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Examiners' Report

June 2011

GCE Government and Politics 6GP03 3C

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Introduction

Taken overall, many candidates found this a more accessible paper than its equivalent last January, and achievement was generally higher. Only question 5 on civil rights was completely new, although, since it is a key concept in the specification, its inclusion should not have come as a surprise to centres. Question 6 on pressure groups was predictably the most popular essay question, and almost twice as many candidates attempted it as the other two questions combined. As has been true of essay questions on race in the recent past, however, candidates' eagerness to tackle it was not always reflected in the quality of their answers.

The concept of synopticity is still causing difficulties for some candidates. It is worth repeating that synopticity requires the recognition of, and engagement with, the competing viewpoints around the question set; these may be ideologically based but more often they are not. There are no liberal and conservative viewpoints that it is helpful to refer to, or indeed construct, in answer to a question such as question 8 on party decline and renewal, and neither is it helpful to refer to the aims of the Founding Fathers, which, in any event, are themselves the subject of debate.

Candidates do not need to use the word 'synoptic' at any stage in their answer and neither do they need a section (the favoured position is towards the end) where they announce that they are about to begin 'synoptic analysis'. All that is required is consideration of the competing evidence and arguments, and a judgement as to which is stronger. Even where there are recognisable ideological positions, while it may be convenient to refer to what conservatives and liberals may or may not believe, it is not essential, and it is certainly not necessary or even desirable to refer to these positions in short answers.

A further point of technique worth mentioning concerns evaluation. In both short and long answers, candidates fail to maximise AO2 marks by a failure to evaluate the evidence they use. For example, in the question on pressure groups' approach to the Supreme Court, many candidates used *Brown* to illustrate the method of a pressure group sponsoring a test case (*Brown* was ubiquitous on this paper and appeared in answers to at least four different questions). This is perfectly valid but the case was heard almost 60 years ago, and, if it is the best example available (and it may well not be), then this says something about the likely success of the method it is being used to illustrate.

Recognition of this raises the quality of the answer and accumulates AO2 marks.

It is now a number of years since the specification was drawn up, and inevitably since that time new issues have emerged. The specification itself obviously remains unchanged, but, to reflect these changes, new notes of guidance for centres have been produced. A link to these can be found on the Government and Politics subject page of the Edexcel website (<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gce/gce08/gov/Pages/default.aspx>), under 'Teacher Support Materials'.

Question 1

This question was second in unpopularity only to question 5, but it was well done by the majority of candidates who did attempt it. Level 1 answers were relatively infrequent, although a number of candidates misunderstood the question and devoted some or all of their answer to presidential or gubernatorial incumbents; Arnold Schwarzenegger was particularly popular in this connection. Answers which could refer in general terms to advantages such as fundraising, track record in pork procurement, etc, were usually well into Level 2 but, as is true of almost every question, knowledge of contemporary examples to support the points made lifted the answer into Level 3.

Chosen Question Number:

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

Question 4

Question 5

~~congress~~ white, water, senate. ~~money, water, funding~~
factors - ~~extra~~ ~~subverts~~ money, profile, name, expertise, ~~expert~~
PER M - money. A L - ^{anger} challenge.
Profile

From 1996 - 2008, on average 95% of house incumbents were re-elected for a second term under what can be referred to as the "Iron grip of incumbency". This is largely because incumbents have three main assets that challenger candidates don't - a profile, expertise and money. The first of these, profile, allows the candidate to use money in areas other than TV ads, as most congressmen and senators have built up name recognition in their previous term. Therefore, money can be used for things other than expensive advertising, and put into pursuits such as campaign staff. Similarly, incumbents have the advantage of congressional behavior such as the

franking privilege. Although this, ~~which is~~ ~~mainly used strictly not supposed~~ a privilege is not to be used in electioneering only, in 2010 most of the \$103 million dollar spent by congress on the franking privilege occurred 3 months before the midterms. Similarly, the expertise of senior congressmen often make them more appealing to voters. Not only can they offer contracts, and often more experience in committees to represent their constituency (for example, both Iowa Senators are on the Senate Agriculture Committee) they can also "pork barrel" or bring in earmarks to the state. The most famous example of this is Ted Stevens "Bridge to Nowhere" in Alaska, or the \$22,000 spent on the tea cup factory in Spartan, North Carolina. In fact, he could be argued that he won the 2010 midterms against Sharron Angle over his acknowledgement of his expertise. Similarly, incumbents tend to have more money, as they ~~are~~ ^{have} already built relationships with corporations through Iron Triangles and previous campaigns. Similarly, because of the "iron grip" of incumbency, corporations and interest groups tend to support incumbents as they are aware they are more likely to get a return on their investment should the incumbent win again, creating a vicious cycle.

