



Chief Reader Report on Student Responses:
2025 AP[®] Comparative Government and Politics Set 1
Free-Response Questions

• Number of Students Scored	27,184		
• Number of Readers	120		
• Score Distribution	Exam Score	N	%At
	5	4,440	16.3
	4	6,329	23.3
	3	8,745	32.2
	2	4,485	16.5
	1	3,185	11.7
• Global Mean	3.16		

The following comments on the 2025 free-response questions for AP[®] Comparative Government and Politics were written by the Chief Reader, Nicholas Clark, Professor, Susquehanna 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: Conceptual Analysis

Topic: Sovereignty and Economic Liberalization

	Max Points:	Mean Score:
(A)	1	0.71
(B)	1	0.72
(C)	1	0.60
(D)	1	0.40
Overall Mean Score: 2.43		

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

The intent of this question was to assess students' understanding of sovereignty and economic liberalization. Students were expected to describe sovereignty, then to describe a way in which governments promote economic liberalization. Students then needed to explain how economic liberalization could present challenges for maintaining sovereignty. Finally, students needed to explain why states would undertake economic liberalization despite the challenges to their sovereignty.

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, student responses illustrated content knowledge. Students generally had little difficulty describing sovereignty. Similarly, most students were able to describe one or more ways in which states could promote economic liberalization. Few students had trouble explaining how economic liberalization produced challenges for state sovereignty, although some student responses lacked the specificity necessary to earn credit. In contrast, many students struggled to explain why states might engage in economic liberalization despite the evident challenges to sovereignty. Many students identified a relevant tradeoff but could not explain why a state would choose economic liberalization at the expense of sovereignty.

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">Responses indicated that economic liberalization posed a challenge to sovereignty, but did not specify a mechanism that would create this challenge. For example, "Economic liberalization presents a challenge to sovereignty because a state does not control as much of national industry as before."	<ul style="list-style-type: none">"Economic liberalization presents a challenge to sovereignty because Multinational Corporations may demand policy changes that challenge the state's current policies."

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses did not explain why a state would prefer the benefits of economic liberalization to the loss of sovereignty. For example, “Economic liberalization leads to economic growth and increased trade between countries.” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “A state in pursuit of economic growth may choose economic liberalization despite the loss of sovereignty, because such growth results in political stability.” |
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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 could provide guidance on completing specific tasks required on the AP® exam, with emphasis on understanding the difference between various task verbs like *describe*, *explain how*, and *explain why*. Doing so will give students a better sense of how to provide responses that fully answer various prompts. Teachers could also provide students with opportunities to close explanatory loops, especially when students are asked to explain why phenomena develop in particular ways. Students should have practice in explaining why a state chooses between two alternatives, which requires more work than simply comparing or describing the two alternatives.

One possible interactive way to do this would be for students to form groups in which they create visual examples of task completion, on posters or the board to share with the rest of the class. One group could illustrate a ‘describe’ task (where the teacher assigns them a key concept, and students then list characteristics), while another group could illustrate an ‘explain’ task (where the teacher gives them a sample question, and students then provide relevant sections of an explanation with actor/policy, motivation/reason, target/outcome). Other student groups might illustrate additional assessment tasks (such as ‘identify,’ ‘define’), for the sake of comparison.

Finally, teachers should provide multiple opportunities for students to practice demonstrating their knowledge of sovereignty and economic liberalization. It is important for students to describe the characteristics of concepts throughout the course, especially the concepts found in the CED’s Learning Objectives.

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

- Resources related specifically to this prompt include:
 - AP Daily Video 3 for Topic 1.2 reviews the concept of sovereignty, both in the context of the course and as a response to an FRQ prompt.
 - AP Daily Video 1 for Topic 5.4 reviews the concept of economic liberalization, including a broad overview, country-specific examples, and guidance for responding to a practice FRQ.
 - AP Daily Video 3 for Topic 5.1 reviews the concept of multinational corporations, including an overview of the challenges they may present to course countries.
 - AP Daily: Live Review (Practice Sessions 2 and 3) are available through AP Classroom. These videos offer students advice and strategies to develop strong responses to FRQ1 on the AP Comparative Government and Politics Exam.
- Additional resources may be found on the AP Comparative Government and Politics Course on AP Central at: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-comparative-government-and-politics>

