



**Chief Reader Report on Student Responses:
2024 AP[®] United States Government and Politics Set 1
Free-Response Questions**

• Number of Students Scored	350,257		
• Number of Readers	1,551		
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At
	5	85,018	24.3
	4	87,571	25.0
	3	83,071	23.7
	2	63,251	18.1
	1	31,346	8.9
• Global Mean	3.38		

The following comments on the 2024 free-response questions for AP[®] United States Government and Politics were written by the Chief Reader, Stella Rouse, Professor, Arizona State University. 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: EPA Policymaking

Max Score: 3

Mean Score: 1.44

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

The Concept Application question expected responses to apply course concepts in response to a provided real-world scenario. The focus of the scenario are shifts in environmental policy over a series of presidential administrations. This scenario addresses several topics in the course and exam description from Unit 2. Ultimately, this question expected responses to demonstrate an understanding of the various stages of the policymaking process and the different participants in that process.

In part A responses were expected to demonstrate the power of the bureaucracy in implementing environmental laws. The intent of part A was for responses to describe the EPA's use of interpretive, discretionary, and rule-making powers when implementing environmental policy.

In part B responses were expected to show comprehension about the interaction between the EPA's bureaucratic role and the presidency. Responses were expected to demonstrate an understanding that presidents have powers that can shape the actions of bureaucratic agencies, in the context of the scenario.

In part C responses were expected to offer a clear explanation of how Congress could try to influence the bureaucratic agency's actions. Parts B and C both ask for responses to demonstrate an understanding of methods used to keep the bureaucracy accountable in a policymaking context.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?

In part A, most responses accurately described the EPA's role in interpreting the legislation or utilizing its discretionary or rule-making powers. Yet, some responses did not describe the bureaucratic power in the scenario because they only focused on language from the prompt ("implemented") to describe the EPA's activities. Some responses confused the interpretive power of the bureaucracy with that of the courts by referencing powers such as judicial review.

In part B responses should have shown an understanding of the interaction between bureaucratic agencies and the president. While most responses demonstrated knowledge of the powers of the president related to federal agencies, some only identified presidential actions that could be taken to hold the agency accountable without elaborating on their effect on the EPA or environmental policy. Appropriate responses to this part of the question demonstrated an understanding of the connection between presidential powers and their corresponding impact on federal agencies such as the EPA.

In part C responses should have demonstrated an understanding of the interaction between bureaucratic agencies and Congress. Most responses were able to demonstrate knowledge of the powers of the Congress related to federal agencies. However, many responses often identified congressional actions that could be taken to hold the agency accountable without elaborating on their effect on the EPA or environmental policy. Responses that earned the point successfully explained how congressional powers can influence federal agencies such as the EPA.

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"> In part A some responses did not demonstrate understanding of the powers exercised by bureaucratic agencies like the EPA. Some responses confused the powers of the bureaucracy with other government institutions such as the federal courts (judicial interpretation) or Congress (making laws). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The EPA used its bureaucratic discretion to interpret and change how it implemented environmental laws under different administrations.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In part B some responses did not apply presidential powers in the proper context. They incorrectly noted the extent of these powers, for example, stating that the president nominates the staff of the EPA (rather than the head/leadership). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The president can appoint leaders of agencies and departments (like the EPA) that will interpret and enforce laws in a way that aligns with the POTUS’s agenda.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In part C some responses did not elaborate on how congressional powers could be used to make the bureaucracy more accountable. They often simply identified the powers without demonstrating understanding of the application of these powers. For example, responses often stated that Congress could pass laws about the EPA and not address how this would impact the agency’s actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “If Congress is unhappy with the actions of the EPA and more specific regulations they are applying to laws, it can pass new legislation which changes the guidelines of EPA regulations and forces them to come up with new ones.”

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?

