

Texas A&M University (TAMU) POLS206 American National Government Exam 3 Practice (Sample)

Study Guide



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Questions

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1. What is the relationship between presidential strength and congressional power when a president is perceived as weak?
 - A. Congress gains more power
 - B. Congress loses power
 - C. The judiciary gains power
 - D. The media gains control
2. What is a filibuster?
 - A. A method to expedite legislation in the Senate
 - B. A tactic used in the Senate to delay or prevent a vote on legislation
 - C. A procedure allowing House members to debate issues
 - D. A strategy to propose constitutional amendments
3. What is the concept of "separation of church and state"?
 - A. The government should support religious institutions financially
 - B. Government should remain neutral regarding religion and not favor or disadvantage any religion
 - C. Religious leaders should be involved in the legislative process
 - D. Churches should have the right to influence government policy
4. What does Chief Justice Marshall assert is the role of the judicial department?
 - A. To enact laws
 - B. To interpret the law
 - C. To create new policies
 - D. To enforce the law
5. What is the main idea behind the establishment clause?
 - A. It protects the right to free speech
 - B. It prohibits the government from establishing an official religion
 - C. It ensures freedom of assembly
 - D. It mandates public education

6. What type of committee is primarily responsible for examining different bills and is mostly permanent?
- A. Joint committees
 - B. Standing committees
 - C. Select committees
 - D. Ad hoc committees
7. What does it mean that the Supreme Court must only decide cases that are justiciable?
- A. The Court can answer political and personal disputes
 - B. The Court can legal principles to make decisions and avoid political questions
 - C. The Court is only able to consider cases related to public opinion
 - D. The Court must decide all cases, irrespective of their nature
8. How many total years can a U.S. President serve, if re-elected?
- A. 4 years
 - B. 8 years
 - C. 10 years
 - D. 12 years
9. What is the function of the Majority Whip in Congress?
- A. To draft bills
 - B. To manage party discipline and vote counts
 - C. To lead the opposition
 - D. To preside over sessions
10. What is the role of leadership caucuses in Congress?
- A. To vote on legislation
 - B. To choose party leaders
 - C. To conduct public polls
 - D. To represent constituents

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. What is the relationship between presidential strength and congressional power when a president is perceived as weak?

A. Congress gains more power

B. Congress loses power

C. The judiciary gains power

D. The media gains control

When a president is perceived as weak, Congress tends to gain more power. This phenomenon occurs because a weak president might struggle to assert leadership or effectively influence legislative outcomes. Such a scenario creates an opportunity for Congress to assert its authority and take charge of the legislative agenda. Lawmakers may feel emboldened to challenge the president's proposals or push their own initiatives, as they sense less executive pushback. In this context, Congress can leverage its constitutional powers more effectively, including its authority to legislate, conduct oversight, and control budgetary processes. Additionally, when a president appears unable to rally support or deliver on key policy initiatives, Congress can step in to fill the vacuum, thereby expanding its influence and role in governance. The other options do not fully capture the dynamic at play in this scenario. The judiciary typically remains independent, and while it may occasionally gain significance as legal disputes arise during periods of executive weakness, it doesn't directly gain power in the same way Congress does. Similarly, media influence may not directly correlate with presidential strength or weakness; rather, it often functions in its role of informing public opinion and scrutinizing both Congress and the president.

2. What is a filibuster?

A. A method to expedite legislation in the Senate

B. A tactic used in the Senate to delay or prevent a vote on legislation

C. A procedure allowing House members to debate issues

D. A strategy to propose constitutional amendments

A filibuster is a tactic used in the Senate to delay or prevent a vote on legislation. This procedure allows a senator, or a group of senators, to speak for an extended period of time, or to engage in other forms of obstruction, in order to hinder the legislative process. The intention behind a filibuster is often to draw attention to an issue, negotiate for amendments, or ultimately block the passage of a bill. The ability to filibuster is rooted in the Senate's tradition of extended debate, which differs from the House of Representatives, where time for debate is usually limited. It is an important feature of Senate procedure that emphasizes the body's role as a deliberative chamber, giving individual senators significant power to influence or stall legislation. The potential for a filibuster can lead to negotiations and compromises, as proponents of a bill may seek to gather enough support to overcome the filibuster by invoking cloture, which limits further debate and leads to a vote. In contrast to the correct answer, the other choices describe different legislative procedures or roles that do not accurately represent what a filibuster is. For instance, expediting legislation or allowing debate in the House are not characteristics of a filibuster; rather, they describe