However, in 2010 the hold of incumbents declined dramatically, with 64% of incumbents only retaining their seat. There are two likely reasons for this. The

their seat. There are two likely reasons for this. The first is that anger with the incumbents over scandals such as the banking crisis led to voter dissatisfaction, and more challengers picking seats. It is true that GW Bush lost the swing vote in 2004 as a consequence of his attitudes on global warming. However, the rise of the Tea Party in 2010 has also been seen as responsible for the surge of freshmen congressmen. Christine O'Donnell, although losing the election, defeated the Delaware incumbent in the Republican primary, and senators such as Tim Wainwright saw increasing support of the Tea Party movement. However, it has also benefitted the Democrats, as many moderate Republicans have chosen to support a moderate Democrat rather than a Tea Party member.

Therefore, although incumbency has certainly benefitted candidates in the past, its influence in congress is falling. Although incumbent president usually last 2 terms, the rise of the Tea Party in 2010, and its likely influence in 2012 has seen the "Iron grip" significantly weakened.



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Examiner Comments

This answer deals fully with both sides of the question and is securely in Level 3. It is not exhaustive - some candidates discussed partisan gerrymandering for example - but those that are made are developed intelligently. It illustrates the effectiveness of using recent examples to support the points made, even if one or two details are not quite accurate.



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Examiner Tip

Follow the news: one of the strengths of this answer is the references to recent political events such as the 2010 midterms, which will not be found in most textbooks. Internet sources as *Politico* will help keep you up to date.

Question 2

Affirmative action is always a popular topic, and this was an inviting question for many candidates. While the majority were able to explain at least three or four criticisms with some degree of clarity, a lot of the evidence cited tended to be anecdotal social observation and some way removed from traditional political analysis. The *Bakke* case was frequently cited and its background rehearsed in some detail, but it was not always obvious that candidates understood what the court's decision actually was. Some candidates discussed the case for reparations, but the case for reparations is not a case against affirmative action. Only a few were able to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the criticisms they discussed, and some wasted their time by describing justifications as well.

Questions on the 'Racial and Ethnic Politics' section of the specification will continue to feature affirmative action, but the scope of the topic will be broadened to include other issues of contemporary relevance, particularly immigration reform. Guidance on this can be found in the notes on the Edexcel website, referred to above.

Question 1

Question 2

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Question 4

Question 5

Abraham Lincoln's emancipation speech marked ~~the end of slavery~~ ~~the end of slavery~~ the end to slavery. However when slavery ended the white southerners used Jim Crow laws and segregation to disenfranchise ~~the~~ African Americans culminating in the ~~infamous~~ infamous 1896 Supreme Court ruling which suggested that blacks were 'separate but equal'. This was followed by another half century of persecution. ~~Then, in~~ Then, in ~~1963, JFK was elected President.~~ JFK Kennedy was elected President. In 1963, Martin Luther King gave his famous 'I have a dream' speech and JFK was assassinated. These two events lead to the Voting Rights Act of 1964 and the Civil Rights Act of 1965 as obviously the Reconstruction / Civil War Amendments hadn't done enough.

⊞

People argue that this history of two

centuries of persecution is reason enough for affirmative action. However affirmative action does have its costs.

Affirmative action is an attempt to create equality of opportunity and results. However arguably it does just the opposite. Studies have proven people are ~~more~~ less likely to go see a doctor from a minority as they are unsure whether or not he or she has the necessary skills due to affirmative action. This is true of many professions and it disenfranchises African Americans and other races. Also it seems very demeaning to suggest to somebody that they need extra help to succeed and helping someone in higher education and jobs suggests just this.

Also some people argue that affirmative action has run its course. This was backed up by the Supreme Court rulings in the *Balinger* cases (2009) where the Supreme Court suggested affirmative action has a shelf life of 25 years, it will be done by 2028.

