
AP[®] Comparative Government and Politics

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 1

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Free-Response Question 4

- ☒ Scoring Guidelines
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Question 4: Argument Essay**5 points**

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row A Claim/Thesis (0–1 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Responds to the prompt with a defensible claim or thesis that establishes a line of reasoning.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only restate the prompt. Do not make a claim that responds to the prompt. 	Responses that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to the prompt rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt and establish a line of reasoning. Provide a defensible claim or thesis that establishes a line of reasoning as to whether having direct elections strengthens the authority and stability of nondemocratic regimes using one or more of the provided course concepts: competition, legitimacy, political participation.
	Examples that do not earn this point: Restate the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Direct elections strengthen the authority and stability of authoritarian regimes.”</i> <i>“Direct elections weaken the stability of nondemocratic regimes.”</i> Do not respond to the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Nondemocratic regimes sometimes have direct elections when they are not quite authoritarian.”</i> <i>“Competition is not required in direct elections in authoritarian regimes.”</i> 	Examples that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Direct elections in nondemocratic regimes can help build legitimacy by creating the appearance of competition and mass participation, which leads to more authority and stability.”</i> <i>“Direct elections in authoritarian regimes can undermine their authority and stability when there is evidence of widespread electoral fraud, which also undermines legitimacy.”</i>
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The claim or thesis must consist of one or more sentences that may be located anywhere in the response. A claim or thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning. 		

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria		
Row B Evidence (0–2 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Provides <u>one</u> piece of specific and relevant evidence from a course country relevant to one of the course concepts in the prompt.	2 points Provides <u>two</u> pieces of specific and relevant evidence from one or more course countries relevant to one or more of the course concepts in the prompt.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
	Responses that do not earn points: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Do not provide any accurate evidence.Provide evidence that is not relevant to the course concepts in the prompt.	Responses that earn 1 or 2 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide specific and relevant evidence from required course countries, relevant to the course concepts in the prompt.	
	Examples that do not earn points: Provide evidence that is not specific <ul style="list-style-type: none">“Elections are somewhat competitive in Russia.” Provide evidence that is not relevant to course concepts in the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none">“China does not have direct elections.”	Examples of acceptable specific and relevant evidence (one example is one piece of evidence): <ul style="list-style-type: none">“Competition is limited in Russia since opposition leaders like Navalny were banned from running in the 2018 presidential elections.”“The 2011 Duma elections in Russia were perceived as fraudulent and resulted in protests that shook the Russian government’s authority.”“Iran’s elections to the Majlis and presidency are competitive after the vetting process by the Guardian Council.”“Green Movement protests following the 2009 presidential elections in Iran challenged the regime’s authority.”“By allowing local elections at the village level, the CCP gives an outlet for citizen participation other than widespread protests.”“China does not have direct elections for any of its national positions and yet it has legitimacy through economic performance and CCP ideology.”“Until the 1990s, when the regime was non-democratic, Mexico had direct elections for national and state-level offices.”	
	Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">A response does not need to earn the point in Row A to earn points in Row B.A response does not need to explain the relationship between the evidence and the claim or thesis to earn points in Row B. (That explanation is evaluated in Row C.)		

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row C Reasoning (0–1 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Explains how or why the evidence supports the claim or thesis.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include evidence but offer no reasoning to connect the evidence to the claim or thesis. • Restate the prompt without explaining how the evidence supports the claim or thesis. 	Responses that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the relationship between the evidence provided and the claim or thesis.
	Examples that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Elections in which the regime-supported candidate or party wins are good for Russia.”</i> • <i>“Having direct elections in China strengthens the authority and stability of the regime.”</i> 	Examples of reasoning that explain how evidence supports the claim or thesis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Elections in which the regime-supported candidate or party wins make an authoritarian regime look legitimate and thus more stable.”</i> • <i>“Competitive elections, even if the choice is limited, make citizens feel as if their voices are heard, and increase authority and stability.”</i> • <i>“Protests after elections, especially when there is a perception of electoral fraud by the regime, undermine popular acceptance of the regime, and so decrease authority and stability.”</i> • <i>“Elections give citizens an outlet, so they don’t turn to other means of participation, such as protest, which could undermine stability and authority.”</i>
	Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To earn this point, the response must have a defensible claim or thesis (earned the point in Row A). • The explanation of the relationship between one piece of evidence and the claim or thesis is sufficient to earn this point. 	

