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# AP<sup>®</sup> Seminar End-of-Course Exam

## Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

### **Inside:**

#### **Part B**

- Scoring Guideline**
- Student Samples**
- Scoring Commentary**

**End-of-Course Exam: Part B**

**24 points**

**General Scoring Notes**

- When applying the scoring guidelines, you should award the score according to the preponderance of evidence (i.e., best fit).
- Each row is scored independently.

**0 (Zero)**

A score of 0 is assigned to a single row of the rubric when the response displays a below-minimum level of quality as identified in that row of the rubric.

Scores of 0 are assigned to all rows of the rubric when the response is off-topic; a repetition of a prompt; entirely crossed-out; a drawing or other markings; or a response in a language other than English.

**NR (No Response)**

A score of NR is assigned to responses that are blank.

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria			
<p><b>Row 1</b> <b>Establish Argument</b> <b>(0, 2, 4 or 6 points)</b></p>	<p><b>0 points</b> Does not meet the criteria for 2 points.</p>	<p><b>2 points</b> Misstates or overlooks a theme or issue that connects the sources. The response’s perspective is unclear or unrelated to the sources.</p>	<p><b>4 points</b> Identifies a theme or issue that connects the sources. The response derives its perspective from only one of the sources.</p>	<p><b>6 points</b> The response identifies a theme or issue connecting the provided sources and presents a perspective that is not represented in one of the sources OR brings a particularly insightful approach to one of the perspectives OR makes a strong thematic connection among perspectives.</p>
<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>				
<p><b>Typical responses that earn 0 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are not related in any way to a theme that connects the provided sources (off-topic).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 2 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer a perspective that is unclear.</li> <li>• Demonstrates a simplistic or mistaken understanding of the provided sources.</li> <li>• May be dominated by summary rather than being driven by the student’s perspective.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 4 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer a clear perspective that is derived from a single source.</li> <li>• Offer a reasonable understanding of the provided sources.</li> <li>• Are student driven but trite, obvious, or overly general.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 6 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer a clear perspective that is either original or insightful.</li> <li>• Offer a perceptive understanding of the provided sources used.</li> <li>• Are driven by the student’s perspective.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Additional Notes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A perspective is a “point of view conveyed through an argument.”</li> </ul>				

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria			
<p><b>Row 2</b> <b>Establish Argument</b> <b>(0, 2, 4, or 6 points)</b></p>	<p><b>0 points</b> Does not meet the criteria for 2 points.</p>	<p><b>2 points</b> The line of reasoning is disorganized and/or illogical. The response lacks commentary, or the commentary incorrectly or tangentially explains the links between evidence and claims.</p>	<p><b>4 points</b> The argument is mostly clear and organized, but the logic may be faulty OR the reasoning may be logical but not well organized. The commentary explains the links between evidence and claims.</p>	<p><b>6 points</b> The line of reasoning is logically organized and well-developed. The commentary explains evidence and connects it to claims to clearly and convincingly establish an argument.</p>
<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>				
<p><b>Typical responses that earn 0 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are not related in any way to a theme that connects the provided sources (off-topic).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 2 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarize the provided sources without linking them to one another or to an argument.</li> <li>• Offer very general or confusing commentary, if any, connecting evidence and claims.</li> <li>• Have a line of reasoning that fails.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 4 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are organized well enough to discern the argument.</li> <li>• Provide inconsistent or incomplete explanations linking evidence and claims.</li> <li>• Make a claim that may be only partially supported.</li> <li>• Have a line of reasoning that is difficult to follow at times.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 6 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are driven by the argument; points are intentionally ordered AND the links between claims and evidence are logical and convincing.</li> <li>• Are thoughtful or sophisticated (e.g., may address a counterargument)</li> <li>• Have a sound line of reasoning.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Additional Notes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Line of Reasoning is “an arrangement of claims and evidence that leads to a conclusion.”</li> <li>• Commentary is “a discussion and analysis of evidence in relation to the claim which may identify patterns, describe trends, and/or explain relationships.”</li> </ul>				