~~Another way that affirmative action is criticised is by~~
Affirmative action is also criticised by perhaps the most powerful two black political figures in America, President Obama and Clarence Thomas.

Question 3

This was another well answered question and many candidates were able to describe a range of pressure group methods with supporting examples. The role of groups in the nomination process, particularly in the Bork and Miers nominations, was usually the most successfully developed point. Surprisingly, given that they were presumably taking Unit Four only a few days later, some candidates had only the sketchiest notion of the function of the court (there were fairly frequent references to the court passing or making laws), and others gave a list of all the pressure group techniques they could think of, including giving judges a foreign holiday.

Many candidates failed to recognise that this was a two part question and only gave a cursory nod in the direction of 'why' pressure groups seek to influence the court. Finally, as already mentioned in the introduction, relatively few answers attempted to evaluate the techniques they were describing; the example of *Brown* as a test case has been referred to, and amicus curiae briefs were another missed opportunity. Many candidates mentioned these as having been submitted in considerable numbers – 350 was the favourite – in the *Grutter* case; it would be reasonable to wonder, given the quantity involved, how likely it would be that any given brief would have a significant influence, or, even if it is cited in the judgment, as several were in *Grutter*, how far it had actually influenced the court, or merely supported a position it intended to take anyway.

Question 1 ✕ Question 2 ✕ Question 3 ✕
Question 4 ✕ Question 5 ✕

① Supreme Court landmark ② Amicus Curiae ③ Appointments ④ Renominating outside
⑤ Briefcases ⑥

The Supreme Court is responsible for some of the most landmark changes made in the US in ~~its~~ its history, and most notably on contentious issues such as Abortion and Rights for African-Americans, in cases such as Roe vs Wade of 1973 and Brown vs The Board of Education of Topeka of 1954. Thus the Supreme Court can ~~not~~ change American societies in ways which Congress cannot, making it a very attractive access point for pressure groups.

access point for Pressure Groups.

Pressure Groups provide the Govt with Amicus Curiae briefs, which are ^{evidenced} documented opinions on the case which the Supreme Court is studying at the time. For example in the case of *Gratz vs Bollinger* of 2003, concerning the use of Affirmative action, over 350 briefs were provided by ~~the~~ Pressure Groups to try to persuade ~~the~~ the Court of the judgement it should make.

Equally, Pressure Groups try to influence who is



ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

There are two points arising from this answer. The first part of the question is answered in a single paragraph; it is certainly rewardable, but is on the short side for one half of a two part question.

The second paragraph is an illustration of the point made above; a pressure group method is described, an example is given and the point is left there. It would be stronger if there was an evaluation of its likely success.



ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

Two part questions: unless the first part is just a definition, try to give the two parts roughly equal treatment, not necessarily 50:50, but at least 66:33. Evaluation: you should always try to give some assessment of the points you are making; in this question on the Supreme Court, you would aim to give an indication of the likely success of the various methods pressure groups might adopt.

Question 4

This was the second most answered short answer question, a welcome rise in popularity for the parties topic. Most candidates managed to at least reach Level 2, although some took the question to be about ideological factions rather than groups of voters, while others spent almost as much time discussing why some groups do not vote Republican as on those that do. The most successful approach to questions of this type is to take a single demographic at a time – for example men or evangelicals – rather than attempt, as some did, to explain the loyalty of the southern white middle class. A lot of answers made generalised points – for example, that wealthier Americans tend to vote Republican because of the party's traditional support for lower tax rates – but when reference to recent trends and policies, for example, the marked increase in the support of elderly voters for Republican candidates in the 2010 midterms, was made, the quality of the answer instantly went up.

Question 1

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3. Which groups of voters support the Republican Party and why.

The Republican Party, founded after the Democrats were once the party of the North, with Lincoln fighting Slavery. But since then the groups of voters have dramatically changed.

In terms of race, white Americans continuously vote for the Republican party. Other ethnicities tend to vote for Democrat, but with some exceptions. Hispanics between 200-2004 were more prone to vote for the Republican party. Jeb Bush the governor of Florida at that time connected with Hispanics with his Spanish speaking skills and having a Hispanic wife... Furthermore Florida have the highest number of Anti Castro Cubans, who view the Democrat Party as a continuation of that regime, therefore voting Republican over Democrat.

