

**Chief Reader Report on Student Responses:
2019 AP[®] Comparative Government and Politics Free-Response Questions
Set 2**

• 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:** 1.57***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

The intent of this question was to assess students' understanding of regime change and the difference between regime change and a change in government. The skills tested were descriptive and explanatory. Students had three specific tasks: to define the concept of regime change, to identify a country studied within the AP Comparative Government and Politics course that has experienced a regime change since 1990, and to explain how a change in regime is different from a change in 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?

Many students correctly defined regime change. Most students correctly identified a country within the AP Comparative Government and Politics course that has experienced regime change since 1990. Many students correctly explained how a change in regime is different from a change in 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"> Some students defined regime change as a change in leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrate understanding by defining regime change as a sweeping change to a political system.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students did not adequately differentiate between a change in government and change in regime. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrate understanding by explaining that a regime change is a complete change to a political system while a change in government is a change in leadership.

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 definition of regime change. Students commonly did not define regime change as a complete transformation of a political system. Teachers should emphasize that regime change is a sweeping, systemic change that goes beyond changes to some rules or institutions of government.

Teachers should encourage students to differentiate between changes in government and changes in regime. Students commonly did not offer an adequate explanation of the difference between these two. Teachers should point out that a change in government is a change in leadership while a change in regime is change to a political system.

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, which 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:** Identification and Description**Max. Points:** 3**Mean Score:** 1.49***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

The intent of this question was to assess students' ability to recognize an indicator of income inequality, their understanding of the political consequences of income inequality, and their understanding of governments' attempts to reduce income inequality through public policy. The skills tested were descriptive. Students had three specific tasks; to identify an indicator of income inequality, to describe a political consequence of income inequality, and to describe a policy that governments use to reduce income inequality.

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

The vast majority of students correctly identified an indicator of income inequality. Some incorrectly identified GDP or HDI as indicators of income inequality. Many students—roughly half—correctly described a political consequence of income inequality. Some students incorrectly described mere political disagreement or multiple parties as consequences of income inequality. Some students incorrectly identified coinciding cleavages as a political consequence of income inequality. The vast majority of students correctly described a policy that governments use to reduce income inequality.

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"> A few students incorrectly identified GDP or HDI as indicators of income inequality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses that identified the Gini Index or Coefficient as an indicator of income inequality.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In describing a political consequence of income inequality, some students described some aspect of income inequality, or described a non-political consequence of income inequality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “If these low-income...citizens are struggling under a current regime to support themselves and their families, this could lead to them expressing their concerns through protests and demonstrations, which might...lead to instability.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students gave a vague response, and did not describe a specific policy that governments use to reduce income inequality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Governments use a policy of social welfare to reduce income inequality. This social welfare provides health care, education, and perhaps food and work for the poorest people.”

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 use the Gini Coefficient in homework questions or tests, so that students are familiar with this measure of economic inequality. They should also emphasize the various political effects of income inequality in their class discussions and course readings on political participation, unrest and revolution, and political trust and legitimacy.

Some students confused the idea of an *indicator* of inequality (such as the Gini Coefficient) with *variables* that may be correlated with inequality, such as the poverty rate, or education levels among the poor. Teachers could emphasize the idea of an indicator and should emphasize that an indicator measures several variables.

Around half of students correctly describe a political consequence of income inequality. This was the most challenging part of the question for students. Some responses incorrectly describe political disagreement, partisan competition, or partisan attachment (i.e. different income groups voting for different parties) as consequences of income inequality. But disagreement is present in virtually all political systems, not only those with marked income inequality. Many students correctly described heightened conflict, political polarization, or political unrest and upheaval as political consequences of income inequality.

Some students incorrectly pointed to economic consequences of income inequality, rather than political consequences of income inequality. Teachers should emphasize the difference between political and economic outcomes.

