



**Chief Reader Report on Student Responses:
2024 AP[®] United States Government and Politics Set 2
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: Census and Congressional Oversight

Max Score: 3

Mean Score: 1.14

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 was on a congressional committee hearing in which the Secretary of Commerce, Wilbur Ross, failed to disclose issues with the 2020 census process. The scenario addresses several topics in the course and exam description from Unit 2 and Unit 5 that relate to Congress holding the federal bureaucracy accountable, the role of the media as an agenda setter, and models of voting behavior.

In part A responses were expected to describe the implied power of Congress to oversee bureaucratic agencies. The focus in part A was for responses to use the information in the scenario to demonstrate that Congress/the House Committee on Oversight and Reform/Chairperson Maloney were holding Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross accountable through their oversight power for the poor execution of the 2020 census. Some responses just identified checks and balances as an implied power without sufficiently demonstrating oversight within the context of that particular check on the bureaucracy.

In part B responses were expected to explain how the media's investigations could influence congressional oversight, either by describing how the media can raise awareness and activate public pressure, or by directly influencing Chairperson Maloney's decision to act.

In part C responses were expected to explain how someone engaged in retrospective voting would change their vote based on Chairperson Maloney's actions from the scenario, either by recognizing her/his actions on behalf of the party and either voting or not voting for her in future elections, or by not voting for the president who appointed Secretary Ross in future elections.

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 responses were able to describe what was happening in the scenario but neglected to mention oversight as the implied constitutional power of Congress. Some responses were able to identify or describe oversight but did not adequately link that power to the federal bureaucracy. Some responses described delegated constitutional powers of Congress, instead of the implied power of oversight, or were vague with their description of oversight.

In part B most responses were able to describe the role of the media in exposing government inefficiency or wrongdoings. However, they often did not demonstrate how that exposure would lead to Congress executing its oversight power to address those inefficiencies or wrongdoings. Responses generally showed understanding of the role of the media and noted the *New York Times* article prompting Chairperson Maloney to act but did not demonstrate that the action of oversight should be prompted from media influence to address the problems of the Census.

In part C, responses largely demonstrated the concept of retrospective voting and were able to explain that, as a result of Chairperson Maloney’s actions in the scenario, a retrospective voter would either vote for her/her party or not vote for her/her party in future elections. Some responses demonstrated the concept of retrospective voting, but incorrectly applied it to Secretary Ross, a political appointee.

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 identified congressional oversight without a linking that oversight to its impact on the bureaucracy. Students who could describe oversight sometimes described it as an internal check applied to Congress, instead of correctly exercised over the bureaucracy. Some responses discussed delegated powers of Congress (power to conduct the census, regulate commerce) or general checks and balances, without demonstrating the implied power of Congress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Congress has the implied power [to] hold Congressional oversight hearings as a way to check the power of the bureaucratic agencies.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In part B most responses could describe the role of the media as a watchdog, investigating wrongdoings of the government (in this case inefficiencies with the 2020 census process), however did not adequately explain how that media influence contributed to Congressional oversight to address those issues. Responses often repeated the material from the prompt (Maloney sent letters to Secretary Ross after reading the <i>New York Times</i>), but did not demonstrate this as an oversight power to address the issues with the Census. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “If Congress is made aware of issues through the media, they will likely take that knowledge and hold an oversight hearing to address the issues.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In part C most responses demonstrated knowledge of retrospective voting, but some connected that concept to Secretary Ross, instead of elected officials. Some responses discussed Chairperson Maloney’s actions, and how individuals view those actions, but never explained how retrospective voters would vote based on those actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The actions taken by the chairperson may show a retrospective voter [from that district] that the [chairperson] is/was unreliable and not transparent. This may cause the retrospective voter to not vote for [the chairperson the next time they are up for election.]” “A retrospective voter may choose not to vote for a candidate [from Maloney’s party] in the future due to [Maloney’s] past failures.”

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 have students practice how to respond to certain task verbs, how to incorporate the scenario into the response, and thoroughly read exactly what the prompt is asking them to do. Some responses would simply identify instead of describe the Congressional oversight of the bureaucracy. Responses also indicated that the prompt was not read carefully, as most students could correctly describe the role of the media as a watchdog, investigating wrongdoings of the government, but did not adequately explain how that media influence contributed to Congressional oversight. Some would bring in information from the scenario, such as the *New York Times* article, and others would bring in information not discussed in the scenario.