Students would benefit from reviewing the meaning of the task verbs for FRQs, such as “explain,” to help close the loop on their responses. Teachers could provide regular opportunities for students to use the task verbs that are found in the free-response portion of the exam (identify, describe, compare, explain how, explain why), through bellringers, in-class activities, homework, or exit tickets, so that students will understand the expectations for the writing portion more clearly, and they will more fully develop their reasoning and writing skills in response to this type of question. These activities can include discussions where students are expected to fully describe or explain a concept in relation to a prompt either provided by teachers or written by the students. Hexagonal thinking activities related to the appropriate vocabulary could also be effective for helping students connect the concepts to one another, with written or verbal explanations of the concepts they are connecting, using the appropriate task verbs (for oral explanation, students can identify what task they are demonstrating).

For students who found part A challenging, a more careful reading and a better understanding of the difference between the role of bureaucratic agencies and federal courts would reduce this stumbling block.

The responses indicate that teachers might want to reinforce student understanding of the various stages of the policymaking process (agenda setting, policy formulation, policy implementation, oversight), who is active in each stage, and how one stage flows from the other. Teachers could create lessons that allow students to connect the policymaking cycle with real-world examples. For instance, utilize current events and have students identify the actions being taken in the current event scenario, who is taking the actions, and where the actions fall in the policymaking process. One way to do this might be to create a policymaking chart or other graphic that students can use as a visual reminder of how the process works.

Teachers could expose students to scenarios regularly and ask them to relate the information to various parts of the curriculum that teachers have already covered. For example, teachers can provide students with an excerpt from an academic article, blog, or podcast and ask them to describe the parts of the policymaking process that are presented, identifying who is taking action, what action they are taking, how other groups not mentioned might respond to the situation (e.g., interest groups, the media, the people), and what the consequences or impact of this decision/event might be.

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. The CED introduces the bureaucracy in Topic 2.12 “The Bureaucracy” and addresses the rulemaking discretion of bureaucratic agencies in Topic 2.13 “Discretionary and Rulemaking Authority.” As a part of the executive branch, the president’s relationship with the bureaucracy is addressed in partially in Topic 2.4 “Roles and Powers of the President.” More specific interactions between Congress, the president and the bureaucracy are addressed in Topic 2.14 “Holding the Bureaucracy Accountable.”
- 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 teacher’s progress through the course.
- AP Classroom also includes topic specific AP Daily Videos related to this FRQ. Topic 2.13 “Daily Video 1” looks at how discretionary and rulemaking authority are given to various bureaucratic agencies and practices a Concept Application FRQ. Topic 2.14 “Daily Video 1” analyzes how Congressional oversight, presidential ideology, and compliance monitoring keep the bureaucracy accountable and influences its actions.
- 2023 AP Exam On-Demand Review videos explain in detail strategies for responding to each FRQ type, including Practice sessions 2 and 3 that focus on FRQ 1 Concept Application.
- 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: Composition of Federal Spending for Fiscal Years 1962-2019

Max Score: 4

Mean Score: 2.12

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

Responses to the quantitative analysis question are expected to demonstrate the ability to read and interpret data related to changes in the patterns of federal spending between fiscal years 1962–2019. In part A responses were expected to identify the largest percentage of spending during a particular year based on an accurate reading of the data. In part B responses were required to describe changes in spending patterns across the period. In part C responses were expected to draw a conclusion regarding the impact that these changes had on Congress’ budgetary choices through an analysis of the data. In part D responses were expected to explain how an interest group might respond to the trends represented in the data.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?

In part A, the overwhelming majority of responses correctly identified mandatory spending as the greatest percentage of the federal budget in 2016.

In part B, a significant majority of responses were able to correctly describe mandatory spending increasing over time and discretionary spending decreasing over time as the differences in the trends in mandatory versus discretionary spending illustrated in the graph.

Part C required a more nuanced approach. Responses needed to conclude that the increase in mandatory spending had a specific impact on the choices that Congress could make regarding the budget. The knowledge required in part C included an understanding that government funding is limited, and the increase in mandatory spending required Congress to either cut spending in other areas, and either raise taxes or increase budget deficits to maintain spending levels in programs. Correct responses were able to link the cause of increased mandatory spending to the effect of having to reduce discretionary spending, raising taxes, or increasing budget deficits as a result. Many responses attempted to explain why the trend happened rather than explain the impact that the trends had, which is not what the prompt required.