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria			
<p><b>Row 3</b>  <b>Select and Use Evidence</b>  <b>(0, 2, 4, or 6 points)</b></p>	<p><b>0 points</b>                      Uses one or none of the provided sources.</p>	<p><b>2 points</b>                      Repeats or misinterprets information from at least two of the provided sources, or the information lacks relevance thereby providing little support for an argument.</p>	<p><b>4 points</b>                      Accurately uses relevant information from at least two of the provided sources to support an argument.</p>	<p><b>6 points</b>                      Appropriately synthesizes relevant information drawn from at least two of the provided sources to develop and support a compelling argument.</p>
<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>				
<p><b>Typical responses that earn 0 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use only one of the provided sources.</li> <li>• Do not make use of any of the provided sources.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 2 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draw obviously mistaken conclusions from the sources.</li> <li>• Mismatch claims and evidence.</li> <li>• Offer evidence that has no bearing on the claims made.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 4 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present evidence that adequately supports assertions.</li> <li>• Use quotations or paraphrases that generally match the claims.</li> <li>• Interpret the sources in a way that does not substantially contribute to the argument; may pull data or information from the sources but do not utilize that information in a thoughtful or insightful way.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 6 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fully integrate the source materials into the argument and put the sources into conversation with one another.</li> <li>• May use a source to clarify points made in a second source, or to make a contrasting point, which is woven into the argument.</li> <li>• Present evidence invoked to support the writer’s argument; the evidence is not the argument itself.</li> <li>• Interpret the evidence in a way that adds substantially to the argument.</li> </ul>	
<b>Additional Notes</b>				

Reporting Category	Scoring Criteria			
<p><b>Row 4</b>  <b>Apply Conventions (0, 2, 4 or 6 points)</b></p>	<p><b>0 points</b>                      Does not meet the criteria for 2 points.</p>	<p><b>2 points</b>                      Contains many flaws in grammar and style that often interfere with communication to the reader OR the response incorrectly or ineffectively attributes knowledge and ideas from sources.</p>	<p><b>4 points</b>                      Is generally clear but contains some flaws in grammar and style that occasionally interfere with communication to the reader. The response accurately attributes knowledge and ideas from sources.</p>	<p><b>6 points</b>                      Communicates clearly to the reader (although may not be free of errors in grammar and style) AND the response effectively integrates material from sources into the argument (e.g. it is clearly introduced, integrated, or embedded into the text) and accurately attributes knowledge and ideas.</p>
<b>Decision Rules and Scoring Notes</b>				
	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 0 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are not related in any way to a theme that connects the provided sources (off-topic).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 2 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use grammar and syntax that is so clumsy as to make the meaning difficult to decipher. Require multiple readings to uncover meaning or intent.</li> <li>Use blatant unattributed paraphrases and/or there is an absence of sources/quotation marks/reference to sources or their authors.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 4 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are written in a style that is adequate, if sometimes clunky, but conveys basic meaning.</li> <li>May contain multiple misspellings or other errors, but not so many as to impede understanding. May attempt elevated word choice but may be incorrect, or may lapse into colloquial language.</li> <li>Refer to sources/authors as necessary and uses quotation marks or paraphrases appropriately. The response may partially contextualize the sources.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Typical responses that earn 6 points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feature writing that enhances the argument, are easy to read, and concise. Grammar and syntax need not be perfect.</li> <li>Accurately cite sources (use quotation marks and paraphrases correctly). Provide a clear introduction of a source that communicates an understanding of the context of the source--time, place, point of view, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Notes</b>				

Begin your response to PART B on this page. Do not skip lines.

