

**Chief Reader Report on Student Responses:  
2022 AP<sup>®</sup> United States Government and Politics Set 1  
Free-Response Questions**

• Number of Students Scored	298,118		
• Number of Readers	1,001		
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At
	5	35,673	12.0
	4	32,514	10.9
	3	76,786	25.8
	2	76,534	25.7
	1	76,611	25.7
• Global Mean	2.58		

The following comments on the 2022 free-response questions for AP<sup>®</sup> United States Government and Politics were written by the Chief Reader, Stella Rouse, Professor, University of Maryland. They give an overview of each free-response question and of how students performed on the question, including typical student errors. General comments regarding the skills and content that students frequently have the most problems with are included. Some suggestions for improving student preparation in these areas are also provided. Teachers are encouraged to attend a College Board workshop to learn strategies for improving student performance in specific areas.

## Question 1

**Task:** Concept Application

**Topic:** Third Parties

**Max Score:** 3

**Mean Score:** 1.21

### ***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

The Concept Application question expected students to apply course concepts in response to a provided real-world scenario. The focus of the scenario was the candidacy of the 2000 Green Party presidential nominee, Ralph Nader. First, students were expected to understand the concept of the two-party system and how the dominance of the two major political parties is a structural barrier to the success of third parties. A third-party candidate is less likely to secure sufficient popular support to justify including the candidate in a presidential debate due to this two-party dominance. Following this, the students were expected to understand how the campaign process would still allow a third-party candidate to influence public policy despite the barrier described earlier in the response. Finally, the students were expected to understand the concept of participatory democracy and how including the third-party candidate in the scenario would have a positive impact on this form of government.

The question expected students to describe a structural barrier that reduces the likelihood of a third-party candidate gaining enough support to be included in debates. Students were expected to reference the scenario in order to describe the structural barrier. Students were also expected to explain how a third-party candidate could still influence public policy in the context of the scenario, despite being excluded from debates due to the previously described structural barrier. Finally, students had to explain how including the third-party candidate could have a positive impact on participatory democracy.

### ***How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?***

It was challenging for students to apply knowledge of course concepts in the context of the provided scenario. In Part A while many students identified the two-party and winner-take-all electoral systems, they did not describe how it was a structural barrier to third-party candidates in the context of the scenario. Greater depth and detail in their descriptions of course content would have led to them earning the point. Additionally, students frequently incorrectly identified both the media and fundraising as structural barriers. While it was clear many students knew third-parties were significantly disadvantaged by structural barriers, they were unable to describe that in the context of the provided scenario.

In Part B students often explained how a third-party candidate could raise awareness of issues and impact both the campaign and eventual policy development. However, they did not link this to adoption of their positions by the major parties. Common responses included utilizing interest groups and PACs for lobbying, partnering with the major parties, endorsing candidates, and taking votes from the major political parties. These responses did not receive a point. Often, responses presented information that was not nuanced and thorough enough to be successful.

In Part C students needed to connect how inclusion of the third-party candidate in the scenario would have had a positive impact on participatory democracy. Students frequently identified participatory democracy as a positive form of government, in and of itself. In conjunction with that, they often discussed providing voters with greater options, information, and opportunities in their responses. While these are positive elements of participatory democracy, the rubric was looking for something more substantive. In order to provide this,

students needed to make a link between the inclusion of the third-party candidate in the scenario and more engagement in participatory democracy. The most common response that earned the point for this was more people voting.

**What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?**

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part A: Assuming media coverage of the two major parties at the exclusion of third parties, as well as the disparity in fundraising between the major parties and third parties as structural barriers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part A: “A third-party candidate, such as Nader from the Green Party, would have difficulty winning popular support, because of the winner take all system.”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part B: Believing that taking votes from the two major parties, third parties using interest groups to influence policy, and endorsing political candidates all qualify as means of influencing public policy despite the previously identified structural barrier.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part B: “Third party candidates could still influence elections because the two main parties, Democrats and Republicans, will usually adopt popular third-party platforms or issues that they advocate for that receives a lot of support.”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part C: Giving voters options or opportunities equated to action that impacted participatory democracy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part C: “The candidate could have provided more ideas and policies that the general public agreed with,” leading to action of “more people would feel inclined to vote.”</li> </ul>

**Based on your experience at the AP<sup>®</sup> Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?**

Students frequently understand the basic elements and concepts they are asked to discuss in the questions. However, applying that knowledge in the context of the scenario can fall short. That frequently occurs due to not carrying their response through to a more comprehensive conclusion. With that in mind, teachers could encourage students to be thorough and thoughtful in their responses.

