

**Chief Reader Report on Student Responses:
2019 AP[®] Comparative Government and Politics Free-Response Questions
Set 1**

• Number of Students Scored	23,522			
• Number of Readers	118			
• Score Distribution		Exam Score	N	%At
		5	5,264	22.4
		4	5,747	24.4
		3	4,506	19.2
		2	4,405	18.7
		1	3,600	15.3
• Global Mean	3.20			

The following comments on the 2019 free-response questions for AP[®] Comparative Government and Politics were written by the Chief Reader, Jennifer Horan, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of North Carolina Wilmington. 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:** Descriptive & Explanatory**Max. Points:** 3**Mean Score:** 1.52***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

The intent of this question was to assess students' understanding of the prime minister's power in parliamentary regimes. The skills tested were descriptive and explanatory. Students had three specific tasks: to describe one power of the British prime minister, to describe one way the British parliamentary system restrains the power of the prime minister, and to explain how parliamentary systems enhance the power of the prime minister in the policy-making process.

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

Most students correctly described one power of the British prime minister. Most students correctly described one way in which the British parliamentary system restrains the power of the prime minister. Many students correctly explained how parliamentary systems enhance the power of the prime minister in the policy making process.

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"> Some students incorrectly identified a power of the British prime minister as approving or passing legislation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrate understanding by describing votes of no confidence as a way the British parliament restrains the power of the prime minister.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students did not adequately explain how parliamentary systems enhance the power of the prime minister. Students failed to mention that the prime minister has the backing of the majority party or that the parliamentary system makes it easier to advance the prime minister's policy agenda. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "As a PM holds majority in Commons and MP's are expected to go along with PM/Cabinet policy, it's rare that a PM has trouble passing policy."

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

Teachers should emphasize that the powers of the British prime minister do not include passing or approving legislation. Teachers should emphasize that the British prime minister can initiate or propose legislation but it is the House of Commons' prerogative to approve it. Teachers should encourage students to understand the vote of no confidence to avoid confusion with impeachment that takes place in presidential systems.

Teachers should encourage students to fully explain how or why parliamentary systems enhance the power of the prime minister in policy making. Identifying fusion of powers or the existence of common goals between prime minister and the parliament does not provide a sufficiently complete answer to earn the last point of the question.

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

AP Classroom, which contains the Personal Progress Checks and AP Question Bank, will have questions paired with specific course content, practices and skills that teachers can use as formative assessments to help prepare their students.

The Online Teacher Community includes a library of resources that can be searched by disciplinary practices, skills, content, and resource type. <https://apcommunity.collegeboard.org/group/apgopo-comp/resource-library/>

Question #2**Task:** Descriptive & Explanatory**Max. Points:** 3**Mean Score:** 1.50***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

The intent of this question was to assess students' understanding of political socialization and how it affects regime stability. The skills tested were descriptive and explanatory. Students had three specific tasks: to identify an agent of political socialization, to describe the process of political socialization, and to explain how political socialization affects regime stability.

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

Most students correctly identified an agent of political socialization. Most students correctly described the process of political socialization. Many students correctly explained how political socialization affects regime stability.

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"> Political Socialization was often confused with socialism or with political or economic liberalization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrate understanding by identifying family, schools, media, peers, religion, or associations as an agent of political socialization.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descriptions of political socialization were often limited to learning about the government rather than the process of transmitting the political values, norms and ideologies of the country. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrate understanding by describing political socialization as the process by which individuals learn about the political values, beliefs and attitudes of their families or other agents of socialization and acquire their own political beliefs and ideologies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students confused regime stability with popularity of the current leadership of the country, focusing on the party in power and the opposition, rather than on the more longterm stability of the regime. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrate understanding by explaining how political socialization leads to enhanced legitimacy of a regime. This happens when parents or other agents of political socialization instill in children the values that are aligned with the regime. This way, later generations are inclined to support the regime. One could also look at indoctrination of the youth through propaganda by use of media, schools, or youth associations will foster a sense of nationalism or patriotism in the youth so they support the regime's values.

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

Teachers should emphasize that the process of political socialization involves an agent that is transmitting the political values and norms of the regime. Teachers should differentiate between regime and government. Teachers should emphasize vocabulary and differentiate between political socialization and socialism.