On religious grounds, Protestant's (highest number of people in a religion in America) tend to vote Republican. Catholics tend to vote Democrat, but this vote is

decreasing, especially in 2004 and 2010, and the 60's. The rise in Affirmative Action meant that European Catholics were losing jobs, due to Affirmative Action programmes being aimed toward blue collar jobs, (which European Catholics were mainly in). ~~It~~ Moreover Catholics are pro-life as the Church advocates being pro-life, Republicans are more likely to be pro-life over Democrats, this was shown when Bush Jr signed the partial abortion ban act. ~~MLL~~

Southerners have moved on from being anti-Lincoln due to the fact that Democrats have become the party for ethnic minorities with Affirmative Action and Civil Rights. Republicans express traditional conservative values such as fiscal & social conservatism which have attracted Southern states more so than the West Coast or North-East Coast. Males commonly vote more for Republicans than women due to their more conservative leaning, but since 2010 the male/female gap has decreased with women voting 49% for Republican candidates. 18-29 year old gap has also decreased due to Obama not fixing the 9% unemployment rate.



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Examiner Comments

This is another secure Level 3 answer; a range of different groups are identified and most points are supported by detail and specific events. Two points of technique; it is not necessary to write out the question, and, like the previous answer, the first paragraph is unrewardable, although here it is obviously much shorter.

Question 5

Civil Rights have not been the subject of a question before, and unsurprisingly it attracted fewest answers of all the short answer questions. When a question actually requests a definition, it would seem commonsensical to give it, and it would have helped many candidates to clarify exactly they took the term 'civil rights' to mean. For some, the opportunity to deliver a narrative is apparently irresistible, and a number of answers comprised a history of the black struggle for freedom, beginning in 1787 and ending in 1965. Some others attempted to turn the question into another affirmative action question, and saw the opportunity to reproduce statistics on black deprivation. More rewardably, a minority of candidates expanded the scope of the question to include other minority groups and discussed for example the status and availability of same sex marriage in the US.

Chosen Question Number:

Question 1 Question 2 Question 3
Question 4 Question 5

.....

Civil rights are the right to expect freedom of speech and liberty, alongside support and federal protection with the right to deserve education, medical care and welfare support, for all citizens. Civil rights are usually associated with African Americans but may also involve other disadvantaged minorities such as Native Americans or women.

.....



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Examiner Comments

When a question asks for a definition, a short paragraph is all that is required. The paragraph in the clip could be developed further, but nevertheless it is a reasonably effective first part of the answer nevertheless.

Question 6

Almost two thirds of the entry attempted this question, with varying degrees of success. The main criticism was that many answers read like a slightly amended version of the answers the same candidates might have written to a question in Unit 1. The only discernible difference in some cases was that Mothers Against Drunk Driving was substituted for Fathers for Justice, although Fathers for Justice was actually mentioned by a few. This led such answers to only partially engage with the question, and a more convincing approach was based on the distinctive features of the US system – fragmented government, multiple access points, weak parties, ballooning costs of elections – and the implications of these for the contribution of pressure groups to democracy.

Chosen Question Number:

Question 6 Question 7 Question 8

Pressure groups also known as interest groups in the USA aim to promote democracy in all its functions: participation, education and agenda building. Pressure groups wish to represent the ideologies of all Americans and in effect influence policy-making in congress and decisions on cases in the courts.



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Examiner Comments

The purpose of an introduction to an essay is to explain why there is a debate around the subject of the question, and to state which side of the debate the writer favours, setting up the direction of the argument for the rest of the essay. This introduction does neither of these things; instead, it gives an outline of some of the points the writer intends to cover, and might as well have been omitted.



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Examiner Tip

Try to write an effective introduction; the introduction is not a summary of all the points you intend to make nor the opportunity for some historical 'background'. For this question, you would briefly explain why the activities of pressure groups have given rise to competing views on their impact, and then state which of these views you intend to support in the rest of the essay.

