

2023

AP[®]



AP[®] United States Government and Politics

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary Set 2

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Free-Response Question 4

- Scoring Guidelines**
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Question 4: Argument Essay

6 points

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row A Claim/Thesis (0–1 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Responds to the prompt with a defensible claim or thesis that establishes a line of reasoning.
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes		
Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only restate the prompt. Do not make a claim that responds to the prompt. 		Responses that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to the prompt rather than restating or rephrasing the prompt and establish a line of reasoning. Provide a defensible claim or thesis that establishes a line of reasoning regarding whether constitutional checks and balances or citizen participation in social movements is more effective in ensuring the people’s will is represented.
Examples that do not earn this point: Restate the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“History has shown that citizen participation in social movements ensures that the people’s will is represented.”</i> Do not respond to the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Checks and balances are a feature of the Constitution.”</i> 		Examples that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Checks and balances are more effective in ensuring the people’s will is represented because they guarantee that parts of the government that defy the people will be counteracted or removed entirely.”</i> <i>“Social movements are more effective because they act independently of the government and can force the government to respond to the will of the people.”</i>
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The claim or thesis must consist of one or more sentences that may be located anywhere in the response. A claim or thesis that meets the criteria can be awarded the point whether or not the rest of the response successfully supports that line of reasoning. 		

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria			
Row B Evidence (0–3 points)	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Provides one piece of evidence that is <u>relevant to the topic</u> of the prompt.	2 points Uses <u>one</u> piece of specific and relevant evidence to <u>support the claim or thesis</u> .	3 points Uses <u>two</u> pieces of specific and relevant evidence to <u>support the claim or thesis</u> .
Decision Rules and Scoring Notes				
Responses that do not earn points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not provide any accurate evidence. Provide evidence that is not relevant to the topic. 	Responses that earn 1 point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide one piece of evidence relevant to the topic of the prompt. May or may not have a claim or thesis. 	Responses that earn 2 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide one piece of specific and relevant evidence that supports the claim or thesis. This evidence can come from one of the foundational documents listed in the prompt, any other foundational document, or from knowledge of course concepts. 	Responses that earn 3 points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide two pieces of specific and relevant evidence that support the claim or thesis. One of these pieces of evidence must come from a foundational document listed in the prompt. The other piece of evidence can come from a different foundational document or from knowledge of course concepts. 	
Examples that do not earn points: Provide evidence that is not specific <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Checks and balances constrain the government.”</i> Provide evidence that is not relevant to the topic of the prompt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Citizens work in social movements to promote change.”</i> 	Examples of evidence that are relevant to the <u>topic</u> of the prompt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social movements such as LGBTQ+, workers, or women’s rights. Description of any check in the political system. 	Examples of acceptable specific and relevant evidence that support the claim or thesis (one example is one piece of evidence): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“The women’s suffrage movement used protests and rallies to raise public awareness to promote the right to vote.”</i> <i>“An elected official that abuses the power of the office is not responsive to the will of the people and can be removed from office through impeachment.”</i> Examples of acceptable specific and relevant evidence from the foundational documents that support the claim or thesis (one example is one piece of evidence): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>“Federalist 10 advocates for a large republic to counter the danger of factions.”</i> <i>“Article I establishes checks and balances by requiring both chambers of Congress to pass legislation before being signed or vetoed by the president.”</i> <i>“‘Letter from a Birmingham Jail’ argues that civil disobedience, which can be used by social movements, is the most effective means for showing the injustices of the system.”</i> 		
Additional Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To earn two or three points in Row B, the response must have a defensible claim or thesis (earned the point in Row A). To earn three points, the response must use one of the foundational documents listed in the prompt. 				

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
<p>Row C Reasoning</p> <p>(0–1 points)</p>	<p>0 points</p> <p>Does not meet the criteria for one point.</p>	<p>1 point</p> <p>Explains how or why the evidence supports the claim or thesis.</p>
<p>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</p>		
<p>Responses that do not earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include evidence but offer no reasoning to connect the evidence to the claim or thesis. • Restate the prompt without explaining how the evidence supports the claim or thesis. 		<p>Responses that earn this point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the relationship between the evidence provided and the claim or thesis. <p>Examples of reasoning that explains how the evidence supports the claim or thesis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“In Letter from a Birmingham Jail,’ King explains that waiting for the government to check itself has led to greater suffering for African Americans therefore, social movements increase pressure on policymakers to gain outcomes favorable to their cause.”</i> • <i>“Article I provides Congress with the power to override a presidential veto. This power can be very effective in representing the will of the people, because it can be used to stop a president that vetoes legislation for selfish or personal reasons.”</i>
<p>Additional Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To earn this point, the response must have a defensible claim or thesis (earned the point in Row A) and support that argument with at least one piece of specific and relevant evidence (earned at least two points in Row B). • The explanation of the relationship between one piece of evidence and the claim or thesis is sufficient to earn this point. 		

