Government Mid-term Review:

**1. GOVT 2a.** **What elements of the United States constitutional system evolved from Athens and Rome?**

Athens: Direct Democracy

Rome: Indirect (Representative) Democracy, Republic

**2. GOVT 2b.** **What elements of the Constitution of the United States are derived from the Magna Carta, the English Petition of Rights, and the English Bill of Rights?**

Magna Carta:

• Limited power of government

• Fundamental rights: trial by jury, due process of law

English Petition of Rights:

• Early document supporting the idea that men have rights and establishing the concept of rule of law.

• Included basic rights: Guarantee of trial by jury, protection against marshal law, protection against quartering of troops, Protection of private property

English Bill of Rights:

• Limited power of the monarch, no standing army in peacetime, free elections, right of petition, parliamentary checks on power

**3. GOVT 2c.** **What were the fundamental principles of American government and law developed by leading European political thinkers?**

• Limited government: John Locke (Constitution of Virginia, Constitution of the United States, Declaration of Independence)

• Government’s authority coming only from the consent of the governed: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke (Declaration of Independence, Constitution of the United States)

• Separation of powers: Montesquieu (Constitution of the United States, Constitution of Virginia)

**4. GOVT 2d.** **Why are the charters of the Virginia Company of London significant?**

The basic rights of Englishmen were guaranteed to the colonists by the charters of the Virginia Company of London.

**5. GOVT 2e.** **How are the natural rights philosophies expressed by John Locke and JeanJacques Rousseau reflected in the Declaration of Independence?**

• Rousseau believed that all men are equal.

• Locke believed that government is based on an agreement between people and their rulers (“social contract”). He felt that people have the right to life, liberty, and property.

**6. GOVT 2f. What roles did George Mason, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison play in the adoption of the Bill of Rights?**

**Virginia Declaration of Rights, by George Mason**

• States that all Virginians should have certain rights, including freedom of religion and the press

• Basis for the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the United States

**Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, by Thomas Jefferson**

• States that all people should be free to worship as they please

• First time religious freedom was protected by law

• Basis for the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which guarantees religious freedom

**James Madison, “Father of the Constitution”**

• Kept detailed notes during the Constitutional Convention

• Engineered compromises on the most difficult issues facing the delegates

• Authored the “Virginia Plan,” which proposed a federal government of three separate branches (legislative, executive, and judicial) and became the foundation for the structure of the new government.

• Authored much of the Bill of Rights

**7. GOVT 4a. How did the amount of power given to the national government polarize the ratification debates?**

• Nine of thirteen states were needed to ratify the Constitution.

• Anti-Federalist position – Suspicious of a strong central government – Wanted Bill of Rights to protect personal liberties

• Federalist position – Believed that a strong central government was the best way to protect freedom

*The Federalist* was a series of essays supporting adoption of the Constitution of the United States.

**8**. **GOVT 4b. What is the significance of the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States?**

• To form a more perfect union

• To establish justice

• To ensure domestic tranquility

• To provide for the common defense

• To promote the general welfare

• To secure the blessings of liberty

**9. GOVT 4c. What are the fundamental principles contained in the Constitution of the United States?**

• Consent of the governed: People are the only source of governmental power.

• Limited government: The government may do only those things that the people have given it the power to do.

• Separation of powers: Government is divided into three branches — the legislative, executive, and judicial.

• Checks and balances: This is a system whereby each branch of government exercises some control over the others.

• Federalism: In this form of government, powers are divided between the national government and state governments.

• Rule of law: The Constitution of the United States is supreme, and all individuals are accountable under the law.

**10. GOVT 4d. How does the Constitution of the United States organize the national government?**

• Article I establishes the legislative branch of the national government by setting forth the two houses of Congress to make laws.

• Article II establishes the executive branch to carry out the laws passed by Congress.

• Article III creates the United States Supreme Court and empowers Congress to establish lower Federal Courts to interpret the laws.

