

Oral Exam Questions

1. How does a bill become law in the United States and why is that process so difficult?
 - President
 - Congress
 - Bicameralism
 - Conference committees
 - Lobbying
 - Public opinion
 - Ideology
 - Leadership
 - Chamber rules (Senate and House)
 - Supreme Court
 - States
2. To what extent is the United States an equal society? What consequences does this level of equality have?
 - Economic inequality
 - Political inequality
 - Racial inequality
 - Welfare state policies
3. Would you say the American federal government does enough to reduce inequalities?
 - Facts of inequality?
 - Public opinion on inequality
 - Public opinion on taxes
4. To what extent is the United States a politically polarized society? What consequences does this have?
 - What does polarization mean? What about sorting?
 - Is it polarized at the elite or mass levels?
 - Media
 - Social relationships (marriage, friendships, etc.)

- Elections, extremity, redistricting
5. What role do states play in the development of policy in the United States? And how do states and the federal government interact in the policymaking process?
 - State-by-state learning
 - National government adoption of state policies
 - Federalism; separation of powers
 - Supreme Court involvement in states
 6. How much and what kinds of impact do parties have on politics and policymaking in the United States?
 - Congress: party discipline, leadership, floor control, divided government
 - Presidency: president as party leader
 - Parties as electoral competitors
 - Partisanship in the electorate
 7. What are the distinguishing features of American campaigns and elections? What impact do those features have on turnout and vote choice?
 - Plurality rule
 - Two-party system
 - Large number of races
 - Non-competitive races and uncontested races
 - Nonpartisan elections
 - Judicial elections
 - Direct democracy
 8. Why aren't there third parties in the United States?
 - Plurality rule elections
 - Polarization
 9. The Supreme Court is an important institution in American politics. What role does it play in politics?
 - Judicial review
 - What are the originals of judicial review
 - How does it influence policymaking? (e.g., strategic interactions)
 10. How does the Supreme Court decide cases? What factors influence their decisions?
 - Ideology

- Precedent
 - Arguments
 - Strategic considerations
 - Public legitimacy
11. There are lots of different ways of defining liberty. Friedman, for example, has one definition of liberty. Tocqueville talks a lot about liberty. The American Founders also talked about liberty. Would you say the United States a liberal society?
- Declaration of Independence and founding principles
 - Tocqueville on equality
 - Evidence on equality and inequality
 - Friedman's notion of liberalism
 - Liberalism as a political ideology in the United States
12. What do you think you can learn from American politics that might be relevant for your home country?