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# AP United States Government and Politics

## Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

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#### **Free Response Question 1**

- Scoring Guideline**
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# AP<sup>®</sup> UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS 2018 SCORING GUIDELINES

## Question 1

**5 points**

**Part (a): 2 points**

Two points are earned for identifying two activities that political parties do to win elections.

- Advertise
- Fundraise
- Nominate candidates
- Organize rallies
- Hold conventions
- Mobilize voters/Get out the vote (GOTV)
- Generate a platform of issues
- Conduct public opinion polling
- Recruit candidates

**Part (b): 1 point**

One point is earned for describing a way that third parties can affect elections.

- Take votes away from one of the major party candidates (spoiler effect)
- Bring new issues to the forefront/set the agenda
- Give voters another option
- Shift attention away from the major party candidates

**Part (c): 1 point**

One point is earned for an explanation of how single-member districts make it difficult for third parties to win elections.

In winner-take-all, or plurality systems, third-party candidates in single-member districts have a difficult time getting enough votes to win.

**Part (d): 1 point**

One point is earned for explaining how electoral competition is affected by gerrymandering.

- Drawing district lines to favor/protect one group/incumbent, making the district less competitive electorally
- Drawing district lines to spread opposition party voters across districts, making the district more competitive electorally
- Drawing district lines to allow a party with fewer votes statewide to win a majority of seats

A score of zero (0) is assigned to an answer that is off-task or is attempted but earns no points.

A score of dash (—) is assigned to an answer that is blank.

## UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

## SECTION II

Time—1 hour and 40 minutes

**Directions:** You have 1 hour and 40 minutes to answer all four of the following questions. Unless the directions indicate otherwise, respond to all parts of all four questions. It is suggested that you take a few minutes to plan and outline each answer. Spend approximately one-fourth of your time (25 minutes) on each question. In your response, use substantive examples where appropriate.

1. Political parties seek to win elections to control government.

- (a) Identify two activities that political parties do to win elections.
- (b) Describe one way third parties can affect elections.
- (c) Explain how single-member districts make it difficult for third parties to win elections.
- (d) Explain how electoral competition is affected by gerrymandering.

1. a) Political parties may hold national conventions and run campaign ads for their candidates to win elections. They can also host rallies for their candidates.

b) Third parties can take away votes from the two major parties & offer another option for voters.

c) Since it is a winner-take-all system, major parties tend to win over third parties, who usually only garner a small percentage of votes.

d) Gerrymandering is the redrawing of districts to ensure that a certain party wins in elections. It ensures that a certain party will win before elections due to how the districts are deliberately drawn, so electoral votes will all go towards that party, ~~eliminating the threat of competition.~~ Gerrymandering effectively eliminates any opposing electoral competition for the party in power.

b) They can also cause a divide in a major party & encourage dealignment.

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1. Political parties seek to win elections to control government.
- (a) Identify two activities that political parties do to win elections.
  - (b) Describe one way third parties can affect elections.
  - (c) Explain how single-member districts make it difficult for third parties to win elections.
  - (d) Explain how electoral competition is affected by gerrymandering.

a.) Campaign + receive donations

b.) A third party can affect elections by taking away votes that would normally go to the other parties.

This changes the voting percentage of the election by changing a majority from 51% to 34%

c.) Single member districts make it difficult for third parties to win elections because they are not represented equally compared to the Democrat + Republican parties

d.) Electoral competition is affected by Gerrymandering.

Gerrymandering is the redistricting of communities to benefit a certain party or candidate. The use of gerrymandering alters an election when citizens w/ a certain ideology are paired in the same district as those w/ a different majority ideology. An example of this would redistricting a county because the majority votes Democrat. If an official changed the county lines to combine w/ a

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ADDITIONAL ANSWER PAGE FOR QUESTION 1

neighboring county that votes majority republican  
+ there are more republican voters in that  
area that would allow the republican party to  
win that election for that new district. This changes  
a once democratic majority vote into a republican  
one w/ just the alteration of a few district  
lines

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1. Political parties seek to win elections to control government.
  - (a) Identify two activities that political parties do to win elections.
  - (b) Describe one way third parties can affect elections.
  - (c) Explain how single-member districts make it difficult for third parties to win elections.
  - (d) Explain how electoral competition is affected by gerrymandering.

a. Activities political parties do to win elections are making campaigns and making the opponent look like an unfit candidate.

b. A way third parties can affect elections is by lowering the amount of voters who vote for the two main parties. It changes the percentage rate of voters between the democratic and republican party and cause one of them to lose because they needed extra votes.

c. Third parties are the most uncommon because they don't get enough votes to even make it to an election. So with a single-member district, a third party will not get that much participation from voters to even come close to winning an election.