Part D required responses to apply course content knowledge related to interest group motivations and behaviors and explain how interest groups would respond to the trends. The knowledge required in part D included the fact that most programs that are important to interest groups often fall within discretionary spending. Responses also had to show that interest groups would need to influence federal government decision-making that would be more favorable for the group and its members, either through fighting to protect their preferred programs, cutting mandatory spending to free up more discretionary spending, or getting a larger piece of the limited discretionary spending funds. Responses that made this connection earned the point. Many responses either stated groups might be happy with the status quo or simply stated that groups would be angry or unhappy with the trend, rather than explaining the actions that groups would take based on the trends in the data.

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"> In part B, some responses did not accurately describe the trends in mandatory spending versus discretionary spending or misinterpreted what the lines represented in the line graph. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “As time progresses the percentage of mandatory spending in the federal budget has increased, and the percentage of discretionary spending in the federal budget has decreased.” “As time goes on the percent of spending on mandatory spending increases while discretionary decreases.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In part C, some responses did not accurately explain the impact of the trends in the data on Congress’ budgetary choices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Congress has been forced to cut down on discretionary spending in the budget because of the large percentage of mandatory spending that is required.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In part D, some responses did not accurately link an action that interest groups might take in response to trends in the data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “An interest group may try to support a candidate that promises greater discretionary spending by holding rallies for that candidate and that goal in mind.” “An interest group might notice that there is less money going to discretionary spending and would attempt to lobby and convince members of Congress to put a limit on mandatory spending. This would leave more room for discretionary spending, which is what the interest groups want.”

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?

Teachers could emphasize the application of political concepts and processes from the course to data provided in graphs and charts.

Teachers could expose students to data presented in a variety of different methods and styles. Teachers could also implement something like a “graph of the week” where they identify a particular style, tied to the unit or lesson, which could then be analyzed using the different elements of “Skill Category 3” from the Curriculum Guide, which deals with data analysis. AP Classroom is also a great tool for identifying questions which incorporate data analysis, both in multiple choice questions, and in the FRQs. Teachers could also emphasize looking at entire data sets and identifying trends within the entirety of the data as opposed to isolated data points.

Students should be able to recall relevant course concepts and apply them to the data provided. Teachers could emphasize the practical implications of Congressional and governmental decision-making and not just the conceptual applications. Students should understand the motivations of interest groups and the actions that they take to influence policy to achieve their goals.

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. For content support in responding to this FRQ, the CED addresses mandatory and discretionary spending in Topic 2.2 “Structures, Powers, and Functions of Congress” as well as the actions interest groups may take in addressing congressional spending in Topic 5.6 “Interest Groups Influencing Policymaking.”
- 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 teacher’s progress through the course.
- AP Classroom also includes topic specific AP Daily Videos related to this FRQ. Topic 2.2 “Daily Video 2” focuses on how Congress generates a budget that addresses mandatory and discretionary spending. Topic 5.6 “Daily Video 1” discusses how interest groups affect the policymaking process.
- 2023 AP Exam On-Demand Review videos explain in detail strategies for responding to each FRQ type, including Practice session 4 focuses on FRQ 2 Quantitative Application.
- 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: *Katzenbach v. McClung* and Natural Rights

Max Score: 4

Mean Score: 2.26

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

The SCOTUS comparison question provided a summary of a non-required Supreme Court case (*Katzenbach v. McClung*) and expected responses to compare this non-required case to a case required in the course (*U.S. v. Lopez*). In part A responses were expected to identify the constitutional clause common to both cases. In part B the response should have explained how the facts in *Lopez* and *Katzenbach* led to different holdings. In part C responses were expected to explain how the decision in *Katzenbach* reflects the ideal of natural rights.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?

In part A, most responses identified the Commerce Clause as the constitutional clause common to both *Lopez* and *Katzenbach*.

