

GOV 310L/FALL 2010/ESSAY QUESTIONS FOR THE FIRST EXAM

As I explained in my recent email, we will select one of each of these two pairs of questions for the exam, so you will have no choice, but you have the questions in advance. Here they are:

First pair:

Either (1): It is often said that the Framers were creating a republic rather than a democracy. What does this mean? What features of the government they created in the Constitution would support this view? What features of government today make the government more democratic than the Framers intended? How did these changes come about?

Or (2): Key features of American government are the separation of powers, checks and balances, the division of powers, and democracy. First, (a) state clearly what is meant by each of these four features. Then, (b) pick a particular controversial or disputed happening in current American politics, such as policy on the war in Afghanistan, or the current debate over extending the Bush tax cuts, or the current midterm elections (or another example of your choice) and, using materials from the *N.Y. Times* and, if you wish, from lecture, explain how (if at all) each of these four key features has affected this happening.

Second pair:

Either (1): Interest groups are playing a major role in current American politics, especially on economic policies and in the current election campaign, as we have seen in the *N.Y. Times* and in lecture. Some believe that interest groups currently strengthen American democracy, while others argue that interest groups currently weaken American democracy. (a) What do we mean by interest groups in American politics? (b) Summarize concisely the major arguments for the view that interest groups strengthen American democracy, illustrating your argument with examples from current American politics as reported in the *N.Y. Times* and/or lecture. (c) Summarize concisely the major arguments for the view that interest groups weaken American democracy, illustrating your argument with examples from current American politics as reported in the *N.Y. Times* and/or lecture. Be sure to define what you mean by democracy in the course of your answer.

Or (2): The news media have occasionally been referred to as 'the fourth branch of government,' because of the important role they play in communicating between citizens and government. (a) Make the strongest case you can for the view that the media strengthen American democracy, and then (b) make the strongest case you can for the view that the media weaken American democracy. Finally, (c) say which view you find more persuasive, and why. Illustrate your argument throughout all three parts of your answer with examples from lecture and the *N.Y. Times*.

DON'T FORGET TO BRING A BLUE BOOK FOR YOUR ESSAY ANSWERS AND A PENCIL FOR YOUR SCANTRON ANSWERS TO THE 20 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS.

**AND DON'T FORGET: THERE WILL ALSO BE 4 EXTRA CREDIT QUESTIONS ON
WORLD AFFAIRS NOT INVOLVING THE UNITED STATES, WORTH A POINT
APIECE.**