Motivating students has always been a problem in school. Some kids are self-motivated and can push themselves to do things with little incentive besides the hope for an A, but for many students this isn't enough. ~~Those~~ Those students often require something more or they fall behind and fail to complete work. Sometimes, a push from a teacher or other students can help get ~~the~~ them back on track, but with many students doing online school this year, it is just too easy to skip classes or assignments. The pandemic has highlighted the motivation problem in schools, since punishments such as detention are no longer effective. Even top students who succeeded in regular school are falling behind and losing motivation. Schools are not motivating students enough, but they can implement more rewards and incentives to solve the issue.

From a young age, many students are taught to read and follow the bible. It says not to do acts of charity for a reward and not to pray where people can see and recognize you (Source B). This teaches people to do things out of the goodness of their own hearts. While some do this, many people don't and it is a highly ineffective way of motivating people, especially students in school. Rather than using rules or punishments to get a desired outcome, people should use rewards and incentives. A study at a New York state hospital revealed that punishments, through the form of cameras, only increased the desired behavior by 10%. While rewards, in the form of positive messages, increased the behavior by almost 90%. (Source A). This study clearly shows the relationship between reward and motivation and

Continue your response to PART B on this page. Do not skip lines.

reveals that rewards are much more effective than punishments in getting people to do things. This is because positive feedback triggers a reward signal in the brain while punishment causes people to avoid the action altogether (Source A).

The results of the study can be translated into schools and help increase motivation during a time when it is so low. Often times, it's not that students want to fail, but the ~~fear~~ fear of failing causes them to avoid school altogether, something being at home has made much easier. Reward has proven to be more effective, so implementing it into schools can help get students back on track and make them more motivated. Some teachers already use reward on a small scale, such as the best drawing will get a sticker or a piece of candy, but these often decrease as students get older when in reality, the older students ~~want~~ <sup>need</sup> rewards just as much as younger students. Being online has made it harder for teachers to provide rewards to their students, since they can't just hand them a sticker anymore. However, these rewards are needed more now than ever since many students <sup>of all ages</sup> are ~~lacking~~ lacking motivation in online school.

Even those in person still lack motivation. Students often ~~want~~ <sup>want</sup> do work, but making it for a grade, or even just an assignment deters them from it. Many students enjoy reading and would read books in their free time, but the second that reading becomes an assignment, they no longer enjoy it. Tom in the adventures of Tom Sawyer makes a similar observation saying  $\Rightarrow$  that the wealthy gentlemen who drive in the summer wouldn't do it if



Continue your response to **PART B** on this page. Do not skip lines.

they were paid, since that makes it work rather than fun. (source C). This is a main reason that students often don't want to do schoolwork, even if it is something they would enjoy doing voluntarily. However, rewards can help to decrease this from happening.

Some schools have found creative ways to incentivize students during the pandemic. One school has modified its submission platform to display digital confetti after an assignment is submitted, and it worked. Students have expressed that the confetti is motivating them to turn in work through their social media platforms. Something like digital confetti is so small and easy and effective, so other schools ~~so~~ should try to do something similar. The confetti, even digital, triggers the reward center in the students' brains, making it more likely for them to do the action again in the future (source A). There are many other ~~and~~ options besides confetti, such as the positive messages used in the study at the hospital, stickers for in person students, or virtually anything that provides a positive reward to the students. These rewards can help override the fear of failing many students experience. Rather than ignoring school, the rewards will provide students with a reason to go to school and do their work. While there will always be a fear of grades and difference between work and fun at school, these incentives help to decrease their effects and motivate students ~~more~~ more. Religious students should certainly read the bible if they desire, however people

**Continue your response to PART B on this page. Do not skip lines.**

and schools should acknowledge the research and see that rewards motivate people more than anything else, and try to implement them into the daily lives of students to increase motivation.

Begin your response to PART B on this page. Do not skip lines.

There is a problem with people reluctantly skipping ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ important stuff in life.

A way to fix this problem is to reward instead of punish.