Teachers could provide regular opportunities for students to practice the task verbs that are found in the free response portion of the exam (identify, describe, compare, explain) through bellringers, in class activities, homework, or exit tickets, so that students will more clearly understand the expectations for the writing portion of the exam. This would allow students to more fully develop their reasoning and writing skills in response to this type of question. Activities could include discussions where students are expected to fully describe or explain a concept in relation to the prompt teachers provide or prompts students write themselves.

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 Congress and its implied powers in Topic 2.1 “Congress: The Senate and the House of Representatives” and addresses how Congress can check the power of the bureaucracy in Topic 2.14 “Holding the Bureaucracy Accountable.” The CED also discusses the media in Topic 5.12 “The Media and 5.13 Changing Media.”
- 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 difficulty as teachers progress through the course.
- AP Classroom also includes topic specific AP Daily Videos related to this FRQ. Topic 2.1 “Daily Video 2” focuses on the enumerated and implied powers of Congress in the Constitution, and how those powers allow for the creation of public policy. Topic 2.1 “Daily Video 3” also practices Skill 1.C as it is applied in 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.
- The 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: Women Candidates for Senate

Max Score: 4

Mean Score: 2.36

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

The Quantitative Analysis question expects responses that interpret data related to women candidates for the U.S. Senate, categorized by party, between 1980–2020. In part A responses were expected to identify the year with the fewest number of Democratic women candidates for the Senate. In part B responses were required to describe a difference in an overall trend in the graph. Additionally, in part C responses were expected to draw a conclusion that explains an overall trend shown in the graph. Finally, in part D responses were expected to explain how the data in the graph might affect political participation.

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, responses generally identified and described an overall trend in the graph. Most responses correctly identified 1988 as the year with the fewest number of Democratic women candidates.

In part B, most responses were able to accurately describe an overall trend in the graph. Most focused on the trend of Democratic women candidates increasing faster than Republican women candidates; others correctly mentioned there have been more Democratic women candidates than Republican women candidates since 1996, as illustrated by the graph.

Part C required responses to draw a conclusion that explains an overall trend in the graph. They needed to discuss a factor that informed an overall trend in the graph, focusing on the graph time period of 1980–2020. Acceptable responses focused on either political party changes or social changes that may have created an environment for more women candidates to secure their party's nomination and explained how the change in the political/social arena influenced the overall trend in the graph.

Part D asked responses to use data in the graph to explain how something in the data might affect political participation. This required a demonstration of knowledge of political participation and a skillful reading of the data.

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

In part B, some responses focused on seats in the Senate or votes obtained by the party as opposed to the number of Democratic and Republican women candidates in the Senate.

In part C, many responses focused on historical events (e.g., 19th Amendment) or offered vague references to the ideology of Democrats and Republicans. Some responses that did not earn a point did not identify a trend to be explained, while others did not provide an acceptable explanation.

Although most responses correctly identified a form of political participation in Part D, they often did not explain how the data in the graph might impact that particular form of political participation.

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In part A, some responses focused on a time period instead of identifying the year with the fewest number of Democratic women Senate candidates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The year with the fewest number of Democratic women candidates for Senate would be in 1988.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In part B, some responses demonstrated a failure to read the chart carefully, incorrectly referring to “women senators” or choosing certain years and talking about the rise and fall of numbers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “In the overall women candidates for senate by party, Democratic candidates had a drastically higher increase in numbers, as opposed to the republican candidates who slowly increased in numbers.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In part C, many responses put forward a discussion of ideology in general terms, while also failing to explain the connection to an overall trend in the graph; others focused on factors from long ago (women’s suffrage) that do not have an impact on the relevant time period (1980–2020). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The growing acceptance of women in positions of power as a result of the feminist movement and other social changes has meant more women are willing to run for Senate and more are getting elected. The conclusion is that women are being seen more and more as equals to men, in all aspects of life including politics and as such are choosing to run for Senate.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In part D, responses presented a discussion of party switching (women moving to the Democratic party from Republican party) or failed to explain how political participation was affected by the data in the graph. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The data in the graph might positively affect political participation by encouraging more people, specifically women, to get involved and interested in politics. Having women in government, and running for power positions, sets an inspirational tone for other women, potentially affecting political turnout.”

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 connection and application of political concepts and processes from the course to data provided in graphs and charts. Students should be able to recall relevant course concepts and apply them to the data provided.

Teachers could also emphasize examining datasets and teach students how to identify both patterns and trends within the data, as opposed to simply focusing on isolated data points. Students should also be able to differentiate between a trend and series of isolated data points when answering the quantitative analysis question. For example, stating, “in 1990, the Republican Party line was going down and the Democratic Party line was going up; in 2010 they both were going up” is not an *overall* trend of the data.