Most students correctly described a policy governments use to reduce income inequality. The most common weakness was that students were too vague, often simply indicating “a welfare state,” “welfare programs,” or “socialism,” rather than describing 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 #3**Task:** Descriptive & Explanatory**Max. Points:** 3**Mean Score:** 1.61***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

The intent of this question was to assess students' understanding of sustainable development and the economic factors that influence environmental policy in Nigeria. The skills tested were descriptive and explanatory. Students had three specific tasks: to describe the goal of sustainable development, to identify one sector of Nigeria's economy in which sustainable development has been a serious challenge, and to explain how economic factors influence environmental policy in Nigeria.

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 describe the goal of sustainable development. Most students correctly identified one sector of Nigeria's economy in which sustainable development has been a serious challenge. Many students correctly explained how economic factors influence environmental policy in 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"> Some students incorrectly described the goal of sustainable development as economic independence or solely as environmental protection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrate understanding by describing the goal of sustainable development as economic growth that can be maintained into the future, or by describing the goal as economic growth or improvements in social welfare that do not degrade the environment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students confused economic factors with political factors, or students explained how economic factors affected the environment instead of environmental policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrate understanding by explaining that Nigeria's oil dependence or Nigeria's underdevelopment have complicated efforts to pass and enforce environmental regulations.

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 goals of sustainable development. Students commonly did not describe the goal of sustainable development as economic growth that can be maintained into the future or as economic growth that does not degrade the environment. Teachers should point out that sustainable development entails more than environmental protection; it also entails economic growth or improvements in social welfare.

Teachers should encourage students to give specific examples of how economic factors may complicate environmental policies in the countries studied in the AP Comparative Government course. Students commonly offered an explanation of how economic factors in Nigeria affected the environment in a negative manner, but many did not offer an adequate explanation of how economic factors influenced environmental policy. Teachers should point out that economic factors can affect the passage and enforcement of environmental policy in many ways.

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 & Explanatory**Max. Points:** 3**Mean Score:** 1.22***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

The intent of this question was to assess students' understanding of why states use coercion domestically and how democracies are constrained in their use of coercion. The skills tested were conceptual and analytical. Students had three specific tasks: to explain why both authoritarian and democratic states use coercion domestically and to describe two ways democratic states are constrained in their use of coercion.

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?

Few responses were able to explain why both authoritarian states and democratic states use coercion domestically. Most responses were able to describe one way that democratic states are constrained in their use of coercion. Many responses were able to describe a second way that democratic states are constrained in their use of coercion. The most common correct responses described a political motivation such as the need to maintain popular support, an institutional check such as an independent judiciary, or public accountability through an independent press or free and fair elections.

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 responses described how both authoritarian states and democratic states use coercion domestically instead of explaining why both states use coercion domestically. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Both authoritarian and democratic states use coercion domestically to ensure the operation of unpopular but necessary government initiatives.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many responses described two characteristics of a democratic state instead of describing two different ways that democratic states are constrained in their use of coercion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Democratic states are constrained in their use of coercion by elections with citizens voting out representatives or parties too harsh in their use of coercion.” “Democratic states are constrained in their use of coercion by a free press – the media acts as a watchdog in reporting any corruption or coercion to the people.”

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 both authoritarian states and democratic states use coercion. Teachers should provide students with opportunities to identify and compare different coercive policies in the six core countries so that students will better understand the concept and the reasons why states use coercion. Current events assignments can also help students learn about specific coercive policies and why governments use them.

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, which teachers can use as formative assessments to help prepare their students.

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Question #5**Task:** Descriptive & Explanatory**Max. Points:** 3**Mean Score:** 1.35***What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?***

The intent of this question was to assess students' understanding of how and why the economic ideology of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has changed during the last 30 years. The skills tested were conceptual and analytical. Students had three specific tasks: to describe how the economic ideology of the CCP has changed since the time Deng Xiaoping held power and to explain two reasons why the CCP has changed its economic ideology over the past 30 years.