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row D Responds to Alternate Perspectives (0–1 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Responds to an opposing or alternate perspective using refutation, concession, or rebuttal.
	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restate the opposite of the claim or thesis. May identify or describe an alternate perspective but do not refute, concede, or rebut that perspective. 	Responses that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must describe an alternate perspective AND refute, concede, or rebut that perspective.
	Examples of responses that do not earn this point: Restate the opposite of the claim or thesis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Many scholars disagree, arguing that direct elections undermine the stability of authoritarian regimes.”</i> Describe an alternate perspective but do not refute, concede, or rebut that perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Only some authoritarian regimes have direct elections.”</i> 	Examples of acceptable responses to an alternate perspective may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Some may argue that having direct elections promotes legitimacy by allowing the people’s voices to be heard, and that this strengthens the authority and stability of nondemocratic regimes. However, this is not the case since these elections usually involve corruption, so instead of increasing legitimacy, the elections lead to protests which actually undermine the stability of the regime.”</i> <i>“An alternative viewpoint may be that having direct elections undercuts a nondemocratic regime’s stability and authority because they allow for competition, which may result in the formation of opposition movements which destabilize a regime. It is true that opposition movements may form, but nondemocratic regimes have many repressive policies that they can use to suppress the movements and still allow for the façade of elections which give the regime legitimacy and so enhance its authority.”</i>
Additional Notes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To earn this point, the response must have a defensible claim or thesis (earned the point in Row A). Responses that demonstrate an incorrect understanding of the alternate perspective do not earn this point. 		

● **Important:** Completely fill in the circle that corresponds to the question you are answering on this page.

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Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

Direct elections do not strengthen the authority and stability of nondemocratic regimes, they weaken it. The competition associated with direct elections ~~leads~~ leads people to stray away from the ruling government in favor of opposing ideologies, and these elections may expose the weaknesses of the government, leading to resistance from the public.

Iran holds direct elections for the position of president. In 2009, the incumbent president Ahmadinejad ran for reelection, but relied on election fraud due to the threat of being defeated by his moderate opposition. This fraud led to the massive Green Movement, in which young Iranians protested the injustices of the conservative theocratic ~~government~~ government and demanded greater progressive democratic change. These protests were harshly suppressed, ~~but~~ but they proved how the competition of direct elections can lead to instability that threatens the dominance of nondemocratic regimes. In hopes of increasing legitimacy by allowing for political participation, the Iranian regime ~~instead~~ instead caused instability ~~by~~ by triggering resistant progressive protests.

A similar situation occurred in Russia in 2012. Vladimir Putin won the presidential direct election, placing himself back in power after serving as prime minister to avoid presidential term limits. However, Russians became angry with the fraudulent and

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unfair elections that only served to boost Putin's legitimacy and keep him in power. This led to widespread winter protests that demanded a return to democracy and fair elections. Through forceful suppression and media restriction, the protests were ended, but similar to the Green Movement in Iran, they exposed the government's instability and ~~that~~ ~~the~~ proved that direct elections can trigger public resistance in nondemocratic regimes.

An opposing argument would be that the use of direct elections in nondemocratic regimes can increase legitimacy and stability by making the government seem chosen by the people and by reducing the risk of resistance from groups who feel a lack of efficacy. I concede this argument. For example, the PRI party in Mexico kept political ~~the~~ dominance for most of the 20th century by holding direct yet manipulated elections. These elections kept Mexicans satisfied by giving them political participation to reduce ~~the~~ resistance against the PRI's power. However, when it became clear that the PRI was using election fraud in the late 20th century, their legitimacy quickly declined, leading to their fall from dominance in 2000.

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Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

Having direct elections strengthens the authority and stability of nondemocratic regimes, as it gives them the ability to facilitate greater political participation, and boosts legitimacy through the facade of competition.

When a nondemocratic regime has a system for direct elections in place, it gives its people greater political participation, contributing to the regime's stability as this greater participation results in increased government satisfaction. An example is in modern day Russia, where illiberal manipulations of elections by the United Russia Party and Putin have effectively resulted in a nondemocratic regime. Despite this, the ability to participate politically

example is in Iran, which is nondemocratic due to the Guardian Council's ability to select presidential candidates as it sees fit. Despite this, Iran remains politically stable with its current system of government, as opposed to past decades of military or dictatorial leadership, due to the citizens' ability to have some amount of political participation through direct elections, even if this is limited by other governmental features.

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Having direct elections also gives nondemocratic regimes a way of boosting their political legitimacy by being able to claim that there exists competition against the current government. Russia is a perfect example. There, election manipulation through media control and bribery of opposition is able to ensure continuous victory for Putin and the United Russia Party. Then having direct elections gives Putin the ability to say he does have competition against him, increasing the legitimacy, and thus the authority and stability, of his government.

However, direct elections do have the chance of decreasing stability when not properly managed. If citizens are generally unhappy with an election result and find that election was in some way manipulated, it destroys any benefit having the election once had. An example is in early 1900s Mexico, where Díaz running for reelection sparked revolution due to perceived corruption.

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Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

Having direct elections does strengthen the authority and stability of nondemocratic regimes. This is because the perceived competition in elections increases legitimacy, which is whether the citizens of a country view their government as having the right to rule. An example of this is in Russia, where there are elections for the executive office, and Putin wins dominantly. This strengthens Putin's legitimacy, as it shows that he has popular support from the people, and has the right to rule. Another reason that direct elections strengthen authority and stability of nondemocratic regimes is that ~~political participation~~ formal political participation strengthens the authority of a government. Formal Political Participation is any state-encouraged political participation, such as voting. An example of this being effective is in China, where the voting on both regional and national ~~elections~~ elections strengthens the legitimacy and authority of the Chinese Communist Party. ~~Formal political participation~~ On the other hand, if the regime does not have popular support, it may lose legitimacy. While this ^(often) is true, the nondemocratic regimes have control over the elections, so the result of the elections likely will not hurt them. In conclusion, having direct elections in nondemocratic regimes strengthens authority and stability through increased legitimacy and political participation.

