

- A. To influence public policy to promote or protect group interests
- B. To educate the public on governmental processes
- C. To enhance governmental transparency and accountability
- D. To advocate for fewer regulations on businesses

The primary goal of lobbying in American politics is to influence public policy to promote or protect group interests. This process involves individuals or groups, such as corporations, unions, and associations, who employ lobbyists to advocate on their behalf. These lobbyists seek to shape legislation, regulation, and government actions to align with their clients' interests, whether economic, social, or political. Lobbying is a crucial aspect of the democratic process, as it allows different voices and perspectives to be heard in the policymaking arena. By representing specific interests, lobbyists aim to inform lawmakers about these interests and persuade them to adopt policies that favor their causes. This dynamic is essential for creating a balanced dialogue in government, ensuring that various sectors of society can actively participate in shaping the laws and regulations that affect them. In contrast, while educating the public on governmental processes, enhancing governmental transparency, and advocating for fewer regulations are all important aspects of civic engagement and policy discussions, they do not encapsulate the central focus of lobbying efforts. Lobbying is fundamentally about influence and representation rather than merely education or advocacy for less regulation.

7. What impact does winning the "money primary" have on a candidate?

- A. It guarantees their election success
- B. It indicates strong fundraising capability and campaign viability
- C. It ensures a high number of public endorsements
- D. It automatically secures their party's nomination

Winning the "money primary" significantly indicates that a candidate has strong fundraising capabilities and demonstrates their viability as a candidate in the election process. Fundraising is a critical aspect of political campaigns; candidates who can attract substantial financial support often show that they have broad appeal and a solid support base among donors. This financial backing allows them to fund advertising, outreach efforts, and other essential campaign activities, which contribute to winning the votes in actual elections. While winning the money primary doesn't guarantee election success, as many factors influence an election outcome beyond funding, it does position the candidate favorably within their party and among voters. High fundraising often translates into increased visibility and media attention, which can enhance the candidate's reputation and competitiveness. The other options do not accurately reflect the significance of winning the money primary. It does not ensure a high number of public endorsements or automatically secure a party's nomination—those outcomes depend on various other political dynamics and voter sentiments. While financial support plays a crucial role, it alone cannot guarantee election success or nomination, as actual voting behavior can diverge from financial indicators.

8. What can be said about public opinion regarding the war in Iraq?

- A. It has remained stable over time
- B. Public opinion has shifted to indicate that more people believe it was not worth fighting
- C. Public opinion is largely indifferent about the issue
- D. Opinions on the war have become more favorable

Public opinion regarding the war in Iraq has indeed demonstrated a notable shift, especially as the conflict evolved over time. Initially, there was significant support for the war, driven by beliefs regarding weapons of mass destruction and the fight against terrorism. However, as the war progressed and the anticipated outcomes did not materialize, public sentiment changed dramatically. Polls conducted over the years revealed that a growing number of individuals began to perceive the war as unjustified or not worth the costs in terms of lives lost and financial expenditure. This shift can be attributed to various factors, including media coverage of the war, rising casualty numbers, and the perception of a prolonged insurgency without clear results. The recognition of these changing attitudes is crucial for understanding the overall narrative surrounding the Iraq War. It emphasizes how public opinion can evolve in response to new information and circumstances, reflecting citizens' varied experiences and consequences of military action.

9. One reason public opinion is not a reliable guide for governing is that:

- A. It is consistent and stable
- B. It is based on a representative sample
- C. Opinions can be based on ignorance
- D. It reflects only elite views

Public opinion can be an unreliable guide for governing primarily because opinions can often be based on ignorance. Many people may not have the necessary information or understanding of complex policy issues to form an informed opinion. This lack of knowledge can lead to opinions that are superficial or misinformed, potentially skewing the representation of what constituents truly want or need. When decision-makers rely on public opinion as a guide, they risk following misguided perceptions rather than well-founded beliefs derived from comprehensive understanding. In contrast, the stability of public opinion can suggest a more reliable foundation for decision-making, but it does not account for the potential ignorance underlying those beliefs. Additionally, while public opinion is often derived from surveys with representative samples intended to reflect the broader population, the actual knowledge and understanding of the issues at hand among respondents might still be lacking. Finally, public opinion can sometimes appear to reflect elite views, where the voices of informed or influential individuals are amplified over those of the general populace, but this does not fundamentally address the issue of ignorance among the broader public.

10. In what way might political machines affect overall government spending?

- A. They would likely cut government spending
- B. They typically do not impact spending levels
- C. They could increase spending through job creation
- D. They would promote balanced budgets

Political machines often have significant influence on government operations, particularly when it comes to spending. They are known for their ability to mobilize voters and leverage political power, and one way they can impact government spending is through job creation. When political machines are in power, they tend to pursue policies that expand public works and services to provide employment opportunities for constituents. This can lead to increased government spending as they fund infrastructure projects, social services, and other programs that directly create jobs. Moreover, the emphasis on job creation can be a strategy to gain political loyalty, as individuals are more likely to support a political machine that provides economic benefits to their community. By fostering environments where jobs are created through government initiatives, political machines can stimulate local economies, increase spending on various projects, and thus elevate overall government expenditure. This is a crucial aspect of their operation, as it allows them to maintain power by delivering tangible benefits to voters.