**What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?**

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this free-response question.

- The Course and Exam Description (CED) provides a framework for teaching and learning about the topics that are covered on the exam. The CED addresses the much of the content for this FRQ in Topic 5.5: Third-Party Politics, paying special attention to structural barriers to third-party success. Topic 1.2: Types of Democracy examines various forms that representative democracies can take, including participatory democracy. Understanding these topics is important in order to respond accurately to this FRQ.
- In AP Classroom, teachers will find a rich collection of resources to support learning about these topics. These resources include formative and summative assessment items for every unit of the course, including

practice FRQs for teachers to use as formative assessment pieces. The formative items are scaffolded so that early items represent what students are ready for at the beginning of the school year and later items increase in challenge as teachers progress through the course.

- AP Classroom also includes topic specific AP Daily Videos, including Topic 5.5: Daily Video 1 and Topic 1.1: Daily Video 1.1 that address topics related to this FRQ. Each of these AP Daily Videos provide content information useful in understanding this FRQ.
- The Review section under Course Resources has AP Daily Videos for review. While the content in Review Session 1 and Review Session 5 is different than in this FRQ, these videos provide detailed information on responding to the Concept Application FRQs.
- Additionally, the Professional Learning tab in AP Classroom has a skill-based module on teaching the concept application FRQ, Unit 2: Data Analysis and Concept Application.
- Finally, the online AP Teacher Community includes a library of instructional resources and a forum for teachers to share instructional ideas regarding these topics.

## Question 2

**Task:** Quantitative Analysis

**Topic:** Impact of Congressional Hearings

**Max Score:** 4

**Mean Score:** 2.53

### ***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

The Quantitative Analysis question called on students to read and interpret data related to Congressional investigative hearings of the executive branch. Students were expected to describe relationships through analysis of data related to these hearings. Also, students were asked to draw a conclusion about a trend presented in the data. Students were expected to identify changes in the data over time and explain their potential effect on presidential power. Finally, this question challenged students to analyze aspects of the data to show how partisanship and hearings reflect the constitutional concept of checks and balances found in the foundational document of *Federalist 51*.

### ***How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?***

Student performance in both analyzing data from and applying their knowledge of course content to the provided bar graph was very strong. In part A the overwhelming majority of responses correctly identified Bill Clinton as the president who faced the fewest number of investigative hearing days in a single year when the House was controlled by the opposing party.

In part B responses also overwhelmingly were able to identify the relationship between congressional hearing days and the party that controlled the House and the president. They either mentioned that more congressional hearing days occurred when the House and president were of opposing parties or that there were fewer hearing days when the House and president were of the same party.

Part C required a more nuanced analysis. Students needed to be able to draw a conclusion that the increased number of hearing days that occurred between 1970 and 1980, in comparison to 1990–2000, led to less presidential power, or that the decreased number of hearing days from 1990 to 2000, in comparison to 1970–1980, led to an increase in presidential power. The knowledge required in part C included an understanding of how the number of days that the executive is required to respond to a congressional hearing can either detract from or allow the president to carry out his powers. Correct responses in C often alluded to the distraction and scrutiny that increased congressional hearings can pose for the president. Many responses approached it as a trend over time rather than comparing two timeframes, which is not what the prompt required.

Part D required students to apply course content knowledge related to Madison’s views of checks and balances in *Federalist 51* and explain how the reduced number of congressional hearing days while the president’s party controlled the House was an insufficient check on presidential power. The knowledge required in part D centered on students’ understanding of Madison’s argument in *Federalist 51* that checks and balances were required to control the power of each branch. It also required them to understand that congressional hearings of the executive branch acted as a check on presidential power, and because fewer hearings occur when they share the same party, presidential power is checked less and therefore is inconsistent with Madison’s ideas. Responses earning the point accurately make this connection. Many responses focused on the fact that hearings still occurred while they were of the same party and used that as evidence of a check on presidential power, rather than seeing the significant decrease in hearing days

between when the president and the House were opposed and when they shared the same party. These responses did not earn the point.