- The Course and Exam Description provides a section on “Developing the Disciplinary Practices” on pages 138–146. This section provides examples of questions and instructional strategies for incorporating the course skills into classroom instruction.
- Sign into AP Classroom to access AP Daily Videos and questions on the topics and skills addressed in this question. AP teachers can assign students short AP Daily Videos as homework, warm-ups, lectures, reviews, and more.
- AP teachers can also use the AP Question Bank in AP Classroom to enable students to practice and get feedback on formative topic questions and past AP Exam questions.
- AP Classroom also contains review videos for the AP Comparative Government and Politics Exam from recent years that have helpful information for students and that review key concepts, theories, and skills.
- The AP Comparative Government and Politics Online Teaching Community (OTC) is another great resource, which includes materials and resources posted not only by the College Board, but also by other teachers. The OTC Discussion Board is the place to ask questions, share resources, and exchange teaching ideas at: <https://apcommunity.collegeboard.org/group/apgopo-comp>

Question 2

Task: Quantitative Analysis

Topic: Corruption and Political Legitimacy

	Max Points:	Mean Score:
(A)	1	0.94
(B)	1	0.90
(C)	1	0.38
(D)	1	0.42
(E)	1	0.14
Overall Mean Score: 2.78		

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

The intent of this question was to assess students' ability to interpret, describe, and draw conclusions from quantitative data presented in a graph. In addition, the question was designed to assess students' ability to draw connections about the relationship between corruption and political legitimacy. Students were presented with a line graph of Corruption Perception Index scores for the United Kingdom, China, and Nigeria for the period 2014–2021. Students were asked to identify the country with the highest level of perceived corruption in 2015 and to describe a trend in China's score between 2018 and 2021. Students were then tasked with describing political legitimacy. The next two prompts required students to synthesize their analysis of the data in the graph with their knowledge of course content. They were asked first to draw a conclusion as to what explains low levels of perceived corruption in the United Kingdom. Finally, students were expected to explain what the data in the graph implies about the relationship between corruption and legitimacy in China.

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?

Students were consistently successful at interpreting the graph by demonstrating strong abilities at reading the data presented in the graph and describing a trend in the data. Most students were able to identify Nigeria as the country with the highest level of perceived corruption in 2015. Similarly, a large majority of students were able to describe a trend in the levels of perceived corruption in China between 2018 and 2021. This was particularly notable as the Corruptions Perception Index uses an inverted scale, where higher scores indicate less perceived corruption.

Students' ability to describe the concept of political legitimacy was mixed. Some students did not understand the concept of political legitimacy. Other students commonly confused political legitimacy with political capacity and governmental effectiveness. Another frequent point of confusion was conflating political legitimacy with democracy. When students made this error, they could rarely communicate that practices like elections are a source of legitimacy. Finally, other students who did not earn this point failed to convey that political legitimacy is not simply a government's right to rule, but rather the people's belief in the government's right to rule.

Students were relatively successful at using the data in the graph to draw a conclusion that explains the relatively low levels of perceived corruption in the United Kingdom. Most students were able to connect the United Kingdom's low levels of perceived corruption to factors such as the country's free and fair elections or long history of democratic practices.

The biggest challenge that students confronted on this question was explaining what the data in the graph imply about the relationship between corruption and legitimacy in China. The strongest correct answers conveyed a quite nuanced point given that China has both moderate levels of corruption and high legitimacy indicating that there is little relationship between corruption and legitimacy in China. Students most frequently did so by explaining how China’s high level of economic growth provides the regime with a source of legitimacy, thereby weakening the relationship between corruption and legitimacy typically seen in other countries. However, many students failed to fully explain the relationship between corruption and legitimacy in China and simply identified the correlation between the two concepts without explaining the relationship. Although many students understood that lower corruption strengthens legitimacy, very few answers referred to actions taken by the Chinese government, such as the government’s far-reaching anti-corruption campaign, that would explain why legitimacy in China would increase. Many answers provided descriptive, circular discussions of corruption and legitimacy.