Part B was the most difficult part of this FRQ. To earn both points in part B, the response must demonstrate an understanding of the required case and accurately compare it to the given non-required case. In part B, some responses lacked precise descriptions of the facts of *Lopez*, but were still provided comparisons to the provided case. Many responses attempted to make a state's rights / federal government argument between the two cases. Other responses did not explain how the Commerce Clause did not apply to the Gun Free School Zones Act.

In part C, many responses did not sufficiently explain how natural rights were reflected in *Katzenbach*. Responses were able to show an understanding of what natural rights are but were not able to explain the connection. The response should give an action and then explain the effect of that action on natural rights.

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"> In part A, some responses did not identify the Commerce Clause as the central part of the holding in <i>Lopez</i> and would instead try to make their argument based on the 2nd Amendment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The commerce clause is common to both.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part B was worth 2 points. If a response failed to earn 2 points by completing the task, the response could still earn 1 point by providing relevant information about the required case, <i>United States v. Lopez</i>. Many responses did not earn 2 points because they did not demonstrate an understanding that actions of Congress related to their use of the Commerce Clause were treated differently in the two cases resulted in different holdings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “In <i>Katzenbach ...</i> the court ruled against the <i>McClungs ...</i> because their business did in fact impact inter-state commerce ... Whereas in <i>US v. Lopez</i> the court ruled that the Gun Free School Zones Act was unconstitutional under the commerce clause because possessing a firearm in a school zone is hardly commerce.” “Whereas in <i>United States v. Lopez</i>, the court ruled that the Gun Free School Zones Act was unconstitutional under the commerce clause because possessing a firearm in a school zone is hardly commerce and to consider it commerce is to give Congress unlimited power.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some responses were unable to connect the decision in <i>Katzenbach v. McClung</i> to the democratic ideal of natural rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The decision in <i>Katzenbach v. McClung</i> protected against racial discrimination in places of public accommodation. Public accommodation reasonably falls under the natural right to live and the pursuit of happiness.”

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?

Teachers could emphasize that their students read the task carefully and identify one clause instead of listing multiple clauses. Also, teachers could emphasize that their students follow the directions to identify the correct clause rather than articles or amendments. Teachers could access past FRQ questions to find sample responses that earned points in each part of the FRQ.

Teachers could instruct their students to explain the relationship between course concepts with the required or nonrequired case for the task in part C. Teachers should make use of content review from AP Central to make sure students are well versed in the required SCOTUS cases.

Teachers could emphasize that, while the information within the prompt is important for understanding the concepts presented in the nonrequired case, the response should not merely repeat information. Strong responses use the information but go beyond what is provided to demonstrate understanding.

Teachers should access the resources in AP Central to help students become familiar with the task verbs of the FRQ exam. Some students struggled with including enough information to meet the “explain” threshold.

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. The CED addresses the Supreme Court cases that are required for this course on pages 27–32. This section also includes a cross-reference table with suggestions for opportunities to show relationships between these cases and course concepts. This section also includes a table with terms and definitions for how these terms are used when assessing FRQ 3. Topic 1.8 specifically addresses the Commerce Clause, which is central to *United States v. Lopez*. Additionally, Topic 1.1 “Ideals of Democracy” contains information about the democratic ideal of natural rights.
- 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 teacher’s progress through the course.
- AP Classroom also includes topic specific AP Daily Videos related to this FRQ. Topic 1.8 “Daily Video 1” focuses on the balance of power between the national and state governments and what factors can cause changes in that balance. Topic 1.8 “Daily Video 2” focuses on two Supreme Court case rulings, including *United States v. Lopez* (1995). This video also examines how these cases defined and redefined the distribution of power between the state and national governments.
- 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: Domestic Policymaking and the Executive and Legislative Branches

Max Score: 6

Mean Score: 3.32

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

This Argument Essay question expected responses to demonstrate an understanding of the extent to which the legislative and executive branches exercise control of domestic policy-making. Responses should have also shown an understanding of foundational documents related to the concepts of the role of domestic policy-making between the president and Congress (Article I of the United States Constitution, *Federalist No. 51*, *Federalist No. 70*), while taking a position on the topic of the prompt.