Teachers should emphasize that causes that explain changes in the data should come from the time period of the data. Additionally, encouraging students to explain connections specifically and thoroughly should be continued practice.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this 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 political participation in Unit 5, with a particular focus on participation through voting in Topic 5.2 “Voter Turnout.” Factors that influence elections are discussed in both Topic 5.9 “Congressional Elections” and Topic 5.10 “Modern Campaigns.”
- 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 difficulty as teachers progress through the course.
- AP Classroom also includes topic specific AP Daily Videos related to this FRQ. Topic 5.10 “Daily Video 1” analyzes the pros and cons of modern campaign tactics, including professional consultants, changing media, and financing.
- The 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: *Schenck v. United States & Civil Liberties*

Max Score: 4

Mean Score: 2.60

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

This SCOTUS Comparison question provided a summary of a nonrequired case (*Cohen v. California*) and expected responses to compare the non-required case to a course-required case (*Schenck v. United States*). In part A responses were expected to identify the civil liberty that was common to both cases. In part B responses needed to explain how the relevant facts in *Cohen* and *Schenck* led to different holdings. In part C the responses were required to explain how the decision in *Cohen* reflects the democratic ideal of limited government. These increasingly challenging tasks required a thorough understanding of the holdings of *Schenck* and *Cohen*, along with accurately comparing key facts between the two cases. Additionally, responses were expected 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 skill(s) required on this question?

In part A, most responses identified freedom of speech and/or freedom of expression, which was the specific civil liberty common to *Cohen* and *Schenck*. Some responses identified a list of civil liberties as being the civil liberty common to both cases, including press and assembly, which demonstrates a lack of understanding of the specific civil liberty the cases had in common.

In part B, some responses did not explain how the facts in the cases that led to different holdings. When failing to do so, these responses only described the facts of the case related to *Schenck* and failed to explain how the Court's holdings in the rulings were different. The same responses had difficulty explaining how freedom of speech applied to the different holdings of the required and nonrequired cases. Additionally, many responses used the word "different" without explaining how the rulings were different. These responses lack an understanding of the basic details (facts and holdings) of *Schenck*. Some responses attempted to inaccurately use the same words to describe both cases. For example, responses that cited "clear and present danger" as the facts of *Schenck*, could not also use these words to explain how the facts/holdings in *Schenck* and *Cohen* were different.

In part C, responses generally explained how the *Cohen* decision reflects the democratic ideal of limited government. However, while most responses demonstrated that the government's power was limited, some responses failed to relate this limitation to the decision in *Cohen* (as the prompt specified) and tried to relate the limitation to federalism or separation of powers. Some responses also confused democratic ideal with Democratic Party.

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"> In part A, some responses gave a list of civil liberties rather than identifying the civil liberty that was common to both <i>Schenck v. United States</i> and <i>Cohen v. California</i>. Responses needed to identify the common civil liberty as freedom of speech and/or freedom of expression. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The civil liberty that is demonstrated in <i>Schenck v. United States</i> and <i>Cohen v. California</i> is freedom of expression.” “The civil liberty that is common to both <i>Schenck v. United States</i> (1919) and <i>Cohen v. California</i> is the right to free speech.”
<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 facts or holding of the required case, <i>Schenck v. United States</i>. To earn 2 points, the response must provide a comparison between the facts/holding of both <i>Schenck v. United States</i> and <i>Cohen v. California</i>. The response must include a fact about <i>Cohen</i> when providing the comparison. Some responses merely stated information about the facts/holding in the required case, <i>Schneck v. United States</i>, and then merely stated that the decision in <i>Cohen</i> was different without providing context. If the response did not fully complete the task of providing a comparison between the non-required case and the required case, the response could still earn 1 point by providing a relevant/accurate piece of information about the required case, <i>Schenck v. United States</i>. Some responses neglected this part altogether, provided inaccurate information, or did not provide information for the required case that was separate from the comparison. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Schneck’s actions occurred during wartime was a deciding factor that he had created a clear and present danger.” In <i>Cohen v. California</i>, Cohen was wearing an anti-war jacket that was seen as unpopular or unfavorable by the state government. “Cohen’s actions did not create the danger that Schneck did.” “Schenck was distributing material that arguably incited violence, chaos, or a clear and present danger ... The court held differently in <i>Cohen v. California</i> because Cohen (and the language on his jacket) was not promoting violence or inciting a clear and present danger, only expressing his opinions.” “In <i>Schenck v. United States</i>, Schenck was distributing leaflets that urged people not to join the war effort and not to join the army.”