**What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?**

Many students could not to draw an accurate conclusion about the relationship between hearing days and presidential power. Often, students struggled to understand overall trends in the graph and instead focused on specific data points. They also struggled to understand that the decreased number of hearing days while the House and president were of the same party is a demonstration of an insufficient check on presidential power by the House of Representatives.

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not drawing an accurate conclusion regarding the number of hearing days from 1970 to 1980 in comparison to 1990–2000.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The Congressional hearing days between 1970 and 1980 likely hindered the president’s power more than from 1990 to 2000.”</li> <li>• “The larger number of Congressional Hearing Days between 1970–1980 compared to 1990–2000 decreased presidential power.”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focusing on specific data points rather than trends in the data.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The graph suggests a pattern there tends to be less hearing days in a year when the House of Representatives and the president hold the same party identification.”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the relationship between congressional hearing days while the House and president share the same party as checks on presidential power.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Federalist 51 states that each branch will act as a check on the other branches. The bar graph, however, shows that when the House and the presidency are controlled by the same party, the legislative branch does not use its check on the executive branch as often.”</li> </ul>

**Based on your experience at the AP<sup>®</sup> Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?**

Teachers should emphasize the application of political concepts and processes from the course to data provided in graphs and charts. They should also emphasize looking at entire data sets and identifying trends within the entire data as opposed to isolated data points. Students should be able to recall relevant course concepts and apply them to the data provided. Teachers should emphasize the practical aspects of checks and balances and not just the conceptual aspects as presented in *Federalist* 51. Students should be able understand the political implications of party government and divided government as they relate to checks and balances. Some students interpreted the mere presence of congressional hearing days with a limitation on presidential power when the two shared the same party.

**What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?**

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this free-response question:

- The CED provides a framework for teaching and learning about the topics that are covered on the exam. It addresses interest groups in Topic 1.6: Principles of American Government, which provides insights on the principles of checks and balances as well as an examination of *Federalist* 51. Topic 2.5: Checks on the Presidency focuses specifically on the role of checks and balances as it relates to presidential power. Understanding these topics is important in order to respond accurately to this FRQ.
- In AP Classroom, teachers will find a rich collection of resources to support learning about these topics. These resources include formative and summative assessment items for every unit of the course, including practice FRQs for teachers to use as formative assessment pieces. The formative items are scaffolded so that early items represent what students are ready for at the beginning of the school year and later items increase in challenge as teachers progress through the course.
- AP Classroom also includes topic-specific AP Daily Videos, including Topic 1.6: Daily Video 1 and Daily Video 2, as well as Topic 2.5: Daily Video 1 for the topics related to this FRQ. Also, Topic 2.4: Daily Video 2 reviews a data analysis exercise related to this topic. Each of these AP Daily Videos provide content information and skill practice for this FRQ.
- The Review section under Course Resources has AP Daily Videos for review. The topic of Review Session 2 is somewhat related to this FRQ, but the topic of Review Session 5 is not related to the FRQ. However, these videos provide detailed information on responding to the Quantitative Analysis FRQs.
- Additionally, the Professional Learning tab in AP Classroom has skill-based modules on teaching the Quantitative Analysis FRQ: Unit 2: Data Analysis and Concept Application and Unit 4: Data Analysis.
- Finally, the online AP Teacher Community includes a library of instructional resources and a forum for teachers to share instructional ideas regarding these topics.

### Question 3

**Task:** SCOTUS Comparison

**Topic:** Civil Liberties: Political and Symbolic Speech/Expression

**Max Score:** 4

**Mean Score:** 1.40

***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

This SCOTUS Comparison FRQ asked the students to read a summary of a nonrequired case (*United States v. Eichman*) and compare it to a course required case (*Citizens United v. FEC*). Students were given several tasks, including identifying the civil liberty that was common to both cases. Additionally, students were asked to explain how the reasonings in *Citizens United v. FEC* and *United States v. Eichman* led to similar holdings. Lastly, the students were required to “explain how those unhappy with the precedent established in *Eichman* can use a constitutional process to have it overturned.”