3. What is the concept of "separation of church and state"?

- A. The government should support religious institutions financially
- B. Government should remain neutral regarding religion and not favor or disadvantage any religion
- C. Religious leaders should be involved in the legislative process
- D. Churches should have the right to influence government policy

The concept of "separation of church and state" primarily emphasizes the importance of government neutrality in matters of religion. The principle holds that the government should neither endorse nor inhibit religious practices or beliefs. This idea is rooted in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits Congress from establishing a religion (establishment clause) and protects the free exercise of religion. By advocating for the government to remain neutral regarding religion, the separation of church and state fosters a pluralistic society where individuals are free to practice their beliefs without fear of government interference or favoritism. This neutrality ensures that legislative and judicial processes are based on secular principles rather than specific religious doctrines, thereby protecting the rights of individuals from diverse religious backgrounds and promoting social harmony.

4. What does Chief Justice Marshall assert is the role of the judicial department?

- A. To enact laws
- B. To interpret the law
- C. To create new policies
- D. To enforce the law

Chief Justice John Marshall emphasized the role of the judicial department as one of interpretation rather than enactment or enforcement of the law. This principle is particularly evident in the landmark case of *Marbury v. Madison*, where he clarified the judiciary's responsibility to determine the meaning and implications of laws passed by the legislature. By interpreting laws, the judiciary ensures that they align with the Constitution and uphold legal principles. This role is crucial in maintaining checks and balances within the government, as it empowers the courts to review legislation and executive actions, providing a safeguard against potential overreach by the other branches. The ability to interpret laws also establishes the judiciary's authority in interpreting constitutional provisions, thereby reinforcing the rule of law in the United States.

5. What is the main idea behind the establishment clause?

- A. It protects the right to free speech
- B. It prohibits the government from establishing an official religion
- C. It ensures freedom of assembly
- D. It mandates public education

The establishment clause is primarily focused on prohibiting the government from establishing an official religion or favoring one religion over another. This principle is rooted in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This clause serves to create a wall of separation between church and state, ensuring that government does not interfere with religious beliefs or practices, and protecting the diversity of religious expressions in the public sphere. While the other answer choices touch on important rights and protections, they do not accurately capture the specific purpose of the establishment clause. The right to free speech is safeguarded under a different part of the First Amendment; the freedom of assembly pertains to the right to gather peacefully; and public education is not directly addressed within the context of the establishment clause. Thus, the correct answer highlights the essential function of maintaining religious neutrality in government affairs and safeguarding individual beliefs.

6. What type of committee is primarily responsible for examining different bills and is mostly permanent?

- A. Joint committees
- B. Standing committees
- C. Select committees
- D. Ad hoc committees

Standing committees are indeed the type of committee that is primarily responsible for examining different bills and is mostly permanent. These committees are established by the rules of either the House of Representatives or the Senate and continue to exist from session to session. They have the authority to review legislation related to specific areas, such as finance, judiciary, or foreign affairs. This permanence allows them to develop expertise over time in their designated subject matter, making them crucial in the legislative process as they can conduct detailed reviews, hold hearings, and recommend legislation based on their findings. In contrast, joint committees include members from both the House and Senate but are often used for specific purposes and are not necessarily permanent. Select committees are typically formed for a particular task or investigation and disband once their objective is achieved. Ad hoc committees, similar to select committees, are temporary and created as needed for specific issues and purposes. Thus, standing committees play a vital and ongoing role in organizing the legislative agenda and shaping policy in a consistent and continuous manner.