Teachers should encourage students to give specific explanations that connect how the process of political socialization leads to an increase or decrease in the stability of the regime. For example, teachers might give the specific example of how schools in China indoctrinate students, creating a new generation of citizens who would support the regime, in order to increase its stability.

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

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Question #3**Task:** Descriptive & Explanatory**Max. Points:** 3**Mean Score:** .95***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

The intent of this question was to assess students' understanding of civil society, its effects on democracy, and why democracies restrict civil society. The skills tested were descriptive and explanatory. Students had three specific tasks: to define civil society, to explain how civil society strengthens democracy, and to explain why democracies would restrict civil society.

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

Many students correctly defined civil society. Most students correctly explained how civil society strengthens democracy. Many students correctly explained why democracies would restrict civil society.

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"> Some students could define civil society as an organization or group, however many did not correctly define civil society as autonomous or outside the control of the state. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrate understanding by defining civil society as a voluntary organization or groups outside of state or government control.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students did not adequately explain how civil society strengthens democracy because many students did not mention a group activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Civil society strengthens democracy because interest groups provide citizens the opportunity to express views.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students did not adequately explain why democracies restrict civil society, or they confused democracies with authoritarian regimes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Democracies restrict civil society to prevent the formation of hate groups that could threaten the rest of the population of a state.”

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

Teachers should emphasize two elements of civil society: an organization or group and autonomy from the government.

Teachers should encourage students to provide specific examples of how civil society strengthens democracy and emphasize the role of group actions, such as providing opportunities to express views and participating in government processes.

Teachers should encourage students to give specific explanations of why a democracy would restrict civil society and should emphasize the difference between reasons why democratic and authoritarian regimes would restrict civil society. Teachers might refer to current events in order to illustrate why democracies and authoritarian states might restrict civil society.

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

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Question #4**Task:** Descriptive**Max. Points:** 3**Mean Score:** 1.33***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

The intent of this question was to assess students' understanding of the institutional and political distribution of power in Iran. The skill tested was descriptive. Students had three specific tasks: to describe one of the constitutional responsibilities of the supreme leader in Iran, to describe the constitutionally defined relationship between the supreme leader and the Assembly of Experts, and to describe the political relationship between the supreme leader and the Revolutionary Guard.

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

Many students correctly identified a constitutional responsibility of the supreme leader in Iran. Most students were able to describe the constitutionally defined relationship between the supreme leader and the Assembly of Experts. Many students were able to describe the political relationship between the supreme leader and the Revolutionary Guards.

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"> Students often confused constitutional responsibilities with the political powers acquired by the supreme leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrate understanding by describing the constitutional responsibilities accurately: the supreme leader is the head of state; he appoints 6 of the 12 members of the Guardian Council; appoints the Head of Media; the supreme leader appoints the Commander-in-Chief of the Revolutionary Guard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students confused the Assembly of Experts and the Guardian Council while describing the constitutional relations between the former and the supreme leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The constitutional relationship of the Assembly of Experts with the supreme leader is to elect, monitor and if necessary remove the supreme leader from office.” The Assembly of Experts monitors the supreme leader to ensure that his actions remain consistent with Islamic principles. The Assembly of Experts make sure that the supreme ruler is still qualified and mentally and physically capable of carrying out the duties of the office.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student descriptions often failed to describe the political nature of the relationship between the supreme leader and the Revolutionary Guard. Many students inaccurately described the relationship as between a regular army and its commander-in-chief. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Revolutionary Guard, under the leadership of the supreme leader, is committed to protecting the principles of the 1979 revolution • The supreme leader often appoints officers of the Revolutionary Guard to other positions of authority, and the Revolutionary Guard implicitly obey the supreme leader
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Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

Teachers should emphasize that constitutionally, the Iranian system is designed to provide some checks and balances between the powers of the different branches of government (even if this does not always work in practice).

Teachers should emphasize to students that constitutional responsibilities and powers are not the same as political powers that might have been acquired or usurped by an institution.

Students should be encouraged to understand the composition and roles of key Iranian constitutional institutions like the supreme leader, Assembly of Experts, Guardian Council, Expediency Council, President, Parliament and Ministers. Teachers should emphasize the constitutional relationship between these institutions of government.