Responses 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 or rebuttal. Responses should have been written so that each of these skills are demonstrated.

How well did the responses address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skill(s) required on this question?

In general, responses defended the position that Congress should have a greater role in domestic policy-making due to their closer connection to constituents, or that presidents should have more power over domestic policy-making due to their ability to act quickly and decisively. Most responses made a successful claim and established a defensible line of reasoning. Most responses were also able to provide at least one piece of evidence from one of the provided foundational documents or a course concept, and many were able to provide more than one piece of evidence. Many responses were successful in providing reasoning to explain why their evidence supported an argument relevant to the prompt. However, the majority of responses did not successfully respond to the alternative perspective. Although responses generally demonstrated some understanding of an alternative viewpoint, they often neglected to frame answers in a way that both demonstrated understanding of the argument on the other side AND responded to that argument with a rebuttal or refutation.

The different tasks within this question required responses to demonstrate several higher-order thinking skills and apply substantive knowledge about policy making, while using the argumentation skill from the course. Most responses successfully demonstrated substantive knowledge and the needed skills associated with the argumentative essay. Most responses also provided a correct piece of specific and relevant evidence related to the prompt.

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

Responses could earn 1 point by providing a defensible claim or thesis that establishes a line of reasoning. Incorrect responses simply restated the prompt without establishing a line of reasoning or providing a thesis that addressed the balance of power between the president and Congress over domestic policy making. Some responses included arguments that one of these branches should have less power, or that the branches should

be equal. However, the prompt directed responses to include an argument regarding whether the president or Congress should have “more” power.

Many responses did not clearly state a claim and line of reasoning at the start of the response, which made it difficult to find a thesis in another part of the response. A common error was listing the evidence or documents as the line of reasoning. For example, a response stated, “The president should have more power over domestic policy making due to Federalist 70 and the constitution.”

Responses could earn up to 2 points by describing evidence relevant to the topic of the prompt or up to 3 points by using evidence to support the claim or thesis. The most frequent error included responses that confused foundational documents. Many responses provided evidence using course concepts that were not relevant to the topic of domestic policy making. For example, some responses made a claim that the president being the commander-in-chief is evidence that supports the president’s role in domestic policy making or the response referred to evidence about foreign policy (executive agreements).

A response could also earn a point for reasoning by explaining how or why a piece of evidence supports an argument relevant to the prompt. Reasoning requires the response to go beyond describing the evidence to demonstrating a clearly articulated explanation. Sometimes, responses included reasoning for the evidence, yet did not earn the reasoning point. In these instances, responses either did not support the argument or did not have a clearly articulated thesis/claim.

A response could earn a point by providing an opposing or alternate perspective using refutation or rebuttal. For the alternative perspective portion of the question, common missteps included responses that failed to describe the alternative perspective and instead explained that some people would disagree with the stated claim. For example, some responses’ theses would be about Congress, and the alternative perspective would describe the viewpoint that Congress should have *less* power instead of saying the president should have more. Another common misconception would be simply stating what the alternative perspective was, and not describing why people would have that opinion. Other responses explained an alternative perspective but failed to explain why that position was most accurate.

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A claim was made without a clear line of reasoning.• There was not a line of reasoning in the response. Instead, a response included documents and/or concepts as the attempt at a line of reasoning.• A clear claim was not made that addressed the prompt, instead responses would attempt to claim that one side should have less power (the prompt asks students which branch should have more power) or responses would attempt to claim both should have equal power.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “The president should have more power over Congress in policy making because they are more representative of the people as well as have the ability to work quickly to address national issues.”• “Congress should have more power over domestic policy making because Congress more accurately represents the people of the United States.”