~~An example of this solution is a New York state hospital using positive message boards to help people get into the habit of properly doing stuff.~~

An example of this solution is a New York state hospital using positive message boards to help people get into the habit of properly doing stuff. According to Source A, "An electronic board was placed in the hallway of the unit that gave employees instant feedback. Every time they washed their hands the board displayed a positive message (such as "Good Job!") and the current shift's hand-hygiene score would go up. Compliance rates rose sharply and reached almost 90 percent within four weeks, a result that was replicated in another division in the hospital." The hospital decided to do this because they conducted a study that revealed that only ten percent of medical staff sanitized their hands before and after entering a patient's room. Also according to Source A, "Neuroscience suggests that when it comes to motivating action (for example, getting people to work longer hours or producing star reports), rewards may be more efficient than punishment. And the inverse is true when trying to deter people from acting (for example, discouraging

Continue your response to PART B on this page. Do not skip lines.

people from sharing privileged information or using the organization's resources for private purposes)- in this case, punishments are more effective. The reason relates to the characteristics of the world we live in." From personal experiences it is true that when it comes to somethings reward is much better than punishment but sometimes punishment is necessary and needed. ~~People~~

~~Punishment is needed in the structure of~~

~~Source B~~ Source B talks about how if you use your religious ~~and~~ duties for attention then, your Father who is in heaven has no reward for you. "When you do acts of charity, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your charity may be secret; and your Father, who sees what is in secret, will reward you." Source B is ~~showing~~ ~~that~~ showing that you should do what's right even when no one is paying attention. You should not need to get people attention to feel a reward but that your reward is what you are doing and who you are.

~~The connection between these two sources~~

The connection between these two sources is that you will be rewarded for doing the right thing no matter what.

Continue your response to PART B on this page. Do not skip lines.

And that as long as you do the right thing you will always be rewarded. Some may believe that whenever something is wrong punishment is the way to go. From many of my own personal experiences I have learned that punishment is not the way to go. Punishment does not encourage people all it does is dig them down into a deeper hole. It is like with dogs when they do something good you reward them with a treat and when they do something bad you teach them ~~them~~ the right thing to do from their mistakes. People also should not do stuff just for the attention, they should be doing it because they want to and it is the right thing to do.

~~The right thing to do is the right thing to do.~~

There are different times to use rewards and there are different times punishment must be used. People should do stuff out of the good in their hearts rather than for the attention. Yes, people make mistakes, its just part of who we are. We can either learn and be rewarded from it or we could refuse to change it and be punished for it. We need to overcome the habit of scaring people into doing the right thing, and instead we need

Continue your response to **PART B** on this page. Do not skip lines.

to highlight the rewards and accomplishments  
of reaching our goals no matter how much  
we mess up along the way.

Begin your response to PART B on this page. Do not skip lines.

The four sources, "What Motivates Employees More: Rewards or Punishments" by Tali Sharot, Matthew 6:1-6 from The Bible, "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" by Mark Twain, and "Three Charts that show the gender gap among Nobel Prize winners" by Valentina Zappà, all in their reading have a focused theme on one specific thing. The general theme of all four sources is the idea of working for what you have and want, but not always getting something in return. In source B, The Bible, it states how "...when you do acts of charity, do not have a trumpet blown in front of you." This ties into source C "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer", Ben tells Tom "Don't you wish you could? But of course you'd rather work - wouldn't you? Course you would!". This gives the idea that working isn't always a bad or good thing. It also ties in how working doesn't mean you have to receive a reward, but a reward is presented in its own way

## End-of-Course Exam

### Part B: Synthesizing and Creating Evidence-Based Argument

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

#### Overview

This question assessed students' ability to:

- Read sources critically, understanding the different perspectives presented
- Identify a theme or issue connecting the sources provided
- Use the theme as the impetus for writing a logically organized, well-reasoned and well-crafted argument, including the student's perspective
- Incorporate two or more of the sources to support the argument
- Build an argument with a series of logical claims, supported by evidence
- Cite sources using the author's name or the letter assigned to the text in the prompt