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 responses were able to describe how the economic ideology of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has changed since Deng Xiaoping held power. Many responses described how the CCP extended the economic liberalization policies started by Deng during the 1980s. Some responses specifically described changes to the economic ideology of the CCP as an increase in state direction of the economy under Xi Jinping. Most responses correctly explained the reason that the CCP changed its economic ideology over the past 30 years in order to maximize economic growth. Many responses correctly described the reason that the CCP changed its economic ideology over the past 30 years to ensure the legitimacy of the CCP or to exercise greater international influence.

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 responses described the change in economic ideology of the CCP outside the time frame of the question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since the leadership of Deng, the “Chinese Communist Party has moved toward more acceptance of a free-market based economy.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many responses described two different economic policy changes made by the CCP in the last 30 years instead of explaining two different reasons why the CCP changed its economic ideology. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “To allow more foreign companies to work and operate in China so that the Chinese economy can grow.” “This foreign investment has greatly accelerated China’s economic growth and given the CCP greater legitimacy and favor with their people.”

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 help students understand the time frame of major economic policy changes for each of the six core countries. A graphic organizer comparing economic policy changes for each of the six core countries over the past 30 years can help students compare ruling party ideology with specific policies regarding economic liberalization. Teachers should have students analyze data from a source such as the World Bank to trace the economic growth rates of each country and compare this with policy changes made by the government. This may help students better understand the role that party ideology plays in developing economic policy. Current events assignments can also help students make connections between various political responses by different governments in facing economic challenges.

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

The intent of this question was to assess students' understanding of the role of the bureaucracy in political systems. The skills tested were descriptive and explanatory. Students had three specific tasks: to describe two functions of a bureaucracy in a political system, to identify one way governments recruit civil servants in a merit-based bureaucracy and explain how this method of recruitment can build legitimacy in a political system, and to identify one way governments recruit civil servants in a non-merit-based bureaucracy and explain how this method of recruitment can build legitimacy in a political system.

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 two functions of a bureaucracy in a political system. Most students correctly identified how governments recruit civil servants in a merit-based bureaucracy, and most students explained how this method of recruitment can build legitimacy in a political system. Many students correctly identified how governments recruit civil servants in a non-merit-based bureaucracy, and some students explained how this method of recruitment can build legitimacy in a political 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"> Some students described the bureaucracy in vague terms such as “Boots on the ground of government” or “paper pushers,” and did not describe specific functions of a bureaucracy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrate understanding by describing bureaucracies as implementing policy, connecting or linking the government to the people, or allowing for specialization and expertise.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A few students mistakenly described adequate compensation, pay, or benefits as a merit-based system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrated understanding of merit-based bureaucracy by citing successful completion of a civil service exam, educational background in a related field, or successful career experience in a related field.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students were often too vague in their identification of recruiting in a non-merit-based bureaucracy. The explanation point proved far more challenging than it did for merit-based bureaucracies. Too often, students focused on individual bureaucrats being “chosen with connections” and not to the wider 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrated understanding by citing patron-client relationships or party loyalty, and by explaining that the relationship was mutually beneficial, because groups receiving bureaucratic positions often increased their support for the regime.

groups (ethnicity, party, religion) they represented	
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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 describing the functions of a bureaucracy requires a description of the specific tasks bureaucracies serve, and not merely qualities associated with bureaucrats themselves.

Teachers should differentiate between how governments recruit civil servants in merit and non-merit-based bureaucracies and link this method of recruitment with a thorough explanation of how that method can build legitimacy in a political system, not merely how it benefits the bureaucrats chosen to staff the positions.

Teachers should emphasize ways in which non-merit-based bureaucracies can both hinder and enhance legitimacy.