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses included the incorrect use of foundational documents; for example, using the title of one document with a description of a different document or making vague, general claims about the documents that were not specific to the ideas in the documents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Federalist No. 70 describes a strong and energetic president.” • “in Article 1 of the Constitution the Legislative branch is outlined” • “In Federalist #51 the checks and balances placed on both the house, senate, and the president play an important role.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses included evidence that was not relevant to the topic of the prompt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “In Brutus 1 ... antifederalist’s fear of a government that becomes too tyrannical ... is not possible if the legislative branch has more power over policy making.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses relied on examples of a course concept without providing a reasoned explanation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Congress holds the power of the purse, and determines the budget that bureaucratic agencies get, which Congress can use to influence domestic policy.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses did not state an alternate perspective to the prompt, but instead explained why the initial claim was incorrect. • Responses simply stated the alternative perspective without providing a description of why others believe that alternative perspective. • Responses neglected to respond to the alternative perspective using rebuttal or refutation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Some may argue that the president should have more power over domestic policy making. This idea stems from the attitude of the singular energetic efficient executive ... However, this viewpoint is wrong because fast paced policy making ... could be detrimental if used to carry out negative domestic policy making.”

Based on your experience at the AP[®] Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the exam?

Teachers could emphasize the benefit of beginning the response by taking a clear position (claim) and include a line of reasoning that supports that claim in order establish a clear thesis. For example, “The president should have more power over Congress in policy making because they are more representative of the people as well as have the ability to work quickly to address national issues.” 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 also “unlocks” the opportunity to earn additional points across the response, including the third evidence point and the alternative perspective point. Teachers should encourage students to begin their response with their thesis statement that takes a clear position on the question (claim) and provides an adjacent line of reasoning. Teachers could advise students not to include the alternative perspective while presenting their thesis, as it can make the thesis unclear.

Teachers could 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. For example, students needed to describe *Federalist No. 51* and it wasn’t enough to say, “*Federalist No. 51* argued for a stronger

central government.” Students need to provide some phrasing that differentiates it from other foundational documents and use the document in a way relevant to the prompt, such as describing how the separation of powers gave specific powers to Congress to check the president.

Teachers could 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 alternate perspective.

Teachers could spend time in each unit of study tying course concepts to policymaking. The basis of the argumentation free-response question is to test students’ skill of argumentation and the nine foundational documents. But it is also to test students’ ability to use course concepts or foundational documents and apply them to policymaking.

Each section of the essay should be addressed as a separate skill that students can work toward mastering. After students become comfortable with each section, then teachers can design classroom practices and assessments to integrate the various elements of a successful argumentative essay. Teachers could spend time conducting structured, minilessons 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; utilize practices designed to analyze and explain how the information found in these documents relates to both course concepts and more current events in order to better develop reasoning skills.

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. The CED includes a section on the Foundational Documents that are required for this course on pages 25–26. The introduction to this section states, “Foundational documents are necessary for students to understand the philosophical underpinnings and political values of the U.S. political system and may serve as the focus of AP Exam questions. Source analysis of these documents helps students gain an understanding of how philosophical discussions and debates shaped the architecture of the government.” This section also includes a table that provides suggestions for places in the course where these documents are particularly related to specific learning objectives. Additionally, Topic 1.6 “Principles of American Government” examines *Federalist No. 51* and Topic 2.6 “Expansion of Presidential Power” addresses *Federalist No. 70*. While the Constitution of the United States is applicable to most course objectives, Topic 2.2 “Structures, Powers, and Functions of Congress” contains information about Article 1. Topic 4.8 “Ideology and Policymaking,” Topic 4.9 “Ideology and Economic Policy,” and Topic 4.10 “Ideology and Social Policy” provide information about policymaking.
- 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 teacher’s progress through the course.

- AP Classroom also includes topic specific AP Daily Videos related to this FRQ. Topic 1.6 “Daily Video 1” focuses on the *Federalist No. 51* and how the ideas of separation of powers and checks and balances are described in the Constitution. Topic 2.6 “Daily Video 1” focuses on *Federalist No. 70* and the Twenty-Second Amendment to help explain how presidential powers have been interpreted and justified. Topic 2.2 “Daily Video 1” focuses on how differences in structures, powers, and functions, and the constitutional responsibilities of the Senate and House, affect the policymaking process.
- 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.