#### Sample: A

**1 Establish Argument Score: 6**

**2 Establish Argument Score: 6**

**3 Select and Use Evidence Score: 6**

**4 Apply Conventions Score: 6**

#### Row 1: Establish Argument

This response earned **6** points for row one. The response's perspective shows a thorough understanding of all source materials used (the common theme of motivation is present in each source the response references), along with a unique perspective not presented by the sources (using rewards to motivate students during virtual school). While Source A does speak to rewards as a stronger motivator than punishment, this response goes beyond merely repeating the source's argument and examines the concept of rewards as motivation for students attending virtual school.

#### Row 2: Establish Argument

This response earned **6** points for row two. The response is clearly and intentionally organized, beginning with addressing the Bible (Source B) as a basis for morality/motivation for many people before countering the idea, stating, "This teaches people to do things out of the goodness of their own hearts. While some do this, many people don't and it is a highly ineffective way of motivating people." This statement segues into a discussion of Source A, which is used as support for the claim stated in paragraph two: "Rather than using rules or punishments to get a desired outcome, people should use rewards and incentives."

In the third paragraph, the response elaborates more on how the hospital study can be applied to students attending virtual school. The response claims that students often appear unmotivated because they are afraid of failure and that implementing rewards for completing work would lessen that fear and increase students' motivation. The response then connects Source A to Source C by saying, "Many students often want to do work, but making it for a grade, or even just an assignment deters them from it" and "students often don't want to do schoolwork, even if it is something they would enjoy doing voluntarily" to show how requiring something immediately makes people less motivated to work (as in Source C, in which the gentlemen driving in the summer enjoy driving considerably less once the activity becomes a paid/required task).

The response closes by reiterating the motivating factor of rewards (even something as small as "digital confetti" when students submit work), referencing Source B once more to point out that "people and schools should acknowledge the research," rather than simply following a religious rule. Throughout the response, the direction for the argument is clear, the points are carefully laid out from the beginning.



## **End-of-Course Exam**

### **Part B: Synthesizing and Creating Evidence-Based Argument**

#### **Row 3: Select and Use Evidence**

This response earned **6** points for row three. The response presents evidence from three sources and draws connections between each to support the argument that rewards for completed work would motivate virtual students. The response segues from discussing the Bible as a foundation for a person’s morality and motivation to the Harvard Business Review article about positive motivation, saying the latter presents a more effective means of motivation than the former. While the fourth paragraph exclusively discusses Source C, the paragraph begins by drawing connections between students who want to do something (as in the summer drivers example in Source C) and those who do not (as in the study presented in Source A).

In the last paragraph, the response presents potential rewards (such as “digital confetti” and stickers for in-person students), referring back to Source A to support the assertion that these rewards would effectively motivate students to complete work. The response closes by tying in Source B once more, saying, “Religious people should certainly read the Bible if they desire, however people and schools should acknowledge the research and see that rewards motivate people more than anything else.” Because of these explicit connections between perspectives, this response earns a high score for this row.

#### **Row 4: Apply Conventions**

This response earned **6** points for row four. The writing communicates clearly, with many instances of elevated language that enhance the argument. Phrases such as “The pandemic has highlighted the motivation problem in schools” (paragraph one) and “The results of the study can be translated into schools” (paragraph three) indicate writing that possesses strong control of language and style. The response does occasionally misspell some words or lapse into imprecise language, such as an overuse of pronouns (“it” and “they,” specifically), but these instances are not so frequent as to be distracting, nor do they inhibit understanding of the points being made.

Additionally, this response provides accurate, consistent attribution of sources, along with effective contextualization. The response does not treat the sources as identical in genre, purpose, or context but rather makes distinctions to acknowledge those variations. For example, in paragraphs two and five, the response refers to the Bible as a religious text, and in paragraph two, it is clear in the attributive phrasing that Source A presents the findings of a study. This signaling of the differences between sources indicates effective integration of evidence in the argument.