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In part C, the response needed to explain how the democratic ideal of limited government was demonstrated by the decision in <i>Cohen</i>. Responses needed to explain that limited government is shown through not censoring individual civil liberties. Some responses focused on a federalism issue or a separation of powers issue between the legislative and judicial branches. Other responses confused democratic ideals with Democratic Party beliefs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The decision in <i>Cohen v. California</i> reflects the democratic ideal of limited government because it holds that the individual liberty to express one’s opinion should be protected from a potentially tyrannical government that may try to suppress the varying political views of citizens.” “The ideal of limited government is reflected in this case as the government cannot arrest someone for expressing unpopular views.”
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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 should practice the SCOTUS Comparison question in their classrooms according to the scoring guidelines used at the reading and posted on AP Central. For example, teachers could demonstrate the difference between a response that earns 2 points and a response that earns 1 point in part B.
- Teachers should instruct their students to read the prompt language carefully and, if asked to identify the specific clause, think carefully about the specific constitutional clause relevant to the prompt. If the prompt asks for “the” or “a” specific clause/liberty, responses cannot be a list of clauses or liberties.
- 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 the facts of a case and its holding. They may wish to directly compare cases as practice for this type of question.
- Teachers should instruct 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 that are already found in the prompt. Instead, students should be instructed to spend their time discussing the relevant course concept connected to the case(s).

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 3.3 specifically addresses freedom of speech, which is central to *Schenck v. United States*. Additionally, Topic 1.1 Ideals of Democracy contains information about the democratic ideal of limited government.

- 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 difficulty as teachers progress through the course.
- AP Classroom also includes topic specific AP Daily Videos related to this FRQ. Topic 3.3-Daily Video 1 analyzes the interpretations and limits of the First Amendment's freedom of speech, including symbolic speech and Topic 3.3-Daily Video 2 continues an analysis of some more limits on freedom of speech.
- 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: Participatory Democracy

Max Score: 6

Mean Score: 4.05

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

This Argument Essay question expected responses to demonstrate an understanding of the concept of participatory democracy and apply that to interest groups or social movements as the best reflection of participatory democracy.

Responses should have demonstrated an understanding of foundational documents related to the concept of participatory democracy (*Federalist No. 10*, First Amendment to the United States Constitution, and “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”), 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.

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?

Responses generally demonstrated an understanding that people could participate in government in different ways. Overall, responses showed a particular position on the question; however, they struggled with establishing a line of reasoning. Responses that established a line of reasoning were also generally able to provide and describe at least one accurate piece of evidence that supported the argument, with many responses also offering a piece of evidence from one of the foundational documents provided.

Some responses were not able to describe and then rebut or refute an alternate perspective. Some responses were also unable to provide reasoning (classification, process, causation, or comparison) to explain how or why the evidence provided support to the relevant argument or thesis.

The different tasks within this question required responses to demonstrate several higher-order thinking skills and apply substantive knowledge about participatory democracy while using the argumentation practice from the course. The argument essay required content knowledge from the course to be integrated with the practices associated with the argument 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 can earn 1 point by providing a defensible claim or thesis that establishes a line of reasoning. When responses did not earn the thesis point, they often simply restated the prompt. In addition, some responses stated that pluralism was more appropriate instead of addressing the prompt. A common error was listing the evidence or documents as the line of reasoning. Some responses did not specifically address the prompt’s question about which entity better reflected participatory democracy (e.g., students failed to use the phrases such as “social movements are more reflective” and instead used phrases like “social movements or interest groups are best for participatory democracy” or “Interest groups and social movements are more

reflective”). Some responses only defined participatory democracy and then selected both entities (e.g., “both interest groups and social movements reflect participatory democracy because”).

Some responses did not provide a line of reasoning for the claim that was simply a restatement of the prompt. For example, a common but insufficient line of reasoning was, “Social movements are more reflective of participatory democracy because it allows participation.” This did not earn a thesis point because the line of reasoning could also apply to interest groups. The response needed to add phrasing like “more inclusive.” This shows understanding that the group’s action is tied to its ability to better reflect participatory theory that allows more people to participate, and not just a generic idea of participation.

Responses can 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 common errors involved misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the foundational documents. Responses sometimes mistakenly described pluralism rather than participatory theory. Many responses included broad or vague claims about the documents rather than providing evidence specific to that document. To earn points for both the First Amendment and Letter from a Birmingham Jail, responses would need to clearly describe each piece of evidence correctly and separately.