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

The intent of this question was to assess students' understanding of how the British prime minister and the Mexican president are selected and how these two processes reflect both fusion and separation of power, respectively. Students had four specific tasks: to describe two steps in the process of selecting the British prime minister, to explain how the selection process for the British prime minister reflects a fusion of power, to describe the process of selecting the Mexican president, and to explain how the selection process for the Mexican president reflects a separation of power.

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 described two steps in the process of selecting the British prime minister. Many students correctly explained how the selection process for the British prime minister reflects a fusion of power. Most students correctly described the selection process of the Mexican president. Many students correctly explained how the selection process for the Mexican president reflects a separation of power

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 simply provided characteristics of presidential or parliamentary systems without describing how the executive is selected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrate understanding by connecting the process by which the head of government is selected in Great Britain and Mexico with fusion of power and separation of power, respectively.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In part (a) students described a requirement for becoming prime minister instead of describing the steps in the process of selecting the prime minister. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrate understanding by describing the process by which the head of government is selected in Great Britain.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In part (c) some responses described the process of selecting the Mexican president as through the dedazo. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrated understanding by stating that the process of selecting the Mexican president involves direct popular elections.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In part (a) responses often described the process of selecting the British prime minister as through a vote by the entire parliament. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses demonstrated understanding by indicating that the majority party (or the coalition) chooses the prime minister.

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 stress that the process for selecting the executive is different from the requirements a person must meet in order to become the executive. The selection process refers to the actions that are undertaken, such as parties choosing the leader of the party or electing this individual to the House of Commons. Being the party leader or a member of the House of Commons is not part of a process.

Teachers should emphasize the details of the selection processes involved in choosing the executive across the six core countries in AP Comparative Government and Politics. For example, the Mexican president is chosen through direct election and through a plurality vote. Many of the textbooks continue to discuss at length the mechanism of the Mexican president choosing his successor even though this practice has not been used in more than 20 years. Teachers should emphasize the differences between past and present practices within the six core countries. Teachers and students should stay up-to-date on current events in the countries studied.

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

The intent of this question was to assess students' understanding of the nature of restrictions on civil society in Russia adopted after Vladimir Putin became president in 2000, the reasons for the restrictions, political activity that indicates civil society has continued despite these restrictions, and why the Russian government continues to allow some civil society groups. The skills tested were descriptive and explanatory. Students had four specific tasks: to describe two restrictions to civil society, to explain why the Russian government restricts civil society, to describe one example of political activity that indicates civil society has persisted despite these restrictions, and to explain why the Russian government continues to allow some civil society groups.

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 at least one restriction to civil society groups since Putin became president in 2000, and accurately described one example of political activity that indicates civil society has persisted despite these restrictions. Many students were able to explain why the Russian government restricts civil society, as well as why it continues to allow some civil society groups. Many students were also able to describe a second restriction to civil society groups.

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) many students did not understand that civil society groups are voluntary groups outside of government control. As a result, many responses failed to describe restrictions that would apply to civil society groups. Some inaccurately described restrictions on individual political activity, or they described structural changes such as the extended term limit for the presidency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Russian government has restricted civil society by requiring NGOs that receive foreign money to register as foreign agents.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In part (b) many responses simply stated that governments want to restrict criticism without explaining why the government wanted to restrict that criticism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Russian government restricts civil society groups which criticize the government because it wants to maintain power and is afraid too much negative judgment will undercut its legitimacy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In part (c), some students described an example of persistence by an individual rather than persistence by civil society groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite crackdowns on opposition groups and the arrest of protest bands such as Pussy Riot, groups supporting the election of opposition leaders

	continue to protest fraud in the election process.
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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 terminology and differentiate between civil society and civil liberties. Teachers should emphasize that it is important to read the question carefully so that students can accurately respond to the prompt. Teachers should continue to help students understand the difference between a description and an identification while helping students understand that an explanation requires a link between cause and effect. Teachers should continue to provide students with current examples of civil society groups and political participation and should continue to help students analyze why governments make the choices they do and to recognize the implications of the choices governments make.

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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