

Midterm Review Questions
Practice Short Answer Questions Written by Students

This document includes practice short answer questions for the POLI 10 midterm exam written by students in discussion section. These questions were written by students and are not necessarily endorsed by the course instructor or TAs. But, they should still serve as good practice questions to give you practice writing short answer questions and thinking about how different course concepts connect to each other.

1. Give two examples of how the budgets are different in state and national governments. How do these examples connect to the idea of federalism?
2. In Federalist 51, Madison argued for checks and balances in government. Give an example of checks and balances in the American political system and explain one potential advantage and disadvantage of this example.
3. How does public opinion affect polarization?
4. How does the median voter theorem reflect the aggregate public opinion?
5. Would you run in a local election or a national election (e.g. mayor or president) and why? List the pros and cons of each choice to support your decision, accompanied by information from the readings.
6. Explain how the constitutional set up of a bicameral legislature has led to a heavy dose of polarization in modern politics.
7. Examine and explain both party cohesion and polarization in reference to voting outcomes and latent opinions.
8. How does party cohesion relate to polarization? Is it a direct or inverse relationship? Why?
9. Define polarization and give one positive impact and one negative impact of polarization on the government.
10. George Washington in his parting speech and even the Federalist Papers warned against political parties. What is one way political parties are impacting our government today in either a good or bad way?
11. In what ways would a president's decision on the federal budget differ based on public or latent opinion?
12. What is one purpose of elections as well as what is one downside (negative consequence) of elections?

13. How does the system of checks and balances contribute to the effects of polarization?
14. The responsibilities reserved by the states are mostly implemented at the local level. Name a pro and a con to splitting the responsibilities of government between the national, state, and local level, and why each is either positive or negative.
15. Has the party system today been effective at solving problems?
16. Under what circumstances may a president disregard public opinion in favor of latent opinion?
17. One important aspect of the Constitution is the notion of federalism. To what extent does the 10th Amendment grant states powers and is it sufficient?
18. What are the goals of parties and how might they interfere or come in conflict with each other?
19. According to the median voter theorem, candidates should be moving toward the median voter. Does this always mean it will be a more moderate policy?
20. According to the median voter theorem, candidates should be moving toward the median voter. But, sometimes this is not the case. Give two reasons why candidates sometimes don't propose the policy preferred by the median voter.
21. Would the founding fathers look up to or criticize the gridlock that persisted throughout the Obama administration?
22. Explain the prisoner's dilemma and give an example of it in American politics.
23. In "The Policy Effects of Political Polarization," McCarty discusses several explanations for the rise of polarization. Describe two of these potential causes.
24. To what extent does the polarization of the elites affect the realization of the median voter theorem in the real world.
25. Explain how polarization evolved from the 1970s to present day from the aspect of social issues and economics.
26. What are two consequences of polarization? How do you think they are affecting the policymaking process today?
27. How do voters use heuristics to decide how to vote, and how do they affect election outcomes?

28. What are some aspects that may complicate the median voter theorem, and how do they influence the election?
29. Explain how heavily polarized government could possibly give states more power in creating policy.
30. In regards to latent opinion, why have various presidents seemed to neglect direct public opinions as measured by the polls, yet managed to achieve positive approval ratings?
31. What are two factors that have contributed to the rise of polarization? What are two consequences of this?
32. How is government influenced by public opinion and explain the significance of latent opinion.
33. How does public opinion play a part in the increase of polarization (or why doesn't it)? What are some factors that affect these public opinions?
34. Explain three ways that an incumbent candidate might lose or benefit during an election campaign.
35. Explain how the views of the general electorate have shifted in the past 100 years. Pick two policy areas and explain the trends in public opinion over time.
36. How did the political parties form and change over American political history? Describe two eras of the party system and what distinguished them.
37. How is latent opinion relevant in relation to elections? Give two examples and make sure to define latent opinion.
38. Give one reason why the median voter theorem is a helpful model and one reason why it is not a good model.