

AP US Government
Unit: Constitutional Foundations
Section: The Constitution

Avatar: Free Response Questions

Teacher:

Free response questions on the AP US government exam are not essays in that you do not have to provide a thesis statement and three or four body paragraphs to support that thesis. What you need to do is to answer the question directly. So the first step is to analyze the question.

It's important to understand that the objective of each question is for you to demonstrate understanding of the interrelationship of participants or influences in the policy making process. The first step of this process is to breakdown the question. Determine what the essay wants and be sure you do it. Woe to you if you neglect to answer what is specifically asked.

Once you've got a good understanding of what the question is asking, brainstorm for your answers and supporting facts. Most questions will have various parts so outline an answer to each part, A, B, C. No introduction is necessary. No conclusion is required. Good paragraphs can help explain ideas, but are not required. Make sure, however, that you write in complete sentences.

It's important to understand how these questions are graded. In general, you will receive one point for a definition or identification and one point for each explanation, example or description. (A good rule of thumb is that a complete explanation, example or description requires at least two sentences.) You cannot get points for repeated information so if you used an example in one part of the question, you cannot get points for using it in another part as well.

These are the basics of writing free response questions. As you practice writing throughout the course you will get better at answering free response questions. I'll have more tips for you in later units to help you improve as well.