

Texas A&M University (TAMU) POLS207 State and Local Government Exam 2 Practice Exam (Sample)

Study Guide



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Questions

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1. What does "Party Group Linkage" refer to in the context of voter turnout?
 - A. Strong ties between voter demographics and party platforms
 - B. Correspondence between political parties and segments of society
 - C. The role of social media in political campaigning
 - D. Administering voter outreach programs
2. Is there a relationship between voter turnout and taxing?
 - A. Yes, higher turnout leads to higher taxes
 - B. No, there is no relationship
 - C. Yes, lower turnout results in increased taxes
 - D. No, it varies by state
3. What factor contributes to political parties becoming weaker today?
 - A. Rise of independent voters
 - B. Greater public trust in government
 - C. States requiring primary elections
 - D. Increased media coverage of politics
4. What was the significance of the Supreme Court case *Evenwel v. Abbott* (2016)?
 - A. It denied the use of population counts in district drawings
 - B. It emphasized voting-eligible population for redistricting
 - C. It upheld the principle of "one person, one vote" using total population
 - D. It mandated proportional representation in voting
5. What type of primary elections are practiced in Texas?
 - A. Open primaries
 - B. Closed primaries
 - C. Hybrid primaries
 - D. Nonpartisan primaries

6. What is gerrymandering?
- A. Drawing district lines to ensure fair representation
 - B. Creating districts for the purpose of partisan advantage
 - C. Redrawing borders for population equality
 - D. Assigning electoral votes to match census data
7. What is the primary goal of a state budget?
- A. To restrict spending of state funds
 - B. To allocate financial resources among various state needs and programs
 - C. To increase taxation on residents
 - D. To establish penalties for financial mismanagement
8. In how many states is voter registration available on election day?
- A. 10 states
 - B. 13 states
 - C. 20 states
 - D. 25 states
9. What is the typical voter turnout percentage in presidential election years?
- A. Approximately 30%
 - B. Can approach or exceed 50%
 - C. About 70%
 - D. Just under 40%
10. What factor is negatively related to voter turnout?
- A. Low educational attainment
 - B. Competitive elections
 - C. High-profile candidates
 - D. Increased minority participation

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. What does "Party Group Linkage" refer to in the context of voter turnout?

- A. Strong ties between voter demographics and party platforms
- B. Correspondence between political parties and segments of society
- C. The role of social media in political campaigning
- D. Administering voter outreach programs

"Party Group Linkage" refers to the connection between political parties and various segments of society, emphasizing how different groups align with specific parties based on shared interests, values, or demographics. This concept is crucial in understanding voter turnout because it illustrates how these affiliations influence individuals' propensity to engage in the electoral process. When segments of society feel a strong alignment with a political party, such as through shared ideologies, interests, or cultural backgrounds, they are more likely to participate in elections. This reflects the importance of the social and demographic composition of the electorate and how it corresponds to party platforms. These linkages can manifest through various forms of support, including voting behavior, campaign involvement, and advocacy, which ultimately impact voter turnout rates. While strong ties between voter demographics and party platforms do relate to "Party Group Linkage," the emphasis on the broader relationship of political parties with specific societal segments captures the concept more accurately. Other options like the role of social media and administering outreach programs pertain more to the methods of campaigning and voter engagement rather than the foundational relationship between political parties and voter demographics.

2. Is there a relationship between voter turnout and taxing?

- A. Yes, higher turnout leads to higher taxes
- B. No, there is no relationship
- C. Yes, lower turnout results in increased taxes
- D. No, it varies by state

The assertion that there is no relationship between voter turnout and taxing is supported by research and observations in political behavior. Various studies indicate that while voter turnout can influence policy decisions, the correlation specifically between turnout levels and tax rates is not consistently evident across different contexts. Voter turnout can fluctuate due to numerous factors including socioeconomic status, engagement with political issues, and demographic trends, which do not uniformly affect taxation policies. In many cases, taxes can be influenced more by the prevailing political ideology, fiscal needs of the government, and economic conditions than by the overall number of citizens participating in elections. Higher or lower turnout levels do not inherently dictate how taxes are structured or implemented; instead, they tend to reflect broader political dynamics and preferences within a given region. Thus, positing that there is no relationship holds validity within this context, as multiple variables affect tax-related decisions independent of voter participation rates.

3. What factor contributes to political parties becoming weaker today?

- A. Rise of independent voters
- B. Greater public trust in government
- C. States requiring primary elections
- D. Increased media coverage of politics

The factor contributing to the weakening of political parties today is the rise of independent voters. This shift indicates that a significant portion of the electorate prefers not to affiliate with traditional political parties, leading to a decrease in party membership and loyalty. Independent voters often prioritize individual issues or candidate traits over party identification, which can dilute the influence and power of established parties in elections. The increase in independent voters reflects broader societal changes, such as disillusionment with party politics and a desire for more diverse political representation. As these voters play a more prominent role in elections, political parties must adapt their strategies to engage with a more fragmented voter base, often making the traditional party system less dominant in political discourse and electoral outcomes. Factors like public trust in government and increased media coverage can impact political dynamics but do not directly contribute to the diminished power of political parties in the same clear manner as the rise of independent voters. Additionally, changes related to primary elections may influence party behavior, but the core issue of declining party strength primarily arises from the increasing number of voters who choose not to align with any particular party.