## End-of-Course Exam

### Part B: Synthesizing and Creating Evidence-Based Argument

#### Sample: B

**1 Establish Argument Score: 4**

**2 Establish Argument Score: 4**

**3 Select and Use Evidence Score: 4**

**4 Apply Conventions Score: 4**

#### Row 1: Establish Argument

This response earned **4** points for row four. While the response has a clear perspective (“reward instead of punish”) related to the overall theme of motivation presented by the sources, this perspective is derived directly from Source A, which presents a study that concluded positive reinforcement is more effective at motivating people than negative reinforcement.

#### Row 2: Establish Argument

This response earned **4** points for row two. The response presents an argument that is clear and easy enough to follow, if simplistic in nature. Commentary interprets evidence to build and support an argument, but the commentary is inconsistent in its effectiveness. For example, at the end of paragraph two, the response states, “when it comes to some things reward is better than punishment but sometimes punishment is necessary and needed.” Rather than effectively connecting evidence to the claim made in this paragraph.

Further, the response addresses punishment as a motivator in the conclusion (“There are different times to use rewards and there are different times punishment must be used”), but the response does not thoroughly address punishment as a motivator in the body of the argument. Because the response does not elaborate on the second component of the presented perspective (that punishment is occasionally necessary to motivate people as well as rewards), this response features an inconsistent line of reasoning.

#### Row 3: Select and Use Evidence

This response earned **4** points for row three. The response presents evidence from two sources (Source A and Source B) to argue rewards are more effective than punishment at motivating people. However, these perspectives are used individually rather than integrated effectively. Paragraph two focuses only on Source A, while paragraph three focuses on Source B. Additionally, there is a partial misunderstanding of Source B. The response states, “as long as you do the right thing, you will always be rewarded,” which is not the meaning behind Source B. Due to this misunderstanding, the connection drawn between the two sources is not effective at supporting the argument.

#### Row 4: Apply Conventions

This response earned **4** points for row four. While the writing is easy to follow, the language is simplistic and imprecise (e.g., “skipping important stuff in life,” “doing stuff”). The response accurately attributes knowledge from Sources A and B.

**End-of-Course Exam**  
**Part B: Synthesizing and Creating Evidence-Based Argument**

**Sample: C**

**1 Establish Argument Score: 2**

**2 Establish Argument Score: 2**

**3 Select and Use Evidence Score: 2**

**4 Apply Conventions Score: 2**

**Row 1: Establish Argument**

This response earned **2** points for row one. The response’s perspective (“the idea of working for what you have and want, but not always getting something in return”) represents a misunderstanding of the source materials and is not presented clearly. The idea of working without getting anything in return cannot be supported by the provided sources.

**Row 2: Establish Argument**

This response earned **2** points for row two. The response summarizes the sources, explaining how they all relate to the idea of work, concluding that “working isn’t always a bad or good thing.” Further, due to the minimal presence of the student’s own voice outside the quoted material, there is not sufficient commentary to fully develop a line of reasoning.

**Row 3: Select and Use Evidence**

This response earned **2** points for row three. Though the response does draw connections between sources (the response states in the first sentence that the sources “all in their reading have a focused theme on one specific thing” and later connects the discussion of Source B with Source C, saying “this ties into Source C”), the claims and evidence are mismatched. The quote from Source C (“Don’t you wish you could?”) does not connect to Source B, as the response claims. Because of this misunderstanding of the sources, the response does not sufficiently connect perspectives to support the argument.

**Row 4: Apply Conventions**

This response earned **2** points for row four. While the writing is not necessarily difficult to follow, there is little of the student’s own voice present in this response. When the student’s voice is present, the phrasing is imprecise (“one specific thing” and “working isn’t always a bad or good thing,” for example).