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"> Responses described political popularity, political capacity, or political effectiveness rather than political legitimacy. For example, “Political legitimacy is the extent to which citizens believe the government has the ability to make effective laws.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Political legitimacy refers to citizens’ belief that the government has the right to rule.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses equated democratic political practices with legitimacy and thus did not identify them as sources of political legitimacy. For example, “Political legitimacy is defined as the extent of which a country’s people participate in the democracy—voting in elections, for example.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Elections are a source of political legitimacy.” “Political legitimacy can be derived from economic growth.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses identified the correlation between corruption and legitimacy without explaining the relationship. For example, “The data in the graph implies that China’s growing level of legitimacy over the years can be connected to its overall decreasing levels of corruption.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dissatisfaction with the level of perceived corruption in China harmed the legitimacy of the CCP, which prompted the government to take more actions to prevent corruption in order to improve their legitimacy.”

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 performed well in interpreting the data presented in the chart, so instructors should continue to expose their students to a variety of charts throughout the course. Student performance could be enhanced by familiarizing students with inverted scales to strengthen their abilities to interpret such data.

Teachers could most significantly improve student performance on the exam by focusing on a key skill: explaining the relationship between two concepts. Teachers should stress to students that “explain” prompts require that students articulate a cause-and-effect relationship. Student answers often describe correlations between two concepts or describe circular relationships among variables without linking the concepts in a cause-and-effect way. Correct answers thus need to start with the variable presented in the graph and link it to the concept used in the prompt by providing a causal mechanism. Familiarizing students with appropriate “action verbs” and encouraging them to use them in their responses would likely strengthen the causal connections that students intend to relay. Student use of action verbs, such as *produce*, *influence* or *impact*, would push students to explain how/why two concepts are connected and thus make the proposed connection or causal mechanism more explicit. A more active presentation would clarify the causal connection, rather than leaving raters to draw their own conclusions from passive relationships, which often mean that students do not earn the point.

Finally, it is important to explain the concept of political legitimacy, particularly as it relates to the AP Comparative Government and Politics course countries. Helping students to understand how political legitimacy is different from democracy, trust in government, political popularity, or the ability to govern would likely substantially improve students’ ability to describe political legitimacy and to explain relationships between legitimacy and other course concepts.

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

- Resources related specifically to this prompt include:
 - AP Daily Video 2 or Topic 1.1 reviews how political scientists use both empirical and quantitative analysis to make comparisons across course countries to draw conclusions about politics.
 - AP Daily Video 1 for Topic 1.8 defines political legitimacy and identifies the sources of legitimacy using quantitative analysis.
 - AP Daily: Live Review (Practice Sessions 4) are available through AP Classroom. These videos offer students advice and strategies to develop strong responses to FRQ2 on the AP Comparative Government and Politics Exam.
- Additional resources may be found on the AP Comparative Government and Politics Course on AP Central at: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-comparative-government-and-politics>
- The Course and Exam Description provides a section on “Developing the Disciplinary Practices” on pages 138–146. This section provides examples of questions and instructional strategies for incorporating the course skills into classroom instruction.
- Sign into AP Classroom to access AP Daily Videos and questions on the topics and skills addressed in this question. AP teachers can assign students short AP Daily Videos as homework, warm-ups, lectures, reviews, and more.
- AP teachers can also use the AP Question Bank in AP Classroom to enable students to practice and get feedback on formative topic questions and past AP Exam questions.
- AP Classroom also contains review videos for the AP Comparative Government and Politics Exam from recent years that have helpful information for students and that review key concepts, theories, and skills.

- The AP Comparative Government and Politics Online Teaching Community (OTC) is another great resource, which includes materials and resources posted not only by the College Board, but also by other teachers. The OTC Discussion Board is the place to ask questions, share resources, and exchange teaching ideas at: <https://apcommunity.collegeboard.org/group/apgopo-comp>

Question 3

Task: Comparative Analysis

Topic: Functions and Powers of the Judiciary

	Max Points:	Mean Score:
(A)	1	0.73
(B)	2	1.06
(C)	2	1.08

Overall Mean Score: 2.87

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

The intent of this question was to assess students' understanding of the judicial system in required course countries. The skills tested were descriptive and explanatory. Students first were expected to describe a function of a judicial system. Then they had to demonstrate their understanding of how judicial powers are restricted by describing limits on judicial power in two course countries. Finally, students needed to demonstrate their understanding of the relationship between the judiciary and other political institutions by explaining why these same countries would limit the power of their judicial systems.

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?

Many students were able to describe important functions of judicial systems including the ability to interpret or apply the law, maintain checks and balances, protect civil rights and civil liberties, and to help countries establish rule of law or maintain rule by law. However, numerous students confused the legal enforcement role of the executive branch with the application role of the judicial branch of government.