7. What does it mean that the Supreme Court must only decide cases that are justiciable?

A. The Court can answer political and personal disputes

B. The Court can legal principles to make decisions and avoid political questions

C. The Court is only able to consider cases related to public opinion

D. The Court must decide all cases, irrespective of their nature

The concept of justiciability refers to the types of issues that are appropriate for the courts to resolve. When it is stated that the Supreme Court must decide only cases that are justiciable, it means that the Court focuses on legal principles that can be analyzed and determined through judicial processes. This limits the Court's role to adjudicating disputes that have clear legal ramifications, rather than engaging in matters that are purely political or personal in nature. By deciding only justiciable cases, the Supreme Court ensures that it applies established legal standards rather than wading into political debates or making value judgments on personal grievances. This approach upholds the judicial principle of separation of powers, maintaining that the judiciary should not involve itself in issues that the political branches are better suited to handle. Thus, when the Court applies legal principles to make decisions, it safeguards the integrity of the judicial system and follows its foundational role in upholding the rule of law. In summary, justiciability reinforces the Court's commitment to interpreting and applying law, thereby allowing it to maintain its judicial function while steering clear of politically charged or non-legal matters.

8. How many total years can a U.S. President serve, if re-elected?

A. 4 years

B. 8 years

C. 10 years

D. 12 years

A U.S. President is allowed to serve a maximum of two full terms, which totals 8 years. This limit is established by the 22nd Amendment to the Constitution, ratified in 1951, which specifically states that no person can be elected to the office of the President more than twice. However, if a person becomes President through succession (for example, if a Vice President takes over after the President's resignation, removal, or death), they can serve an additional two years in that capacity without being considered to have served a full term. This means that theoretically, a President could serve for up to 10 years if they were to step in mid-term and then be elected to two subsequent full terms. The answer highlights the combination of both elected terms and potential succession, leading to the maximum of 10 years, but the primary limit for electable terms remains at 8 years for those who are directly elected. The reason the answer focuses on 8 years is due to the more common scenario of full elected terms, while the 10-year limit is more of an exception that can occur under specific circumstances.

9. What is the function of the Majority Whip in Congress?

- A. To draft bills
- B. To manage party discipline and vote counts
- C. To lead the opposition
- D. To preside over sessions

The Majority Whip plays a crucial role in Congress primarily focused on managing party discipline and ensuring that party members vote in alignment with party positions. The whip acts as a communication link between the party leadership and the members, helping to mobilize votes and gauge support for various legislative initiatives. This involves counting votes before they are cast, which allows the leadership to assess whether they have the necessary support to pass legislation or if adjustments need to be made. In addition, the Majority Whip's responsibilities include encouraging party members to attend votes and understand the importance of party unity. This function is essential in a legislative environment where the success of bills often hinges on securing a majority vote. By maintaining discipline within the party, the Majority Whip helps facilitate the smooth passage of the party's agenda and can also influence negotiations with opposition members when necessary.

10. What is the role of leadership caucuses in Congress?

- A. To vote on legislation
- B. To choose party leaders
- C. To conduct public polls
- D. To represent constituents

The role of leadership caucuses in Congress is primarily to choose party leaders. These caucuses are gatherings of party members within Congress, where they discuss strategies, policies, and leadership positions. By selecting their leaders, caucuses play a crucial role in organizing the party's efforts in legislative processes, shaping party ideology, and coordinating actions among members. Caucuses enable party members to have a voice in leadership decisions, ensuring that the leaders chosen reflect the priorities and preferences of the party members within the legislative body. This internal leadership selection is vital for maintaining party unity and effectively executing the party's agenda in Congress. In contrast, the other options, such as voting on legislation or conducting public polls, do not accurately represent the primary function of leadership caucuses, as they focus more on the decision-making process of party organization rather than legislative voting or public opinion gathering.