These increasingly challenging tasks involved a thorough understanding of the reasoning in *Citizens United v. FEC* along with the skill of comparison between the required and the nonrequired case. Additionally, students were asked to integrate relevant course concepts into the Court case comparison.

***How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?***

Students were generally proficient at identifying the civil liberty—freedom of speech/expression—common to both *Citizens United* and the nonrequired case (*Eichman*). Some students identified the free exercise clause, which demonstrates a lack of understanding of the various civil liberty protections within the First Amendment. Students struggled with the higher-order task of comparing the reasoning in the cases leading to similar holdings. Many students described facts of the case related to *Citizens United* but failed to describe or explain the Court’s reasoning in the ruling. The students had difficulty in explaining how the common civil liberty of freedom speech applied to a similar holding between the required and nonrequired cases. Additionally, many students confused the term “donation” with “spending” in explaining the Court’s ruling. These examples demonstrate that students lacked understanding of the details (facts, holding, and reasoning) of the *Citizens United* case. Students struggled with explaining the constitutional amendment process that would result in the overturning of the *Eichman* case. Many students could identify the amendment process as one that would lead to the overturning of the *Eichman* case, but they could not accurately explain how the process involves multiple actors and steps. This demonstrates a lack of understanding of the process of formally amending the Constitution.



**What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?**

Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps	Responses that Demonstrate Understanding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although most students were able to correctly identify “freedom of speech/expression” as the common civil liberty in the two cases, some students incorrectly identified “First Amendment” which was in the prompt and therefore did not earn a point for part A. Additionally some students only identified “right to protest” which only applied to the nonrequired case and thus did not earn the A point.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“The civil liberty that is common to both Citizens United and the Eichman case is free speech.”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many students had difficulty with the reasoning of <i>Citizens United</i>. Common mistakes included an exclusive focus on the facts of the case or describing the case in general terms. The explanation of reasoning in the <i>Eichman</i> case was easier for students since the prompt helped guide them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“In Citizens United, the court ruled that corporations have the same speech rights as people. They can spend their resources on ads, commercials ... to support their candidate ... In the United States v Eichman it was found that his free speech rights were violated.”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students who failed to provide the reasoning in the required <i>Citizens United</i> case were unable to qualify for the second point in part B, as the task required the reasoning in both cases to be explained. Some students provided an adequate description of the reasoning in <i>Citizens United</i> and in <i>Eichman</i> but did not explain how the two cases resulted in similar holdings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Both of the supreme court cases used freedom of speech in their reasoning and allowed for speech to be expanded.”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many students had difficulty explaining the appropriate constitutional process that would overturn the precedent established in <i>Eichman</i>. Most students chose an indirect constitutional process, or they did not adequately explain the process for amending the Constitution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Those unhappy could start an amendment. If 2/3 of Congress and 3/4 of states agree then the decision would be overturned.”</li> </ul>

**Based on your experience at the AP<sup>®</sup> Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?**

Teachers can help students improve their performance in the following ways:

- Teachers should instruct the students to read the prompt language carefully and if asked to identify the civil liberty to identify just one. Additionally, teachers should emphasize the various ways that SCOTUS cases may be evaluated on the exam—facts of the case, holding, and reasoning.
- Teachers should emphasize the difference between campaign donations, spending, and limits—donations are limited, and spending is not.
- Teachers should instruct the students to be thorough in their answers—especially when the task verb is “explain.”
- Teachers should emphasize that when discussing the nonrequired case, students should avoid lengthy descriptions of the case which can be found in the prompt. Students should be instructed to spend their time discussing the relevant course concept connected to the case(s).
- Teachers should emphasize that when comparing the similarities of the required and nonrequired cases, the two cases cannot simply be described, but rather they must intersect throughout the explanation. The task verb in B is “explain” which requires a higher threshold response. Side-by-side descriptions of the required and nonrequired cases do not earn the second point in part B.