Many students were able to describe limits on judicial systems such as political party or executive branch domination of the judiciary, fixed terms or mandatory retirement requirements, removal processes such as impeachment, executive nomination and legislative approval restraints, and the ability to only directly apply law as in the case of code/common law or in rule by law systems.

The final part of the response required an explanation of why a course country would seek to limit the power of the judiciary. Many students successfully explained that democratic countries would choose to limit the power of the judiciary to check and balance institutional power between the branches of government and that authoritarian countries would limit the power of the judiciary to consolidate power with the executive branch or with a dominant political party or individual leader. Students also frequently explained the unique institutional reasons that would cause some political systems to restrict the judiciary such as parliamentary sovereignty in the case of the United Kingdom and the role of Sharia law in the cases of Iran and Nigeria.

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"> Confusing legal interpretation and application with enforcement of the law. For example, “The judicial branch enforces the law.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “A function of a judicial system is to interpret laws and to review them as stated within the constitution.” “The judiciary puts checks and balances on the head of government and the lawmaking system with the use of judicial review.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confusing the process for the selection and removal of judges. For example, “A limit on the power of the judicial system in Nigeria is that justices can be removed via presidential intervention.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “In Iran the head of the judiciary is appointed by the Supreme Leader. This places a limit on who can be a judiciary.” “In Nigeria, judges can be impeached by the legislature.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overreliance on legitimacy as an explanation. For example, “Russia limits the power of the judiciary because of legitimacy.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Russia limits the power of the judiciary to allow United Russia (the political party) to maintain one party dominance over the legislative/executive branches while allowing President Putin to consolidate power and control over the nation/presidency.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The absence of judicial review in the UK is because there is no written constitution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The courts in the UK do not have the power of judicial review because of the principle of parliamentary sovereignty.”

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 provide multiple opportunities for students to practice writing about the role of the judiciary in each of the six course countries. One suggestion is to introduce the process of selection and removal during an overview of the judicial branch for each country and then reinforce it later. Diagramming or drawing flowcharts of nomination and confirmation processes can help students see the connections.

It is important for students to practice writing with precision about country-specific information. For example, in their responses, students often confused the executive branch role of enforcing the law with the judicial branch role of applying or upholding the law. Students also confused typical or usual institutional characteristics of most judicial systems, such as their inability to enforce the law, as constraints that might be applied to deprive the judicial branch of the power that it wields as a matter of course.

Teachers can help students learn to distinguish between formal and informal checks on the judiciary by constructing a graphic organizer or engaging in a sorting activity. Using the country-specific material, the students should then be prompted to explain the extent to which power is restrained in practice.

Teachers should also have students practice writing this specific question format which often requires the students to use the two countries in part (C) that they used in part (B). Some students used the United States in both sections. It would be helpful to remind students that the United States is not a course country and that they should not use it as an example.

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

- Resources related specifically to this prompt include:
 - AP Daily Video 1 for Topic 2.8 investigates the structures and functions of judicial systems in China, Iran, and Mexico, while Video 2 covers Nigeria, Russia, and the United Kingdom.
 - AP Daily Video 1 for Topic 2.9 explains the importance of independent judiciaries relative to other political institutions.
 - AP Daily: Live Review (Practice Sessions 5 and 6) are available through AP Classroom. These videos offer students advice and strategies to develop strong responses to FRQ3 on the AP Comparative Government and Politics Exam.
- Additional resources may be found on the AP Comparative Government and Politics Course on AP Central at: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-comparative-government-and-politics>
- The Course and Exam Description provides a section on “Developing the Disciplinary Practices” on pages 138–146. This section provides examples of questions and instructional strategies for incorporating the course skills into classroom instruction.
- Sign into AP Classroom to access AP Daily Videos and questions on the topics and skills addressed in this question. AP teachers can assign students short AP Daily Videos as homework, warm-ups, lectures, reviews, and more.
- AP teachers can also use the AP Question Bank in AP Classroom to enable students to practice and get feedback on formative topic questions and past AP Exam questions.
- AP Classroom also contains review videos for the AP Comparative Government and Politics Exam from recent years that have helpful information for students and that review key concepts, theories, and skills.
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Question 4