Teachers should emphasize that answers have to be precise. For example, “The supreme leader nominates half (or 6 of) the members of the Guardian Council” earns a point while “The supreme leader nominates members of the Guardian Council” does not earn a point.

Teachers should stress that students should give the number of examples required by the prompt. Points are deducted for incorrect additional responses even if the others are correct.

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

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Question #5**Task:** Explanatory & Descriptive**Max. Points:** 3**Mean Score:** 1.34***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

The intent of this question was to assess students' understanding of criticism of the government in authoritarian regimes. The skills tested were explanatory and descriptive. Students had three specific tasks: to explain two reasons why authoritarian states allow citizens to criticize the government and to describe a specific policy adopted by Russia, China, or Iran to restrict criticism of the government.

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

Most students correctly explained one reason why authoritarian states would allow citizens to criticize the government. Many students correctly explained two reasons why authoritarian states allow criticism. Many students correctly described a specific policy adopted by Russia, China, or Iran to restrict criticism of the government.

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"> Most incorrect responses described hypothetical or actual examples, rather than explaining the reasons why an authoritarian regime is motivated to allow government criticism by citizens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrate understanding by identifying or linking an example to a motive of authoritarian governments, including internal or external legitimacy or preventing civil unrest.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many responses did not adequately link a given policy to the goal of restricting criticism of government, or offered vague or inaccurate descriptions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrate understanding by connecting the goal of restricted criticism of government to policy in a specific case, such as, internet restriction in China, media censorship in Iran, or laws against criticism in Russia.

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

Teachers should emphasize the difference between a description and an explanation. Additionally, teachers should point out that official reasons claimed by government can differ from the actual motive underlying a given action or policy. For example, students commonly provided “political efficacy” as a reason for tolerance of criticism by authoritarian governments, rather than explaining how the appearance of efficacy is a strategy to enhance internal or external legitimacy or to prevent escalating civil unrest. It may be helpful for teachers to ask their students how a government benefits from a particular policy.

Teachers should encourage students to give descriptions that are correct and specific. Some responses provided vague descriptions that referenced all three countries. For example, stating “all three countries restrict media” is not a specific policy.

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

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Question #6**Task:** Descriptive & Explanatory**Max. Points:** 6**Mean Score:** 2.36***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

The intent of this question was to assess students' understanding of party systems and electoral systems, as well as the relationships of those two types of systems with policy making and regime change. The skills tested were descriptive and explanatory. Students had six specific tasks: to describe two different types of party systems, to explain the effect of each of those party system types on policy making, to explain how an electoral system influences a party system, and to explain how regime change influences party systems.

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

Most students correctly described a single-party system as under the control of a single political party, a two-party system as one in which two parties compete for control of the government, and a multiparty system as one with three or more political parties that are competitive in elections. Many students correctly explained that policy making is more efficient in a single party system. Most students correctly explained that opposing views often lead to gridlock in a two party or multiparty system. Few students were able to explain how electoral systems influence party systems. Most responses defined a proportional or single-member district system. Some students were able to explain that a change from an authoritarian to a democratic regime would lead to free and fair elections and an expansion of the party system.

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"> Students incorrectly identified unitary, federal, presidential, parliamentary, proportional, and single-member district systems as party systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrate understanding by describing dominant party, single-party, two-party, or multiparty systems.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students did not adequately explain how or why a single-member district system leads to a two-party system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "In first past the post systems the party system is more likely to be a one-or two party system because people don't want to "waste" their vote on a smaller candidate that probably won't win the election"

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

Teachers should emphasize the differences between electoral and party systems. Some students seem to understand that the former influences the latter, but have difficulty keeping straight that proportional and single-member district are the electoral systems and not party systems.

Students also struggled to link regime change with party system change. Teachers should emphasize the specific changes instituted with a new regime that might influence a party system. For example, the introduction of free and fair elections or rules providing parties with equal access to the media might facilitate the transition from a single-party to a two-party or multiparty system.

Teachers should emphasize that regime change is a fundamental alteration of the political system, which is often achieved through altering the constitution or the fundamental laws structuring the government.