**What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?**

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this free-response question:

- The CED provides a framework for teaching and learning about the topics that are covered on the exam. It addresses *Citizens United v. FEC* in Topic.5.11: Campaign Finance. Topic 3.3: First Amendment: Freedom of Speech provides further information about issues related to constitutional protections of speech. Topic 1.5: Ratification of the U.S. Constitution examines the process outlined in the Constitution for adding amendments. Understanding these topics is important in order to respond accurately to this FRQ.
- In AP Classroom, teachers will find a rich collection of resources to support learning about these topics. These resources include formative and summative assessment items for every unit of the course, including practice FRQs for teachers to use as formative assessment pieces. The formative items are scaffolded so that early items represent what students are ready for at the beginning of the school year and later items increase in challenge as teachers progress through the course.
- AP Classroom also includes topic-specific AP Daily Videos, including Topic 5.11: Daily Video 1, which examines the debate over free speech found in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*. Topic 5.11: Daily Video 2 explains how *Citizens United* relates to other cases in a SCOTUS Comparison FRQ. Topic 3.3: Daily Video 1 analyzes the interpretations and limits of the First Amendment’s freedom of speech. Topic 1.5: Daily Video 2 explains the ratification and amendment process of the Constitution. Each of these AP Daily Videos provides content information and skill practice for this FRQ.
- The Review section under Course Resources has AP Daily Videos for review. While the content in Review Session 3 and Review Session 7 is different than in this FRQ, these videos provide detailed information on responding to the SCOTUS Comparison FRQs.
- Additionally, the Professional Learning tab in AP Classroom has a skill-based module on teaching the SCOTUS Comparison FRQ, Unit3: Supreme Court Case Analysis.
- Finally, the online AP Teacher Community includes a library of instructional resources and a forum for teachers to share instructional ideas regarding these topics.

## Question 4

**Task:** Argument Essay

**Topic:** Effective Methods of Civil Rights Policy Change

**Max Score:** 6

**Mean Score:** 2.88

### ***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

This Argument Essay question expected students to demonstrate an understanding of how outside groups influence federal policy makers to effect changes in policy in the area of civil rights, as well as an understanding of foundational documents related to the concept of competing policy making interests (*The Federalist* 78, the First Amendment to the Constitution, and “Letter from Birmingham Jail”).

Students were expected to articulate a defensible claim/thesis and establish a line of reasoning; support the thesis with evidence from a foundational document(s) and/or the course concepts; use reasoning to explain why the evidence provided supports the thesis; and respond to an alternative perspective using refutation, concession, or rebuttal. Students were expected to write in the form of an argumentative essay, demonstrating each of the skills mentioned above.

### ***How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?***

The different tasks within this question required students to demonstrate several higher-order thinking skills, applying their knowledge about policy making, particularly in the area of civil rights, while using the argumentation practice from the course. This type of question requires the content knowledge from the course to be integrated with the practices, and most students were successful in demonstrating some substantive knowledge and some of the practices associated with the argumentative essay.

Most students were successful in providing a correct piece of specific and relevant evidence related to the prompt.

Many students demonstrated an understanding of civil rights policy and an understanding of how social movements generated awareness, with some students being able to articulate how social movements connect to policy-making actions by the federal government. Many students struggled with making the connection between awareness being generated by social movements and actual action being taken in response to that awareness by policy makers.

Although many students struggled with successfully articulating a defensible claim with a line of reasoning, students who were able to do so were also generally able to provide at least one accurate piece of evidence that supported their claim, with most being able to provide a correct piece of evidence from one of the provided foundational documents.

Students were least successful in providing multiple pieces of reasoning, particularly the line of reasoning that should have been adjacent to their claim. Students also struggled with successfully describing an alternative perspective.

Most students were able to successfully describe a variety of social movements and the outcomes they sought to achieve.

Many students were able to successfully describe specific court cases (e.g., *Brown v. Board*) that would support their claim that legal challenges were more effective.

Many students correctly described the foundational documents that they chose to describe for this prompt.