**11. GOVT 4e. What are the procedures to amend the Constitution of the United States?**

• Amendment: A formal revision to the Constitution, responding to needs of a changing nation. To date, there have been 27 amendments to the Constitution.

National amendment procedure (Article V)

• Proposing an amendment – requires a two-thirds vote of both houses of Congress or – requires a national convention requested by two-thirds of the state legislatures.

• Ratifying an amendment – requires approval by three-fourths of the state legislatures or – requires acceptance by conventions in three-fourths of the states.

**12. GOVT 5a. What is the relationship of the state governments to the national government?**

• The Constitution of the United States establishes a federal form of government in which the national government is supreme.

• The powers not given to the national government by the Constitution of the United States are reserved to the states or people (10th Amendment).

**13. GOVT 5b. How is power divided and shared between the national and state levels of government?**

**Powers of national government**

• Expressed powers are those directly stated in the Constitution of the United States, such as the power to levy and collect taxes, make war, and regulate trade among the states.

• Implied powers are those reserved by the national government but not specifically listed; the source for implied powers is the elastic clause or “necessary and proper” clause (Article I, Sec. 8).

• Inherent powers are those that the national government may exercise simply because it is the national government, such as establishment of diplomatic relations and regulation of immigration.

**Areas where powers are shared**

• Taxation

• Education policy

• Criminal justice laws

• Conflicts between the state and national authority in a federal system are found in concurrently held powers.

**14. GOVT 5c. What powers are denied to both national and state governments?**

• Ex post facto laws • Tax on exports

**15. GOVT 5d. What is the ongoing debate that focuses on the balance of power between state and national governments?**

• Federalism is not a static relationship between levels of government. The distribution of power between the states and the national government is the source of considerable political debate.

**16. GOVT 6a. How do political parties organize to win elections?**

Political parties have national, state, and local organizations.

**Roles of political parties**

• Select candidates • Raise funds • Conduct campaigns • Identify important issues • Monitor the party in power

• Each major political party seeks to define itself in ways that wins majority support while remaining committed to core principles.

• The two major parties are coalitions of several factions and interest groups and recognize the importance of conducting campaigns that appeal to voters in the middle of the political spectrum, veering neither too far left nor too far right of the political center.

• Third parties could form to highlight single issues in a given election or provide a long-term forum for minority views.

**17. GOVT 6b. How do political parties nominate candidates for national, state, and local offices?**

• Caucus • Nominating convention • Petition • Direct primary

**How do the major political parties select presidential candidates?**

• The two major political parties use a national nominating convention to select presidential and vice-presidential candidates.

• In Virginia, state and local party organizations determine which method of nomination will be used to select candidates. Once nominated, candidates campaign and go before the voters for election to office.

• Democracy requires that elections be free, honest, and accurate.

• In Virginia, 17-year-olds can register and vote in special elections or participate in the nominating process if their 18th birthday is on or before the general election.

**18. GOVT 6c. How has the high cost of getting elected affected campaign funding and spending?**

Laws limit the amount individuals and groups may contribute to federal, state, and local candidates.

**The Federal Election Campaign Act**

• Provides for a system of financing based on three principles:

– Public funding of presidential elections

– Limitations on the amounts presidential and congressional candidates may receive from contributors

– Public disclosure of the amounts candidates spend to get elected

• In state and local campaigns, campaign contributions received by a candidate are unlimited but must be reported.

• Rising campaign costs require candidates to conduct extensive fundraising activities.

• Increasingly, fundraising is done online.

**19. GOVT 6d. How do media coverage, campaign advertising, and public opinion polls influence national, state, and local elections?**

• Mass media (including Internet) influence public opinion.

• Campaign advertisements are used to persuade and/or mobilize the electorate.

• Scientific polling is used to measure public attitudes, target ads, and refine campaign strategies.

**How will current and future elections be influenced by the use of Internet-based communications?**

• Internet-based communications include

– campaign Web sites

– e-mail communications with voters

– use of social networking sites and blogging

– online grassroots organizing.