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Question 4

Argument Essay

Note: Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

Overview

The intent of this question was to assess student’s understanding of whether direct elections strengthen the authority and stability of nondemocratic regimes using one or more of the following course concepts: competition, legitimacy, or political participation. Students were expected to argue whether having direct elections strengthens the authority and stability of nondemocratic regimes. In making this argument, students were expected to use one or more of the following concepts: legitimacy, political participation, or competition. Students were expected to be able to develop a thesis, marshal evidence, provide reasoning for why that evidence supported their thesis, and respond to an alternative perspective.

Sample: 4A

Claim/Thesis Score: 1

Evidence Score: 2

Reasoning Score: 1

Alternative Perspectives Score: 1

(a) The response earned 1 point for responding to the prompt with a defensible claim or thesis that establishes a line of reasoning for stating, “Direct elections do not strengthen the authority and stability of nondemocratic regimes, they weaken it. The competition associated ... leads people to stray.”

(b) The response earned 2 points for supporting the claim with two pieces of evidence from one or more of the course countries related to the topic and course concept in the prompt. It earned 1 point for stating, “Iran holds direct elections ... In 2009, the incumbent President Ahmadinejad ran for reelection, but relied on election fraud due to the threat of being defeated by his moderate opposition. This fraud led to the massive Green Movement.” The response earned 1 point for stating, “Vladimir Putin won the presidential direct election ... However, Russians became angry with the fraudulent and unfair elections ... This led to widespread winter protests.”

(c) The response earned 1 point for using reasoning to explain how or why one piece of evidence supports the claim for stating, “These protests were harshly suppressed but they proved how the competition of direct elections can lead to instability that threatens the dominance of nondemocratic regimes. In hopes of increasing legitimacy ... the Iranian regime instead caused instability by triggering resistant progressive protests.”

(d) The response earned 1 point for responding to an opposing or alternate perspective, using refutation, concession, or rebuttal for stating, “An opposing argument would be that the use of direct elections in nondemocratic regimes can increase legitimacy and stability by making the government seem chosen by the people.” The response then concedes to this perspective,

Question 4 (continued)

providing evidence from Mexico: “the PRI party ... kept political dominance for most of the 20th century by holding direct yet manipulated elections.”

Sample: 4B

Claim/Thesis Score: 1

Evidence Score: 2

Reasoning Score: 1

Alternative Perspectives Score: 0

(a) The response earned 1 point for responding to the prompt with a defensible claim or thesis that establishes a line of reasoning for stating, “Having direct elections strengthens the authority and stability of nondemocratic regimes as it gives them the ability to facilitate greater political participation, and boosts legitimacy through the façade of competition.”

(b) The response earned 2 points for supporting the claim with two pieces of evidence from one or more of the course countries related to the topic and course concept in the prompt. It earned 1 point for stating, “Despite this, Iran remains politically stable with its current system of government ... due to the citizens ability to have some amount of participation through direct elections.” The response earned 1 point for stating, “Having direct elections also gives nondemocratic regimes a way of boosting their political legitimacy ... Russia is a perfect example. There, election manipulation through media control ... is able to ensure continuous victory for Putin.”

(c) The response earned 1 point for using reasoning to explain how or why one piece of evidence supports the claim. It states, “Then having direct elections gives Putin the ability to say he does have competition against him, increasing the legitimacy, and thus the authority and stability of his government.”

(d) The response did not earn a point for responding to an opposing or alternate perspective, using refutation, concession, or rebuttal because, while it describes an alternate perspective, it does not refute, concede, or rebut the alternate perspective.

Sample: 4C

Claim/Thesis Score: 1

Evidence Score: 1

Reasoning Score: 0

Alternative Perspectives Score: 0

(a) The response earned 1 point for responding to the prompt with a defensible claim or thesis that establishes a line of reasoning: “Having direct elections does strengthen the authority and stability of nondemocratic regimes. This is because the perceived competition in elections increases legitimacy.”

(b) The response earned 1 point for supporting the claim with two pieces of evidence from one or more of the course countries related to the topic and course concept in the prompt for stating, “An

Question 4 (continued)

example of this is in Russia where there are elections for the executive office, and Putin wins dominantly. This strengthens Putin’s legitimacy, as it shows that he has popular support from the people, and has the right to rule.” The response did not earn a second evidence point because the only direct elections in China are at the local level not “regional and national” as stated in the response.

(c) The response did not earn a point for using reasoning to explain how or why one piece of evidence supports the claim because it does not explain the relationship between the evidence provided and the claim or thesis.

(d) The response did not earn a point for responding to an opposing or alternate perspective, using refutation, concession, or rebuttal because it did not describe an alternate perspective.