**US Government**

**Essay Questions**

1. Concerning Democracy as a form of government:
   1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of Democracy over other systems of government?
   2. Compare the principles that our democracy is founded upon to those of other systems of government.
   3. How does the role of the citizen within our democracy compare to that of citizens under other systems of government?
2. The United States’ political system is heavily influenced by both political parties and interest groups.
   1. Identify the fundamental goals of political parties and interest groups as a whole.
   2. Describe at least two modes of influence interest groups use to support political parties.
   3. Explain how helping political parties reach their goals benefits interest groups.
3. With the Great Compromise, the framers of the Constitution created a bicameral legislative system.
   1. Discuss at least two reasons why the framers created a bicameral legislature.
   2. Identify at least two powers that were given independently to the House of Representatives and the Senate which makes the two houses distinctly different in authority.
4. A number of conflicting forces work in opposition to one another in the electoral process for the office of President.
   1. In what ways does our two-party system influence the nomination of candidates, the issues raised in the public debate, and ultimately the person we choose to lead our government?
   2. Explain the influence of private interest groups and Political Action Committees (PACs) on the electoral process.
   3. Describe the role of the Federal Elections Commission. How much authority and oversight does the FEC really have? In what ways are its oversight powers and authority limited?
5. Despite being a relatively short, vague document, our Constitution has successfully seen our nation through more than 200 years of social, political, and economic evolution with relatively few changes made.
   1. Identify three of the key basic principles preserved in our Constitution and describe how each of those principles are guaranteed and protected by the Constitution. (Identify the specific article, clause, or amendment, then explain its significance and meaning.)
   2. Why is the relative vague nature of the Constitution an advantage for the document? How would a more specific Constitution create challenges and or problems?
   3. Describe the process for changing the Constitution. Why is the process so difficult? What do many of the changes that have been made to the Constitution have in common?
6. Voting and the right to vote are at the core of political power in our democracy.
   1. What are the qualifications for voting? How and for what reasons have changes to voter qualifications been made in the past?
   2. Historically, barring groups from voting has constituted a violation of civil rights. Identify which groups have been refused the right to vote in the past, the methods used to refuse them access to voting, and the subsequent law/amendment that restored their suffrage rights.
   3. Explain the purpose of laws requiring voter registration. How do registration laws vary from state to state?
7. The terms *Liberal*, *Conservative,* and *Moderate* are frequently used in conversations as a means of classifying political views.
   1. Generally, how do liberals and conservatives views compare on **social** issues? Discuss a specific social issue and describe the general argument from both the conservative and liberal perspective.
   2. Generally, how do conservatives and liberals view the role of government? Explain the philosophy of each.
   3. Discuss the limitations of the usefulness of these labels.
8. Thomas Jefferson is quoted as saying, “Democracy demands an educated and informed electorate”.
   1. In what ways, *specifically*, does the Constitution aim to secure a more educated and informed electorate?
   2. How has the influence of the media on public opinion changed since Jefferson’s time? Are people more or less informed today? Discuss your views using specific examples to back your claims.
9. The powers of the office of the President have been redefined and expanded on a number of occasions in American history; sometimes substantially, always controversially.
   1. Which presidents have expanded the powers of the office? In what ways, specifically? For what purpose/s? What resistance did they face?
   2. How has the power of executive privilege been used by Presidents to achieve their goal/s while in office? Describe two examples of the use of this power that led to controversy.
   3. Discuss two instances where past Presidents engaged in military action without Congressional approval. Were those actions legal? Were they popular?
10. The framers of the Constitution designed it so that each of the three branches of government had oversight power over the other two.
    1. Explain two specific ways that the Executive branch “checks” (or limits) the power of the Legislative and the Judicial branch (each).
    2. Explain two specific ways that the Legislative branch “checks” the power of the Executive and Judicial branch (each).
    3. Explain two specific ways the Judicial branch “checks” the power of the Legislative and Executive branch (each).