Question 7

This was the least popular of the essay questions and the level of achievement was not generally high, although as ever there were a handful of outstanding answers. A number of candidates misunderstood the scope of the question and discussed the functioning of the Electoral College, as well as the system for selecting presidential candidates. It also attracted a number of candidates who offered little beyond some general musings on the nature of democracy, which might have been deployed more effectively in the question on pressure groups. Others knew a range of points for and against the current system, but were unable to link them convincingly to the promotion of democracy. Even in confidently written answers, there was very often a lack of detailed knowledge of developments in primary funding or frontloading, which could have been very rewardably discussed.

Chosen Question Number:

Question 6 Question 7 Question 8

Plan

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
- Caucus Frontloading (more representative)	- Closed Closed primaries (focus on ^{keeping ticket behind} retaining pure ideology)
- Open primaries	- open primaries (Wisconsin)
- Blanket primaries	- Winner-takes - all undemocratic regardless of PP
-	- Frontloading? - Caucus

Following the McGovern-Fraser Commission of 1968, primaries have increasingly been used by both main political parties to nominate a candidate to ~~be~~ run for the presidency. This was ^{partially based} on the theory of increased public participation enhancing the democratic process. One could point to the use of open primaries (to include all registered voters) or ~~or~~ modified primaries; blanket primaries and perhaps the increased amount of frontloading (i.e. more political participation at the start of the primary season) as evidence. Conversely, one might point to the fact that closed primaries focus on retaining the 'pure ideology' by only permitting registered party members to vote; evaluate the strength of open primaries; refer to the disproportionate nature of converting votes into delegates in the Republican Party and caucus.

converting votes into delegates in the Republican Party and caucus elections as evidence that political participation does not advance but merely ^hinders the democratic process.

Firstly, one might refer to the use of open primaries to suggest that political participation advances democracy. Open primaries are primaries ~~held~~ whereby any registered voter, be they Democrat, Republican or independent, can vote in (only) one parties primary. This system ^{was} used by the Republicans in 14 States in 2008, and by the Democrats in 13 States. The theory behind it advancing democracy is that it is seen as being more reflective of the State as a whole, and thus more democratic than merely permitting registered party activists to vote for a candidate perhaps ^{more} ideological than the rest of the State's electorate. This was perhaps evident in the closed primary of ⁺ Delaware 2010, whereby right-wing ~~R~~ Tea-Party endorsed Christine O'Donnell was elected from the Republican primary at the expense of 43-year Congressman Mike Castle who was perceived by many political scientists as being more centrist and thus more ideologically acceptable to ~~the~~ wider proportion of the electorate. One might therefore argue that political participation enhances democracy, as seen by the fact that open primaries in permitting a greater ~~the~~ proportion of the State's electorate to vote give more justification to the candidate nominated. This is ^{as} applicable to the Presidential nomination as it is to all elections in the United States therefore. ~~This is similar to modified primaries therefore~~
~~Secondly, one might refer to the~~
This is similar to modified primaries therefore. Modified

This is similar to modified primaries therefore. Modified primaries are those in which registered party members can vote ~~for~~ ~~in~~ in the election alongside registered independent voters who therefore represent a larger proportion of society. One might refer to the fact that in Wisconsin 2008, 27% of the voters in an early poll described themselves as independent ^{and} Republican leaning. Of this 27%, Obama obtained 63% of the vote, thus far more indicative of the eventual outcome (and therefore the preferences of ^{the} society in that particular state) than a closed primary that is more restrictive of one political participation. This is thus seen ^{by some} as being far more democratic.

In addition, one might refer to recent developments in American politics that point toward political participation advancing democracy. Firstly one might argue that the increased frontloading of 2008 - whereby ^{the} Iowa ^{caucus} and New Hampshire primary were held at the beginning of January, ~~at~~ and 24 ^{different} states holding primaries ^{on} before February 5th (Super Tuesday) - suggests a movement toward greater political participation at an early stage in the primary season. ~~is~~ This is perhaps also evident based on the fact that Nevada and South Carolina were brought forward (as due to the fact that the former has a large Hispanic population and the latter a large black population) to be more reflective of America following the Iowa caucus (93% white state) and the New Hampshire primary (95% white). ~~This is related to the~~ Secondly one might point to the fact that ~~as~~ Proposition 13 was passed in California by 53% to 47% (albeit on a 33% turnout) to ~~permit~~ change the primary system to using blanket primaries. This is when all candidates are placed on the same ballot paper ~~to~~ for an ~~normal~~ election, therefore including a greater spectrum of

~~primary~~ election, therefore including a greater spectrum of society as all registered voters in the state regardless of party affiliation can turn out to vote. This therefore suggests a movement in American politics to promote political participation to enhance democracy.

