

POLS 2020: Study Guide 2

Use the following prompts to help you study for the second POLS 2020 exam. Think critically about these issues and be thorough in your preparations. Note that you are only accountable for the materials we covered in class between Exams 1 and 2.

1. What do elections accomplish in democracies? That is, why do we hold them?
2. What explains which candidates win elections and which lose? What are voters looking for in candidates? Know the difference between the spatial and partisan model of political behavior.
3. Know the different types of methods we discussed regarding how parties select nominees for general election contests (i.e., primaries, caucuses, and conventions).
4. What is Duverger's Law? What are the two necessary conditions, and what kind of political system is typified by states where these two conditions exist?
5. Know how the Electoral College works. Please note, I don't expect you to know all the steps in the event that the Electoral College does not produce a winner. I'm merely looking for how the College itself selects a new president and vice president.
6. Understand that, generally speaking, one needs to win a majority of the vote in primary elections (which may necessitate a run-off) but only a plurality vote in the general election.
7. Understand the difference between a district and an at-large election along with the difference between single-member and multi-member districts.
8. Generally speaking, how has the expense of running for office changed over the years? Which offices are the most expensive for which to run? Why?
9. What is public financing of political campaigns? Why might this be a good or a bad thing? How do democracy vouchers approach this dilemma?
10. Today, how far in advance do presidential candidates announce their candidacy? How did timing differ when political conventions chose nominees?
11. What are some of the key individuals that help to run a campaign aside from the candidate (e.g., scheduler, social media manager, election lawyers, etc.)?
12. What is a "convention bump," and how has it changed over time?
13. What are the common types of campaign media through which individuals communicate with voters (e.g., print, television, internet)? How do campaigns communicate with voters across these different media, and what are candidates' objectives for such communication?
14. How has social media fundamentally changed how candidates run for office? Here, focus not only on the expense of running but also how candidates communicate with voters.
15. What are attack advertisements, and how do they pose a prisoners' dilemma for campaigns?
16. Generally speaking, what happens to the volume of campaign advertising as the date of the general election nears?
17. Understand the concepts of individualism, universalism, and logrolling in the context of legislating. How might some of these concepts hinder legislating? How might some grease the wheels of legislating?
18. Know the difference between the trustee and delegate theories of representation. What are some of the relative merits or demerits of each?

19. Generally speaking, Congress has a very low approval rate, but individual members of Congress are reelected at a rate of more than 80 percent. What explains this “incumbency advantage”? Why is incumbency greater in the House compared to the Senate?
20. Understand the difference between “packing” and “cracking” in gerrymandering, and be prepared to identify which Alabama congressional districts exhibit either type of gerrymandering.
21. What are some of the desired (or undesired) properties of legislative districts when courts are called upon to evaluate them?
22. What are some of the party leadership positions in Congress? How do these positions differ between the House and Senate? Who runs the respective chambers? Why might it be a little difficult to pin down who runs the Senate?
23. What role do committees play in the legislative process? Who determines who serves on which committees, and what might determine their choice of appointment?
24. What’s the difference between standing and select committees? Name some examples, and know what they do substantively.
25. What role do caucuses and staff play in Congress? Under what circumstances might they be important to the policy-making process?
26. What is a filibuster in the Senate? Why is this a minoritarian institution? How does one end it? Under what circumstances does the filibuster not apply today?
27. Explain the “right of first recognition” and how it empowers the majority leader.
28. What are the steps involved in passing a bill into law? Be prepared to go into detail on this one, and review the 10 formal steps outlined in class.
29. What do we mean when we say that the American presidency is a “unitary executive”? How is the presidency quasi-independent vis-à-vis the other branches of government and quasi-democratic vis-à-vis the selection of president?
30. What are some of the enumerated and unenumerated powers afforded the Executive that we discussed in class? Remember what an enumerated vs. unenumerated power is.
31. How did the use of the legislative veto fundamentally change with the election of President Andrew Jackson? (Note this remains the usage of the veto to this day.)
32. Generally speaking, what has happened to the number of bills passed out of Congress and the number of bills the president has vetoed over time? What explains this trend?
33. What is an executive order, and how has its usage changed over time? Which presidents used it the most? To what crises were they responding with its usage?
34. What’s the difference between a treaty and an executive agreement? Generally, under what conditions will a president prefer one over the other? How frequently are either used?
35. What is the pardoning power? How may it be used? How has its usage changed over time?
36. The presidency has evolved significantly over the years such that presidents oftentimes reflect the exigencies or trends of the day. Be prepared to explain some of these types of presidencies and how certain presidents embodied these philosophies (e.g., Washington as an elder statesman, Jackson as a voice of the people, Lincoln as a military leader, and so on).
37. What is the spoils system? How did administrations use it? Put differently, how did they abuse it, and when did it end? How?
38. What role does the vice president play in American government? Understand that their role is highly unique insofar as they are constitutional officers in two separate branches of government.

39. How do presidential impeachments and removal from office work? How many times has a president been impeached, and who were they? Were any removed from office?
40. What are some other limits on executive power (e.g., congressional investigations, public opinion, etc.)?