A response can 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 provided reasoning for the evidence, yet it did not earn the reasoning point because the reasoning did not support the argument. In these instances, responses often did not have a clearly articulated thesis/claim.

A response can earn a point by responding to an opposing or alternate perspective using refutation or rebuttal. For the alternative perspective point, a common error was the absence of a clear alternative perspective. For example, “Some may say interest groups are more reflective of participatory model but they’re wrong” would not earn a point because it lacked a description of the alternate perspective before explaining why the thesis was superior. Some responses attempted concession statements, but sufficient detail was lacking, or actual concessions were not apparent.

<i>Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>Responses that Demonstrate Understanding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A claim/thesis 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.) • A clear claim with a value judgement was not made and/or there was not a line of reasoning by the student. Instead, responses listed documents and /or concepts as their attempt at a line of reasoning. • A clear claim was made but the line of reasoning did not relate to the thesis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Although one may say that interest groups better reflect the participatory model of democracy it is actually social movements because of its ability to gather a widespread influence that allows people to participate.” • “Social movements better reflect the participatory model of democracy ... with the usage of social movements, active participation and engagement are both possible and create lasting change.”

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses incorrectly used foundational documents or made general claims about the documents that were not specific to the group chosen in the response. Responses used an incorrect document to support the claim, for example, using a court case to support the argument that social movements were more reflective of participatory democracy but the case was not tied to social movements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The First amendment states that freedom of speech allows people to willfully voice concerns without repercussions.” • “The Letter from a Birmingham Jail is an authentic piece of literature by Dr. King is a testament to the power of using social movements to create lasting change through social movements Dr. King gained traction for his cause.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses described examples of a course concept without having provided a reasoned explanation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “These freedoms are the key to social movements because social movements often go against common views, so they need right to free speech & protest which allows them to participate in democracy because they are expressing their view for change in the government.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses provided an alternate perspective without including a description. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Some may say however, that interest groups reflect the participatory model of democracy better because of its ability to have a concentrated idea to push to the government ... Although this may be true interest groups are not as widespread as social movements due to their small concentration. Social movements really show that a large quantity of people believe in something which allows not only more people to be active in democracy but to have more change in the government.”

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 can spend time on the nine foundational documents to ensure students can recall specific, descriptive information about each document that is relevant to major course concepts. For example, students needed to describe the Letter from a Birmingham Jail, and it wasn't enough to say, “The Letter from a Birmingham Jail was written by Martin Luther King in jail.” Students needed to provide some phrasing that indicates their knowledge about the content of the document (e.g., “In his Letter from a Birmingham Jail, Martin Luther King advocates for social movements and non-violent protests.”).

Teachers could spend time helping students construct clear paragraphs for the tasks expected in the argumentative essay. This would include picking a side, writing a thesis with a line of reasoning, and providing support for the documents selected. Each section of the essay should address a separate skill that students should work toward mastering. Teachers could create an essay template and have students use it when writing essays on practice exams. Such a template could train students to write for a particular task in an organized manner.

Teachers could spend time in each unit of study tying course concepts to theories such as participatory and elite theories. In addition to testing students' skill of argumentation and knowledge of the nine foundational documents, the argumentative essay also tests students' ability to use course concepts and apply them to participatory democracy. One method is to use the Advanced Placement United States Government and Politics framework to illustrate how key course concepts apply to public participation in politics.

Teachers could find ways in their classroom activities to incorporate the skill of reasoning and alternative perspective/rebuttal so that students can practice this skill in other settings other than the essay. For example, teachers could ask students to give a rebuttal to a position statement another student made in a class discussion.

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 1.2 “Principles of American Government” examines *Federalist No. 10* and Topic 3.10 “Social Movements and Equal Protection” addresses “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” While the Constitution of the United States is applicable to most course objectives, the First Amendment is addressed specifically in Topic 3.3 “First Amendment: Freedom of Speech” and Topic 3.4 “First Amendment: Freedom of the Press.”
- 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 1.2: Daily Video 1 compares different theories of representative democracies and practice describing characteristics of each model via source analysis. Topic 5.6 “Daily Video 1” discusses how interest groups affect the policymaking process. Topic 3.10 “Daily Video 1” analyzes how the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment has been used to support and motivate social movements and Topic 3.10 “Daily Video 2” analyzes the required source “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” to connect usage of the Fourteenth Amendment to supporting civil rights movements.
- 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.