***What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?***

The most common misconceptions for the thesis point included the following:

- Many students simply restated the prompt without establishing a line of reasoning or listed the evidence they would use as an attempt at a line of reasoning (e.g., Social movements are more effective because of the First Amendment and “Letter from Birmingham Jail”).
- Many students did not provide a line of reasoning adjacent to the claim. This prevented those responses from earning the C reasoning point that was intended to support their evidence because that line of reasoning had to be used to support the thesis rather than the evidence.
- Some students chose the position of legal challenges, but their line of reasoning suggested that the legal challenge was to an entity other than the courts/judicial branch (i.e., challenge a law passed by Congress by lobbying members of Congress) or the line of reasoning supported social movements (e.g., Legal challenges are more effective as shown with the BLM movement and the women’s suffrage movement which led to the 19th Amendment).
- Some students failed to take a position, and instead argued that both positions were equally effective. The response required that the student take one position or the other and then support that claim with a defensible line of reasoning.
- Some students contradicted their thesis by making a claim, and then later making a different claim. This led to confusion about which claim the student was making, and therefore the response did not earn the thesis point.

For the evidence portion of the question, the most frequent errors included the following:

- Many students struggled with selecting the appropriate document that would support the claim they were making (e.g., tried to use *Federalist 78* to support social movements or “Letter from Birmingham Jail” to support legal challenges).
- Many students confused civil liberties with civil rights (e.g., for First Amendment descriptions that provided information about free exercise or free press, students provided court cases that related to civil liberties like *Tinker*, *Yoder*, or *Eichman*).
- Some students attempted to use court cases as evidence to support social movements. Some students stated that court cases were not possible without a social movement occurring first, which is inaccurate.

For the reasoning portion of the question, the most common problems were:

- The reasoning that students provided for the evidence had to be used to support the claim they made when they didn’t have a line of reasoning attached to their claim. In these instances, because students did not clearly articulate a line of reasoning adjacent to their claim, the readers were directed to use this reasoning as the completion of the thesis.

- Although many students did well with the reasoning portion of the essay, those students who did not earn this point commonly described course concepts like social movements or court cases unrelated to civil rights, using examples without providing reasoning for how it supported their claim/thesis.
- Many students provided reasoning for how their evidence supported their thesis, but they failed to make a connection to actual enactment of a change in civil rights policy (e.g., students failed to show how a law was enacted or a new precedent set for federal policy on civil rights).
- Many students chose the position that social movements create policy change but did not connect the social movement to actual changes in civil rights policy (e.g., action by lawmakers). Instead, they described how social movements led to increased awareness or media attention but stopped short of the connection to actual changes in federal policy.

For the alternative perspective portion of the question, common issues included:

- Many students did not provide a description of an alternative perspective before responding to it, or they did not attempt an alternative perspective at all.
- Some students did not articulate a defensible line of reasoning until this portion of the essay. When that occurred, this rebuttal was used as the line of reasoning for the thesis, and then the student did not earn the point for the alternative perspective.
- Many students thought that it was acceptable to use language similar to “Some may argue A is better than B but that isn’t true because A is better” as their attempt at the alternative perspective. This does not earn the point because it does not describe the alternative perspective and it is not a rebuttal.

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A claim was made either without a clear line of reasoning or without a clear line of reasoning adjacent to the claim (i.e., the line of reasoning was found later in the essay, often attached to a piece of evidence).</li> <li>• A clear claim with a value judgment was not made and/or there was not a line of reasoning by the student. Instead, students listed documents and/or concepts as their attempt at a line of reasoning or simply restated the prompt.</li> <li>• Students made an initial claim and then changed their claim in the middle of the essay (not as part of an attempt at the alternative perspective) and tried to argue both potential claims in the essay.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “In the area of civil rights, social movements are the most effective for changing federal policy ... They force leaders and representatives to take actual action and create actual laws.”</li> <li>• “Legal challenges are the most effective means for changing federal policy because of the precedents they set. The power talked about in Federalist 78, judicial review, allows for courts to rule on the constitutionality of laws and situations which then sets a precedent for how things should be looked at.”</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students used the wrong document to support a claim.</li> <li>• Students equated civil rights with civil liberties as the same concept and used civil liberties evidence instead of civil rights related evidence to support their claim.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “In his Letter from Birmingham Jail, Martin Luther King writes about how it is up to the people to incite real change. He wrote about how change wouldn’t just be made for them, and that they had to use direct non-violent demonstrations to get their point across.”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students described examples of a course concept without having provided a reasoning explanation.</li> <li>• Students provided an explanation but failed to connect their reasoning to actions of policymakers in enacting civil rights policy changes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “His letter inspired people to take action and those people’s actions pushed Congress to pass laws like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.”</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stating an alternate perspective without providing a description of the alternative perspective.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Legal challenges may lead the courts to set precedents which policy makers may follow ... Just because a precedent is set does not mean it will be followed. Social movements on the other hand force policy makers to hear and listen to the people ... a precedent is not law.”</li> </ul>