Conversely, one might ^{evaluate the aforementioned points} ~~point to caucus elections as a sign of~~ ~~poor~~ Republican in favour of closed primaries might argue that it is more ~~democratic~~ important to nominate a candidate that retains the parties 'pure ideology.' They may therefore ~~point~~ criticize open primaries on the basis that ~~regardless~~ despite or as a consequence of their increased turnout, some electors may vote for a candidate they believe has relatively little chance of being successful, ~~the~~ merely to make their party's nomination have a greater opportunity for success in the eventual Presidential election. This might have been evident in the Democratic Wisconsin primary - the fact that 27% of voters identified themselves as Republican leaning may have suggested that they voted for the candidate with the less name recognition to Hillary Clinton in the hope that it might give the Republican nomination (John McCain) greater opportunity for success. On this basis, political participation can actually hinder the democratic process.

One might therefore criticize caucus elections in the Presidential nomination for hindering democracy. Caucus elections are meetings between party activists to elect delegates to represent their candidate preference at the next round of caucus voters. On this basis caucus elections hinder democracy as they are so very long and drawn out. In Iowa 2008 for example, there were 1784 caucus precinct meetings to elect delegates to

go to 99 county meetings who then proceeded onto the state-wide caucus meeting. This occurred in May 2008, thus 4 months after the initial caucus meetings which Obama and Huckabee won for their respective parties. By this stage, in the Republican Party anyway, McCain had already passed the number of delegates he needed to win the Republican nomination, which had the potential to sway delegates representing the Iowa caucus at the National Convention. Obama actually obtained ~~8~~⁹ more delegates, 8 from John Edwards (who withdrew) and 1 from Clinton. Thus, despite greater opportunity for political participation in discussing candidates, caucus elections may hinder the democratic process. This was also exemplified by the fact that in 1988 the Christian-right lobbied in support of ^{in Washington} Pat Robertson to try and obtain delegates - hardly a democratic, state representative way of electing a presidential nomination.

Likely, one might argue that political participation is somewhat wasted in the Republican process of converting votes into delegates using the winner-takes-all system. In this sense the electoral process arguably negates democracy regardless of political participation, evident on Super Tuesday in the Republican Party whereby John McCain obtained 511 delegates for his 9 states whereas Mitt Romney obtained a mere 176 for his 7 states.

Thus, in conclusion, I believe that political participation as a concept enhances democracy in the presidential nomination

but not always as a practice. This is perhaps categorised by the political division over open primaries - is it more democratic that a greater proportion of the electorate can vote? Or is it undemocratic that some will inevitably attempt to spoil that primacy for ^{the} political benefits of that their Party may enjoy.



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Examiner Comments

This is one of the stronger answers to this question which was not generally done well. Some of the detail this candidate knows, for example concerning the use of 'First Past the Post' in Republican primaries, was seen in very few answers indeed. The repeated use of 'one might refer' to introduce points reads oddly, and an alternative construction would be preferable.



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Examiner Tip

Keep examples relevant - recent examples are the best evidence but they need to be relevant. The point made on the second side about open and closed primaries is certainly valid, but the example cited relates to a Senate primary and is not therefore the strongest evidence in an answer on the nominating process for presidential candidates.

Question 8

As is often the case, the question on parties generated the best answers of the essay questions, and it is a pity that parties as a topic does not attract a higher proportion of the entry. In comparison to pressure groups, for example, there is much more opportunity for candidates in discussing parties to draw on knowledge gained from following contemporary events, and to avoid writing formulaic answers largely or wholly derived from textbooks. This was not true of all, however, and some cited evidence such as the Brock reforms and the votes in the Senate on the Clinton impeachment as evidence of party renewal; while rewardable, neither was compelling evidence that party decline is out of date. More rewardably, many candidates were able to discuss the agenda of the Obama administration, the continued partisan divides within Congress and the rise and influence of the Tea Party; interestingly, the last named was used to argue for both the redundancy and continuing relevance of theories of party decline.