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

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Question #7**Task:** Descriptive & Explanatory**Max. Points:** 5**Mean Score:** 3.49***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

The intent of this question was to assess students' understanding of the reason authoritarian regimes hold elections, of how presidential elections since 2000 have strengthened or weakened democracy in Russia and in Mexico, and of how a factor other than elections strengthens democracy. The skills tested were descriptive and explanatory. Students had five specific tasks: to describe one reason that authoritarian regimes hold elections, to explain how presidential elections since 2000 have strengthened or weakened democracy in Russia, to explain how presidential elections since 2000 have strengthened or weakened democracy in Mexico, to identify a factor other than elections that strengthens democracy, and to explain how a factor other than elections strengthens democracy.

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

Most students correctly described one reason that authoritarian regimes hold elections and many correctly explained how presidential elections since 2000 strengthened or weakened democracy in Russia and in Mexico. Most students correctly identified a factor other than elections that strengthens democracy. Many students correctly explained how a factor other than elections strengthens democracy.

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"> Many students incorrectly cited President Putin's use of power to limit free media as an incorrect explanation of how presidential elections in Russia since 2000 have weakened democracy in Russia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrated understanding by explaining how Mexico's presidential elections since 2000 created a multiparty system that strengthened democracy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students incorrectly used economic strength to explain how a factor other than elections contributed to democracy. Though some students correctly identified a free press as a factor other than elections that strengthened democracy, some incorrectly linked the factor of free press to participation in elections which was specifically excluded from the question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Civil society contributes to democracy since, if active, citizens can influence, persuade, and even suggest new policies and changes to legislators." "Another factor other than elections that strengthens democracy is the freedom of the press. By not getting involved in the media, democracy is strengthened due to the ability to inform citizens of the government's action so that they can react in a positive or negative manner."

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

Teachers should emphasize that authoritarian regimes often hold elections to create more political legitimacy. Teachers should emphasize how competition in elections, or the lack of competition in elections, can contribute to the strengthening or weakening of a democracy.

Teachers should encourage students to read the prompt carefully and respond with specific identifications and explanations. Where called for, explanations should be clearly linked to the identified concept.

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

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Question #8**Task:** Descriptive & Explanatory**Max. Points:** 5**Mean Score:** 2.83***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

The intent of this question was to assess students' understanding of how age structure impacts economic and political systems. The skills tested were descriptive and explanatory. Students had five specific tasks: to describe one difference between the age structure of China and the age structure of Nigeria, to describe one governmental policy that has influenced the age structure in China, to describe one economic consequence of the age structure in Nigeria, to describe one economic consequence of the age structure in China, and to explain a political consequence of having a disproportionately younger population.

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

Most students correctly described one difference between the age structure of China compared to the age structure of Nigeria. Most students correctly described the one-child policy as the government policy that influenced age structure in China. Some students correctly described one economic consequence of the age structure in Nigeria. Many students correctly described one economic consequence of the age structure in China. Some students correctly explained a political consequence of having a disproportionately younger population.

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 (c) some students inaccurately described an economic consequence in Nigeria as not having enough workers to fill vacant jobs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “As Nigeria’s population and working class is rapidly increasing, job growth cannot keep up with the demand for new jobs.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In part (d) some students misread the population pyramids and drew inaccurate conclusions. For example, some responses inaccurately stated that due to the large elderly population, there are currently not enough workers in China today. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “The aging population will soon retire, without enough new, younger workers to replace them.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In part (e) some students did not show understanding of what a political consequence is and were often vague or inaccurate in their responses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “One political consequence of a large younger population is the need to appeal to them in order to win elections.”

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

Teachers should emphasize how to clearly read and interpret graphs, charts, population pyramids, and other visual stimuli. Students commonly made claims that did not correspond with the population pyramids when describing economic consequences. Students often mischaracterized the Nigerian population as being too young to work and the Chinese population as being too old to work.

Teachers should emphasize the differences between economic and political consequences. Students commonly described an economic consequence when prompted to explain a political consequence.

Teachers should emphasize that political consequences refer to specific, tangible outcomes within the political system and that examples of political consequences include changes in election behavior and representation, regime and government changes, protests, and acts of political violence.

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

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