1C2

ADDITIONAL ANSWER PAGE FOR QUESTION 1

D. Electoral competition is affected by gerrymandering because of the image that is portrayed. The participants put an image of their opponents into the media to make them seem like a bad and unfit person to run for an election, which then makes them seem like a better candidate. That causes for the votes to be unfair and that may lead to putting an unfit person in office. For example Trump becoming president, he is highly unfit.

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# AP<sup>®</sup> UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

## 2018 SCORING COMMENTARY

### Question 1

#### Overview

This question expected responses to demonstrate an understanding of how parties behave in elections, the impact of parties and processes on elections, and how the structure of elections impacts third-party chances of winning elections. Part (a) asked students to identify two activities that political parties do to win elections. Part (b) asked students to describe how third parties affect elections. Part (c) asked students to explain how single-member districts make it difficult for third parties to win elections. Part (d) asked students to explain how electoral competition is affected by gerrymandering.

#### Sample: 1A

##### Score: 5

Part (a) – (2 points): The response earned 1 point for identifying a party activity used to win elections by stating, “Political parties may hold national party conventions.” The response earned a second point for “and run campaign ads for their candidates to win elections.”

Part (b) – (1 point): The response earned 1 point for describing a way third parties affect elections by stating, “Third parties can take away votes from the two major parties.”

Part (c) – (1 point): The response earned 1 point for explaining how single-member districts make it difficult for third parties to win elections by stating, “Since it is a winner-take-all system major parties tend to win over third parties, who usually only garner a small percentage of votes.”

Part (d) – (1 point): The response earned 1 point for explaining how gerrymandering affects electoral competition by stating, “Gerrymandering is the redrawing of districts to ensure that a certain party wins in elections. It ensures that a certain party will win before the election due to how the districts are deliberately drawn. ... Gerrymandering effectively eliminates any opposing electoral competition for the party in power.”

#### Sample: 1B

##### Score: 3

Part (a) – (2 points): The response earned 1 point for identifying a party activity used to win elections: “recieve [sic] donations.” The response did not earn a second point for identifying a party activity used to win elections. “Campaign” is insufficient. The response needed to provide a more specific party activity in order to earn this point.

Part (b) – (1 point): The response earned 1 point for describing a way third parties affect elections by stating, “A third party can affect elections by taking away votes that would normally go to the other parties.”

Part (c) – (1 point): The response did not earn a point for explaining how single-member districts make it difficult for third parties to win elections. “[T]hey are not represented equally compared to the Democratic & Republican parties” is insufficient. The response does not connect the representation of third parties to single-member districts or to the plurality system used to determine the winner. To have earned the point, the response should have explained how single-member districts pose challenges for third parties in winning elections.

Part (d) – (1 point): The response earned 1 point for explaining how gerrymandering affects electoral competition by stating, “Gerrymandering is the redistricting of communities to benefit a certain party or



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candidate [*sic*]. The use of gerrymandering alters an election when citizens w/ a certain ideology are paired in the same district as those w/ a different majority ideology. An example of this would [be] redistricting a county because a majority votes [D]emocrat. If an official changed the county lines to combine w/ a neighboring county that votes majority [R]epublican + there are more [R]epublican voters in that area that would allow the [R]epublican party to win that election for that new district. This changes a once [D]emocratic majority vote into a [R]epublican one w/ just the alteration of a few district lines.”

### **Sample: 1C**

#### **Score: 1**

Part (a) – (2 points): The response did not earn any points for identifying a party activity used to win elections. Both responses, “making campaigns” and “making the opponent look like an unfit candidate [*sic*],” are too general. To have earned these points, the response needed to provide a more specific party activity like raising money or making advertisements.

Part (b) – (1 point): The response earned 1 point for describing a way third parties affect elections by stating, “A way third parties can affect elections is by lowering the amount of voters who vote for the two main parties.”

Part (c) – (1 point): The response did not earn a point for explaining how single-member districts make it difficult for third parties to win elections. The response states that third parties “are the most uncommon because they don’t get enough votes to even make it to an election. So with a single-member district district [*sic*], a third party will not get that much participation [*sic*] from voters to even come close to winning an election.” This response does not connect this to single-member districts or the plurality system for determining the winner. To have earned the point, the response should have explained how single-member districts pose challenges for third parties in winning elections.

Part (d) – (1 point): The response did not earn a point for explaining how gerrymandering affects electoral competition. “Electoral competition is affected by gerrymandering because of the image that is portrayed” is incorrect. The response does not show a correct understanding of gerrymandering, nor how it affects electoral competition. To have earned the point, the response should have demonstrated what gerrymandering is and how it impacts electoral competition.