Question 6 ✕

Question 7 ✕

Question 8 ✕

The theory of 'party decline' was first put forward in the 1970s and it suggested that the role of the two main parties (Republican and Democrats) was declining in the US Society and US politics. However since the 1990's in particular it is clear the role of the parties has been increasing and playing a greater role, possibly due to 'party renewal'. However it is clear that the theory of 'party decline' is becoming increasingly out of date.

Proponents of the theory of party decline point to numerous factors to support their views. Firstly, they point to the decreasing involvement of ordinary voters in Presidential candidate selection during the primary and caucus season since the 1968 McGovern-Fraser Commission which recommended democratising the process which started in 1972. Voter turnout in the primaries has increased from 11% in 1968, 21% in 1988 and 30% in 2008. Voters taking part has decreased the role of the party bosses in 'Smoke-filled rooms' who used to decide the candidate.

candidate.

Secondly, they point to the evidence of more split-ticket voting in election where candidates vote for opposing parties at ~~different~~ ^{the same} election for different offices.

A clear example of this was in 1996 when the Republicans effectively gave up on their Presidential Candidate Bob Dole as they believed he couldn't defeat President Clinton and they focused on electing a GOP Congress which they did. A further example is that in 2008 many Democrat incumbents ^{were} voted ahead of Obama in their congressional district suggesting many voted for McCain for President. This is evident when considering the 20-30 McCain democrats in the House of Representatives ~~to the~~ (Democrat Representatives whose District voted for John McCain for President).

Thirdly they pointed to the increasing number of registered Independents in the 1970's and 1980's which suggests they didn't identify strongly with either main party,

Fourthly, they point to the fact that the parties have lost their traditional role in communicating with voters which they suggest the Media in the forms of Television, Newspapers and the Internet have taken over.

Those who support the theory of party renewal also point to a number of factors that suggest the parties are increasingly important in Congress and in US Society. Firstly they say Party decline was overated in the first place and that the parties always played an important role. They argue that numbers

of Independent voters have fallen which is supported by the fact that since 1992, the number of registered independents has fallen which shows increased role for parties. They also point to the fact that the parties still play an important role in nominating Presidential candidates. For example the Democrats have 'superdelegates' at their national conventions to nominate a candidate now which increases the element of peer review and the role of high profile party members such as Senators and Governors in party selection. Superdelegates played an important role in the 2008 Democrat nomination where they on the whole supported Obama over Hillary Clinton. They also point to the increased partisanship in Congress over the last 2 decades where the parties have often come from ^{very} opposing views and find it difficult to compromise on issues.

Those supporting party renewal argue that in the TV climate of today elections ^{have} become much more candidate than party orientated and although this is true to an extent the number of Congressional elections fought on National Party issues has increased considerably in the last 2 decades. In 1994, the GOP fought with the 'Contract with America' and took over both houses in Congress. In 2002 the GOP fought the midterms as - voters should support President Bush's war against terror by voting GOP. This was also successful and they increased majorities in both Houses. In 2006 the Democrats campaigned against Republican Scandal and incompetence and on the 6 for

Republican Scandal and incompetence and on the 6 for OS agenda and won majorities in both houses. And most recently in 2010, the GOP energised by a new Tea Party grass roots took the House of Representatives and increased their membership in the Senate by focusing on the agenda of Democrat ^{Change} and Congressional Democrats such as Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the Healthcare debate. Even more recently in a special election for New York's 26th district, the Democrat victor Kathy Hochul focused on the GOP plan for medicare advocated by House Budget Committee Chairmans~~hip~~ Paul Ryan. This suggests an increased role for parties. Furthermore no GOP voted for Healthcare reform in 2010 and only 3 in Senate for economic stimulus package which shows increased polarisation of parties and partisanshp which shows party renewal.

The increasing partianshp and lack of compromise in Congress, more congressional elections based on the party agenda, number of independents declining and the fact that party decline was probably overated in the first place all suggests the ~~party~~ theory of party decline is increasingly out of date despite parties being control over presidential nomination.



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Examiner Comments

Answers to this question could draw on a wide variety of evidence but usually the increasing ideological coherence of the two main parties formed a central part. Interestingly, this answer ignores this, and focuses instead on elections and Congress, deploying some accurate knowledge about recent developments to very good effect on the final side.

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