4. What was the significance of the Supreme Court case *Evenwel v. Abbott* (2016)?

- A. It denied the use of population counts in district drawings
- B. It emphasized voting-eligible population for redistricting
- C. It upheld the principle of "one person, one vote" using total population
- D. It mandated proportional representation in voting

The significance of the Supreme Court case *Evenwel v. Abbott* (2016) lies in its affirmation of the principle of "one person, one vote," which is foundational to electoral representation. The Court upheld the use of total population counts for redistricting purposes, meaning that when states draw their legislative districts, they must account for the total population, not just the voting-eligible population. This decision underscores the idea that representation should reflect the number of individuals residing in a district, fostering equality among communities regardless of their voting eligibility status. It recognizes the importance of including everyone in the population, such as children and non-citizens, in the redistricting process to ensure fair representation. Thus, this ruling reinforced the traditional method of districting based on total population, impacting how states draw their electoral maps and maintain balanced representation.

5. What type of primary elections are practiced in Texas?

- A. Open primaries
- B. Closed primaries
- C. Hybrid primaries
- D. Nonpartisan primaries

In Texas, the type of primary elections practiced is classified as a hybrid system, often referred to as "semi-open" or "modified closed" primaries. This means that while primarily affiliated voters are expected to participate in their party's primary, the rules allow for some flexibility. For example, unaffiliated voters can choose to participate in either party's primary without declaring a party affiliation beforehand. This hybrid system enables Texas to maintain a degree of party loyalty while still providing opportunities for independent voters to engage in the electoral process. Thus, registered voters in Texas must be aware of their party affiliation but also have the option to crossover if they choose to vote in a different party's primary, making it a unique aspect of Texas's electoral landscape. In contrast, open primaries allow any registered voter to participate in any party's primary regardless of their party affiliation, while closed primaries only permit registered party members to vote in their own party's primary. Nonpartisan primaries typically do not align with party affiliation at all, which is not the case in Texas.

6. What is gerrymandering?

- A. Drawing district lines to ensure fair representation
- B. Creating districts for the purpose of partisan advantage
- C. Redrawing borders for population equality
- D. Assigning electoral votes to match census data

Gerrymandering refers specifically to the practice of drawing electoral district boundaries in a way that gives one political party an advantage over others. This manipulation of district lines enables the party in power to maximize its electoral gains by concentrating or diluting certain voting populations, often based on partisan makeup. For instance, by clustering together voters who support a particular party in specific districts (known as "packing"), or spreading them out across many districts (known as "cracking"), gerrymandering can skew electoral outcomes in favor of the party that controls the redistricting process. This strategic shaping of district boundaries is typically carried out during the redistricting process, which occurs every ten years following the census, but the intention is not to achieve fair representation or maintain population equality; rather, it is to enhance the partisan strength of the controlling party. Understanding this concept is crucial for recognizing the implications of redistricting on democratic representation and electoral competition.

7. What is the primary goal of a state budget?

- A. To restrict spending of state funds
- B. To allocate financial resources among various state needs and programs
- C. To increase taxation on residents
- D. To establish penalties for financial mismanagement

The primary goal of a state budget is to allocate financial resources among various state needs and programs. This involves carefully planned decisions regarding how to distribute limited funds to different areas such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, public safety, and social services. A well-structured budget reflects the priorities and goals of the state, ensuring that resources are directed toward initiatives that promote the welfare of its residents. The process of budgeting involves not only evaluating the current financial situation but also forecasting future needs and revenues, allowing the state to effectively manage its finances while addressing the diverse demands of its constituents. The budget serves as a blueprint for government action, guiding decisions on spending and investment that ultimately contribute to the state's overall development and stability.

8. In how many states is voter registration available on election day?

- A. 10 states
- B. 13 states
- C. 20 states
- D. 25 states

The correct answer is that voter registration is available on election day in 13 states. This option reflects the growing trend among states to make the voting process more accessible by allowing individuals to register to vote on the same day that elections are held. This practice is intended to increase voter participation by eliminating barriers associated with pre-election registration deadlines, which can often discourage potential voters from participating in elections. States that offer same-day registration typically have procedures in place to ensure that individuals can provide proof of identity and residence at the polling stations. Understanding the number of states that allow same-day registration can help in analyzing trends in voter turnout and electoral participation, providing insights into how various states implement voting policies that foster inclusivity.

9. What is the typical voter turnout percentage in presidential election years?

- A. Approximately 30%
- B. Can approach or exceed 50%
- C. About 70%
- D. Just under 40%

In presidential election years, voter turnout typically approaches or exceeds 50%. This figure reflects a higher level of engagement in the electoral process, as presidential elections tend to attract more attention and mobilize larger segments of the population compared to non-presidential election years. Factors contributing to this increased turnout include the significance of presidential elections in shaping national policy and governance, as well as extensive media coverage and campaign mobilization efforts. In contrast, turnout rates tend to be lower for midterm elections or local elections, where voters may feel less compelled to participate due to the perceived impact of those elections on their daily lives. Thus, turnout reaching or exceeding the 50% mark in presidential election years illustrates how these elections galvanize voter interest and action.

10. What factor is negatively related to voter turnout?

- A. Low educational attainment
- B. Competitive elections
- C. High-profile candidates
- D. Increased minority participation

The factor that is negatively related to voter turnout is low educational attainment. Research consistently shows that individuals with lower levels of education are less likely to participate in elections. This can be attributed to several reasons: those with lower educational backgrounds may have less access to information about the electoral process, less understanding of the issues at stake, and lower levels of civic engagement overall. Education often fosters a sense of civic duty and awareness regarding voting rights and governmental functions, leading to higher participation rates among those who are more educated. In contrast, competitive elections typically encourage higher voter turnout, as individuals are often more motivated to vote when the outcomes are uncertain and numerous candidates are vying for office. High-profile candidates can attract attention, interest, and media coverage, potentially motivating more voters to participate. Additionally, increased minority participation is generally associated with efforts to enhance voter engagement and mobilization, leading to greater turnout in those communities. Thus, the correlation between low educational attainment and reduced voter turnout stands out as the most significant negative factor in influencing electoral participation.