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria	
Row D Responds to Alternate Perspectives	0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.	1 point Responds to an opposing or alternate perspective using refutation, concession, or rebuttal.
(0–1 points)	Decision Rules and Scoring Notes	
	Responses that do not earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restate the opposite of the claim or thesis. • May identify or describe an alternate perspective but do not refute, concede, or rebut that perspective. • Refute a foundational document rather than an alternate perspective to the provided claim or thesis. 	Responses that earn this point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must describe an alternate perspective AND refute, concede, or rebut that perspective.
	Examples of responses that do not earn the point: Restate the opposite of the claim or thesis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Many would argue that social movements are better, but this is simply untrue.”</i> Describe an alternate perspective but do not refute, concede, or rebut that perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Some would argue that social movements are better because they can put extra pressure on government to represent the will of the people.”</i> 	Examples of acceptable responses to an alternate perspective may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“While social movements are broadly based and can pressure the government to respond to what the people want, this is not the same as holding elected officials accountable to the people. Thus, social movements are more limited in what they can achieve, while checks and balances are able to protect against a much larger set of problems.”</i> • <i>“While checks and balances are designed to hold the government accountable to the will of the people, they can also be used to ignore the will of the people. Because social movements are motivated by the people’s desire to hold the government accountable, they are more effective.”</i>
Additional Notes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To earn this point, the response must have a defensible claim or thesis (earned the point in Row A). • Responses that demonstrate an incorrect understanding of the alternate perspective do not earn this point. 		

Important: Completely fill in the circle that corresponds to the question you are answering on this page.

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

Question 4



Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

Citizen participation in social movements is more effective than checks and balances in ensuring the people's will is represented because if the people don't speak up through action they will never be heard by government.

The Federalist 10 claims the only way to ensure factions ~~can~~ do not take over is to control them. This is said because factions can never be destroyed, if they were democracy would fall as well. Factions are necessary in representing the will of people, if they are risen the people are left with no way to express their beliefs and democracy ~~is~~ loses one of its fundamental principles. An example of factions showing their opinions is social movements. In social movements a group of people with similar views, a faction, gather together to show their opinion on social issues. Social movements are a great platform for people to show their opinions to the government and try to push for change.

"Letter from a Birmingham Jail" claims that no change will come from government unless the people fight for it. Martin Luther King often leads social movements to protest the unfair treatment of black citizens in America. He claimed that unless the protests continue no change would ever come. The only way to truly ensure ~~your~~ your will is heard by the government is to force them to pay attention. After years of protesting attention was called to King's issue by

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Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

the government.

Some may argue that checks and balances are needed to ensure that federal government does not become too powerful and silence the people's will entirely. While this can be argued, even with the system of checks and balances change rarely ever comes without people displaying their voices. ~~Without platforms for people to express their opinions, government would most likely ignore the opinions of citizens.~~ Without social movements and other platforms that allow large amounts of people to come together and share their voices, the will of the people would be ignored by the government.

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- Important: Completely fill in the circle that corresponds to the question you are answering on this page.

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Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

Constitutional checks and balances are more effective in ensuring the people's will is represented than social movements.

Dividing the federal government into three separate branches and making the legislature bicameral whilst ensuring that they each have power over one another will ensure that no one branch of government will overreach and impend upon the rights and will of its people. One way it does this is through its diminishing effects on factions. Federalist 10 outlines the negative impacts on society that factions have and how they can oppress a minority. The checks and balances system ensures that if one group attempts to overstep or pass unwanted/unconstitutional bills, then the other branches can step in and stop the action. Any bill or measure that does not represent the will of the people will be struck down through the checks and balances the national government has.

Additionally, many of the government's most important positions are elected by vote. Representatives and Senators are at the mercy of their constituents when it comes to being elected. Therefore, when re-election comes around, if the public feels as though their wills weren't represented, they can replace the Representative/Senator with someone they believe will. The President is a similar case but is elected by appointed electors. Although they're technically not elected by the people, faithless electors are exceedingly uncommon and some states have laws against them so the President is dependent on the population as well. These elected officials hold a lot of power and checks/balances to ensure that the will of the people that voted them in is represented.

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Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

Due to the system of checks and balances' effect on factions and the influence that the public's votes have on the officials who do the checking and balancing, it is the more effective way of ensuring that the will of the people is represented as majorities and faithful officials have their power diminished or taken away entirely thanks to checks and balances.

However, lobbying candidates and funding campaigns is commonplace in our government. These things heavily influence who gets elected and what sort of policy they push for. Therefore, it may seem as though those with the most money have the most say in the government. While this is partially true, many of these organizations with massive amounts of money get that money through donations from people. In that way, the organization is acting as an embodiment of those people's concerns and is still representing the will of those people. In addition, even if people get elected who don't embody the will of the people they can be voted out if their policy is unfavorable to the public. While in office, they can also be checked by the other branches to limit their effect on policy and ensure that the will of the people is still represented.

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The most effective way of protecting the People's will is through Constitutional checks and balances as seen in Article 1 of the U.S. Constitution and in Federalist 78.