***Based on your experience at the AP<sup>®</sup> Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?***

Emphasize the benefit of beginning the response with a clear thesis that goes beyond restating the prompt, taking a clear position that establishes a line of reasoning. For example, “Social movements are the most effective means for changing federal policy in the area of civil rights because ...” It is most helpful for the reader to be able to see the clear thesis at the very start of the response. The clear thesis is also the “gateway” to earning all other points.

- Spend time conducting structured, mini-lessons that break down each section of the argumentative essay: design exercises based around thesis creation, with a heavy emphasis on crafting thesis statements that take a clear position and establish a line of reasoning; create a lesson centered around how to accurately describe the information contained within the foundational documents; and provide practices designed to analyze and explain how the information found in these documents relate to both course concepts and more current events in order to better develop reasoning skills.
- Each section of the essay should be addressed as a separate skill that students should work toward mastering. After students become comfortable with each section, then classroom practices and assessments can be designed to integrate the various elements of a successful argumentative essay.

- Spend time on the nine foundational documents to ensure that students can recall specific, descriptive information about each document that is relevant to major course concepts.
- Provide students with opportunities to connect course concepts from one unit to another unit so they can use those concepts as evidence to support a prompt. For example, this prompt demonstrated mastery of the skill of argumentation and content related to policy making from Unit 2 (interaction between the branches), intertwined with course knowledge from both Unit 3 (civil rights) and Unit 5 (social movements).
- Consider providing students with a template for writing the argument essay that begins with a thesis statement, continues with two pieces of evidence and reasoning, and concludes with an alternative perspective.

***What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?***

Consider taking advantage of the following resources to help students prepare for the content and skills required in this free-response question:

- The CED provides a framework for teaching and learning about the topics that are covered on the exam. It addresses the foundation of powers for the courts and how the courts’ independence checks the power of other institutions in Topic 2.8: The Judicial Branch. Topic 2.8 also introduces *Federalist* 78. Topic 3.10: Social Movements and Equal Protection examines how constitutional provisions have supported and motivated social movements, including a focus on Dr. Martin Luther King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” and the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Understanding these topics is important in order to respond accurately to this FRQ.
- In AP Classroom, teachers will find a rich collection of resources to support learning about these topics. These resources include formative and summative assessment items for every unit of the course, including practice FRQs for teachers to use as formative assessment pieces. The formative items are scaffolded so that early items represent what students are ready for at the beginning of the school year and later items increase challenge as teachers progress through the course.
- AP Classroom also includes topic-specific AP Daily Videos related to this FRQ, such as Topic 2.8: Daily Video 1, which looks at the foundations of the power of the judicial branch, including a review of *Federalist* 78. Topic 3.10: Daily Video 1 and Daily Video 2 analyze the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and its connection to “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” Each of these AP Daily Videos provide content information useful in understanding this FRQ.
- The Review section under Course Resources has AP Daily Videos for review. While the content in Review Session 4 and Review Session 8 is different than in this FRQ, these videos provide detailed information on responding to the Argument Essay FRQs.
- Additionally, the Professional Learning tab in AP Classroom has a skill-based module on teaching the Argument Essay FRQ, Unit 5: Argumentation.
- Finally, the online AP Teacher Community includes a library of instructional resources and a forum for teachers to share instructional ideas regarding these topics.