Task: Argument

Topic: Civil Liberties and State Stability

	Max Points:	Mean Score:
(Thesis Claim Score)	1	0.62
(Evidence Score)	2	1.08
(Reasoning Score)	1	0.44
(Alternate Perspective Score)	1	0.36
Overall Mean Score: 2.50		

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

The intent of this question was to assess student understanding of civil liberties and their impact on stability in a state, while using one or more of the course concepts: democratization, transparency, or rule of law. Students were expected to write an argumentative essay using each of the following skills: articulating a defensible thesis/claim; supporting their thesis with two pieces of relevant evidence from a course country; using reasoning to explain why the provided evidence supported the thesis; and using refutation, concession, or rebuttal to respond to an alternative perspective. Specifically, students needed to demonstrate their understanding of civil liberties and their impact on stability, using the course concept(s) to establish the connection between civil liberties and the concepts by providing a defensible claim. Students needed to further demonstrate their knowledge of the course countries by providing specific, relevant, and accurate evidence from the countries that reflect the concept(s) used in the thesis. Students also needed to be able to demonstrate their understanding of how the evidence they described was linked to the relationship between civil liberties and stability provided in their thesis. Finally, students needed to demonstrate their understanding of alternate explanations by describing an alternate thesis, then justifying their concession, rebuttal, or refutation.

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?

The different tasks within this question required students to demonstrate several critical thinking skills, applying substantive knowledge about civil liberties and stability, while using argumentation. This type of question required students to integrate their knowledge of course content with their skills of providing a defensible thesis, specific and relevant evidence and reasoning, and describing an alternate perspective and responding using rebuttal, refutation, or concession. Most responses provided a defensible thesis, usually incorporating democratization and transparency. Many responses successfully described evidence relevant to course concepts, especially with respect to civil liberties and democratization. Those responses that demonstrated understanding of the course concepts and offered accurate evidence were generally able to use reasoning to connect evidence to the thesis. Many responses sufficiently described an alternate perspective, but significantly fewer extended to rebuttal, refutation, or concession.

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"> Not understanding civil liberties as distinct from civil rights in the evidence. For example, “The Mexican government protects the people’s right to vote.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Democratization in Nigeria was accompanied by greater protection for civil liberties, especially freedom of speech and religion.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence lacks a connection to one of the provided course concepts. For example, “The United Kingdom protects freedom of the press and an independent media.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Media and speech freedoms are seriously limited in Iran, China, and Russia. These countries lack transparency in their government's actions.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses that were not able to use reasoning to explain why the evidence supports the claim or thesis, using one or more of the provided course concepts. For example, “Government protection of civil liberties increases stability because the government is viewed as legitimate.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Thus, application of rule of law to protect civil liberties increases stability because people are willing to accept a government’s authority as they trust it to be fair.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternate perspective lacks rebuttal, refutation, or concession. For example, “Some might argue that increasing civil liberties decreases stability because citizens may protest.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Some might argue that restricting civil liberties increases stability because opponents can be put in jail where they will not pose a threat to the regime. However, citizens may protest unjust arrests, increasing instability.”

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 provide frequent opportunities for students to define and explain key vocabulary terms (especially the difference between civil liberties and civil rights), concepts, and principles, and discuss contemporary examples illustrating said vocabulary, concepts, and principles in the six course countries.

Teachers could help students identify relevant evidence, and practice using reasoning to connect that evidence to a thesis statement.

Teachers could outline how to develop an alternative or opposing line of thought, and how to write a rebuttal, refutation, or concession of that line of reasoning.

Teachers could review released scoring guides with students and allow students to see valid examples of high, medium, and low answers. Students can further practice by assessing released prompts to see what appropriate responses may look like.

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

- Resources related specifically to this prompt include:
 - AP Daily Videos 1 and 2 for Topic 3.7 describe the concepts of civil rights and civil liberties and explain the restrictions on freedom of the media.
 - AP Daily Videos 1 and 2 for Topic 1.4 describe the process of democratization and the factors that help and hinder democratization.
 - AP Daily: Live Review (Practice Sessions 7 and 8) are available through AP Classroom. These videos offer students advice and strategies to develop strong responses to FRQ4 on the AP Comparative Government and Politics Exam.
- Additional resources may be found on the AP Comparative Government and Politics Course on AP Central at: <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-comparative-government-and-politics>
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