

PMP Midterm Rubric – Winter 2025

NO HALF POINTS

Essay Questions (28 points each)

Question 1: Collective Action and Ukraine

- **Key Concepts to Address:** Logic of Collective Action, Free Riding, Privileged Actor, Incentives
- **Key Terms:** Should mention (or describe adequately) the incentives; selective incentives; type of group, what the collective goal is, free riding.
- **Strong answers should:**
 - Explain why contributions to Ukraine are highly unequal using the Logic of Collective Action.
 - Discuss the role of the U.S. as a privileged actor and why non-European countries contribute more.
 - Offer two concrete strategies for the EU to offset the loss of U.S. contributions, explicitly tying them to collective action mechanisms.
- **Scoring Guidelines:**
 - **±5 points or less:** Incomplete attempt or completely wrong topic and theory etc.
 - **±10 points:** Does not clearly connect the question to the Logic of Collective Action. Didn't really answer the question; didn't really offer the theoretical concepts in any clear or relevant way.
 - **±15 points:** Just (correct) definitions of key terms without explaining how they relate to the example in the question. Some effort at relating to the question, but maybe not all definitions are quite correct
 - **±20 points:** Demonstrates a solid understanding but lacks depth in strategies for EU contributions.
 - **23+ points:** Thoughtfully analyzes collective action principles and proposes realistic EU policy solutions. It probably offers some potential mechanisms for solving the problem but doesn't give any concrete examples of what they would be or how to achieve them, or doesn't adequately/correctly explain all the concepts applied.
 - **26+ points:** Provides a well-structured argument that integrates theory with practical solutions.

Question 2: Fire Hydrants and Political Oversight

- **Key Concepts to Address:** Principal-Agent Problems, Political Accountability, Symbolic Politics
- **Key Terms:** Congressional Oversight, Police Patrol Oversight, Fire Alarm Oversight, Legislative Delegation, Bureaucratic Discretion, Regulatory Oversight, Blame Avoidance; Interest Group Influence: The role of lobbying organizations and advocacy groups in shaping congressional oversight through fire alarm mechanisms.
- **Strong answers should:**
 - Explain why politicians focus on fire hydrants as evidence of administrative failure.
 - Discuss the strategic benefits of using visible infrastructure issues for political messaging.
 - Propose at least two actionable strategies the IAFF can advocate to demonstrate government responsiveness.
- **Scoring Guidelines:**
 - **±5 points or less:** Incomplete attempt or completely wrong topic and theory etc.
 - **±10 points:** Fails to connect fire hydrant issue to broader political strategy.
 - **±15 points:** Identifies key issues but lacks a clear application to oversight problems.
 - **±20 points:** Analyzes why politicians focus on fire hydrants but does not offer strong lobbying recommendations.
 - **23+ points:** Clearly links administrative oversight to fire hydrants and proposes viable IAFF strategies.
 - **26+ points:** Provides an insightful analysis with well-reasoned recommendations.

Question 3: The Great Firewall and Political Survival

- **Key Concepts to Address:** Logic of Political Survival, Selectorate Theory, Political Stability
- **Key Terms:** winning coalition, selectorate, distribution of public vs. private goods, N (or however they identify the population), probability of replacement, loyalty norm, challenger, defection, technological innovation, contestation, external threats, human capital.
- **Strong answers should:**
 - Explain why China invests in the Great Firewall using Selectorate Theory and the Logic of Political Survival.
 - Discuss why regional governments might want to circumvent internet restrictions.

- Address the risks to political stability and government leadership posed by evasion efforts.
- **Scoring Guidelines:**
 - **±5 points or less:** Incomplete attempt or completely wrong topic and theory.
 - **±10 points:** Does not explain why the Great Firewall exists in political terms. Did not use the selectorate theory adequately. Did not address the second part or did not say what their advice would be.
 - **±15 points:** Mentions political incentives but lacks depth in explaining why local governments would seek workarounds. Mentioned some element(s) of the selectorate theory but misses some key points (i.e. the W/S ratio, the leader's ability to provide private/public benefits, etc.).
 - **±20 points:** Provides a good theoretical explanation but lacks details on risks and motivations. May not have thoroughly described the main moving parts of selectorate theory but describes the general logic.
 - **23+ points:** Thoughtfully explains the firewall's political rationale and the trade-offs for local governments.
 - **26+ points:** Offers a nuanced argument integrating political survival with economic incentives. Thoughtfully includes the dynamics of political survival (i.e. size of W relative to S, the provision of public/private benefits, taxes, etc.). Explains why challengers never win, including their capacity to rig the elections and the incumbent advantage/challenger credibility problem.

Short Answer Questions (11 points each)

Question 4: Heuristics in Decision-Making

- **Key Concepts:** Definition of heuristics, why they are used, at least one factor influencing decisions
- **Strong answers should:**
 - Clearly define heuristics.
 - Explain why people rely on heuristics instead of fully analyzing information.
 - Identify one key factor that improves heuristic selection.
- **Scoring:**
 - **0:** No answer.
 - **1-5:** Unrelated answer.
 - **4-5:** Somewhat wrong definition.

- **6-7 points:** Defines heuristics but lacks depth.
- **8-9 points:** Provides a correct definition and one factor, but explanation is underdeveloped.
- **10-11 points:** Fully explains heuristics and provides a strong example of a selection factor.

Question 5: Principal-Agent Alignment

- **Key Concepts:** Principal-Agent Problems, Incentive Alignment, Monitoring
- **Strong answers should:**
 - Explain why agents' behavior is difficult to monitor.
 - Identify three ways to align agent and principal interests with brief explanations.
- **Scoring:**
 - **0:** No answer.
 - **1-5:** Unrelated answer.
 - **6-7 points:** Identifies but does not explain alignment mechanisms.
 - **8-9 points:** Explains at least two mechanisms clearly.
 - **10-11 points:** Clearly explains three alignment mechanisms with strong examples.

Question 6: Electoral Systems and Party Proliferation

- **Key Concepts:** Electoral Thresholds, Parliamentary vs. Presidential Systems, Duverger's Law
- **Strong answers should:**
 - Identify two reasons why low thresholds lead to more parties in parliamentary systems.
 - Explain why presidential systems generally yield fewer parties.
- **Scoring:**
 - **0:** No answer.
 - **1-5:** Unrelated answer.
 - **6-7 points:** Identifies but does not fully explain reasons.
 - **8-9 points:** Provides explanations but lacks depth.

- **10-11 points:** Clearly explains both reasons with theoretical grounding.

Question 7: Selectorate Theory and Political Institutions

- **Key Concepts:** Selectorate, Winning Coalition, Political Survival
- **Strong answers should:**
 - Explain why the selectorate and winning coalition are central to political survival.
- **Scoring:**
 - **0:** No answer.
 - **1-5:** Unrelated answer.
 - **6-7 points:** Mentions selectorate and coalition but lacks explanation.
 - **8-9 points:** Provides a correct but underdeveloped explanation.
 - **10-11 points:** Fully explains why these dimensions are central to the theory.

General Scoring Guidelines for Two Essay Questions:

- **±10 points:** Off-topic or missing key theoretical elements.
- **±15 points:** Covers key concepts but lacks depth or application.
- **±20 points:** Good application of theory, but missing nuance.
- **23+ points:** Thoughtful integration of theory with real-world examples.
- **26+ points:** Insightful and well-structured analysis with concrete solutions.
- **If we can't read it, we can't grade it.**
- **Write TA initials on bluebook cover.**

Total Possible Points: 100