The constitution is one of the most important foundational documents for our nation. ~~The~~ The founders intent was to create a new government, free from tyranny like they had just escaped. One of the ways this was accomplished was creating a Separation of power most clearly seen in Article 1. This article pertains ~~specifically~~ specifically to Congress, ~~laying~~ laying out their specific powers. Among the procedural ~~rules~~ rules, lays powers that keep the other branches in check. These include the ability to impeach the President and to confirm justices to the Supreme Court. Also, the founders included two houses of Congress to ensure equal representation for states with large and small populations.

Additionally, the support for checks and balances can be seen in the Federalist 78 document. This document argues for the expansion of powers for the Judiciary branch. It is argued that the Judiciary branch only holds the power of the purse and needs more power to ~~maintain~~ restore equilibrium between the branches.

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However, as we see in Brutus 1, others argue that citizen's participating through factions will protect the will of the people. Brutus states that the more factions in the country the better, because no singular one will become too large. To his credit, Brutus makes good points, it is clear to see how participation in this manner would help protect the people's will. However, checks and balances bring a certain assurance that participation does not.

For these reasons, checks and balances outweigh citizen participation as a means to protect the people's will.

Use a pen with black or dark blue ink only. Do NOT write your name. Do NOT write outside the box.

Question 4

Note: Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain spelling and grammatical errors.

Overview

The Argument Essay question expected responses to demonstrate an understanding of whether the will of the people in a democratic republic is better ensured by either constitutional checks and balances or social movements. The question required an understanding of relevant foundational documents that could be used to support an argument: Article I of the United States Constitution, *The Federalist* 10, and “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.”

Responses were expected to articulate a defensible claim that could establish a line of reasoning; support the thesis with evidence from a foundational document(s) and/or the course concepts; use reasoning to explain why at least one piece of evidence provided supported the thesis; and respond to an alternative perspective and then use refutation, rebuttal, or concession to further support their original claim. Responses were expected to be written in the form of an argumentative essay, demonstrating each of the skills mentioned to earn points.

Sample: 4A

Score: 6

Claim/Thesis: 1

Evidence: 3

Reasoning: 1

Alternative Perspectives: 1

A. The response earned 1 point for the thesis. The claim that social movements are more effective than checks and balances in ensuring the people’s will is represented because “if the people don’t speak up through action they will never be heard by government” is a defensible line of reasoning.

B. The response earned 3 points for evidence. The response earned 2 points with its accurate description of *The Federalist* 10, which is a given document, by stating, “The Federalist 10 claims that the only way to ensure factions do not take over is to control them,” which supports the thesis. The response earned 1 point for an accurate description of “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” by stating that “no change will come from government unless the people fight for it.”

C. The response earned 1 point for reasoning for explaining, “After years of protesting, attention was called to King’s issue by the government.”

D. The response earned 1 point for the alternative perspective by describing an alternative perspective: “Some may argue that checks and balances are needed to ensure that federal government does not become too powerful and silence the people’s will entirely.” Further, the response provides a rebuttal that supports the original thesis by stating that “change rarely ever comes without people displaying their voices ... the will of the people would be ignored by the government.”

Question 4 (continued)

Sample: 4B

Score: 4

Claim/Thesis: 1

Evidence: 2

Reasoning: 1

Alternative Perspectives: 0

A. The response earned 1 point for the thesis. The claim that constitutional checks and balances are more effective than social movements in ensuring the people’s will is represented. “Dividing the federal government into three separate branches ... whilst ensuring that they each have power over one another will ensure that no one branch of government will overreach and impede upon the rights and will of its people” is a defensible claim and establishes a line of reasoning.

B. The response earned 2 points for evidence for the description of *The Federalist* 10, and the description supports the thesis: “the negative impacts on society that factions have and how they can oppress a minority.” The response did not earn evidence points for its description of the electoral process because elections are not related to checks and balances.

C. The response earned 1 point for reasoning with an explanation of how factions represented in policymaking institutions act as checks on each other to protect the will of the people, ensuring “that if one group attempts to overstep or pass unwanted/unconstitutional bills, then the other branches can step in and stop the action. Any bill or measure that does not represent the will of the people will be struck down.”

D. The response did not earn the alternative perspectives point because the discussion of elections, lobbying, and money is not a relevant alternative perspective.

Sample: 4C

Score: 1

Claim/Thesis: 0

Evidence: 1

Reasoning: 0

Alternative Perspectives: 0

A. The response did not earn the thesis point. The response makes a claim but does not have a defensible line of reasoning.

B. The response earned 1 point for evidence with a factual description of Article I: “This article pertains specifically to Congress, laying out their specific powers.” The response includes additional attempts at evidence by discussing *The Federalist* 78 and *Brutus* 1; however, additional points were not earned because the response is factually inaccurate, and the response could not earn additional evidence points without a thesis.

C. The response does not have a thesis and could not earn a point for reasoning.

D. The response does not have a thesis and could not earn the alternative perspective point.