**20. GOVT 6e. How do demographic changes lead to reapportionment? What effect does reapportionment have on elections?**

• reapportionment: Redistribution of the fixed number of seats in a legislative body (e.g., the 435 Congressional seats)

• redistricting: Redrawing the boundaries of legislative districts

• gerrymandering: The process of redrawing district boundaries to benefit one political party or group of citizens

The Constitution of the United States requires reapportionment of Congressional districts following each census.

**What are some alternatives to legislative redistricting?**

In Virginia, the General Assembly’s majority party redraws state and Congressional districts. Some states have removed legislators completely or partially from the process (e.g., by using non-partisan commissions).

United States Supreme Court cases *(Westbury v. Sanders)* in the early 1960s established the “one man, one vote” principle.

**21. GOVT 6f. How have amendments to the Constitution of the United States extended suffrage?**

• The 15th Amendment ensures right to vote regardless of race.

• The 17th Amendment provides for direct election of United States senators.

• The 19th Amendment grants women the right to vote.

• The 23rd Amendment allows voters in Washington, D.C., to vote for president and vice president.

• The 26th Amendment gives the right to vote to citizens 18 years old and older.

**22. GOVT 6g. What factors influence voter participation?**

• Campaign issues

• Candidates

• Voter attitudes toward government

• Voter loyalty to political parties

• Competitive and noncompetitive races

- Education, age, and income are important factors in predicting which citizens will vote.

- More citizens vote in presidential elections than in other national, state, and local contests, but the percentage of Americans voting in presidential elections was on the decline until the 2008 election.

- A voter’s belief that he/she has little impact on the outcome of an election tends to discourage voter turnout.

- Voter apathy, dissatisfaction, and failure to meet voting requirements can contribute to decline in voting.

**23. GOVT 6h. How do interest groups influence political life?**

• Stimulate interest in public affairs

• Serve as a vehicle for participation in the political process

• Advance specific political, social, or economic issues

• Contribute to political campaigns

- The high cost of campaigning increases the influence of interest groups and political action committees (PACs).

**24. GOVT 6i. How can students under 18 participate in the democratic process?**

• Participating in student elections and school governance

• Volunteering to work in political campaigns

• Registering and voting in a primary election (if the student turns 18 on or before the general election)

• Participating in classroom and online simulations.

**25. GOVT 7a. How is Congress organized?**

• The Senate: 100 members, with each state having two senators

• The House of Representatives: 435 members, with each state’s representation based on the population

**How are committees organized, and what is their purpose?**

• Committees are organized by subject matter.

• Because of the large volume of work, committees are essential to the legislative process.

**What are the expressed and implied powers?**

• Levy taxes • Borrow money • Regulate commerce • Coin money

• Implied powers of Congress allow it to do all things “necessary and proper” to carry out its expressed powers.

**What are the three parts of the executive branch, and how are these positions filled?**

The executive branch is headed by the president and vice president, who are supported by the Executive Office, the Cabinet, and the federal bureaucracy.

**What are the expressed and implied powers of the executive branch?**

• Overseeing the various parts of the executive branch

• Enforcing laws

• Issuing executive ordinances

• Appointing and removing officials

• Making treaties and executive agreements

• Commanding the military

**26. GOVT 7b. How does the system of checks and balances protect against an abuse of power by any one branch of government?**

**Checks of the legislative branch**

• over the executive branch: – To override presidential vetoes – To impeach and convict a president – To approve treaties – To approve presidential appointments

• over the judicial branch: – To approve federal judges/justices – To impeach and convict judges/justices

**Checks of the executive branch**

• over the legislative branch: – To veto acts of Congress – To call special sessions of Congress

• over the judicial branch: – To appoint federal judges/justices

**Checks of the judicial branch**

• over the legislative branch: – To declare laws to be unconstitutional

• over the executive branch: – To declare executive actions to be unconstitutional

**27. GOVT 7c. How do individuals and groups exert influence on the national government?**

**Ways individuals influence public policy**

• Participating in politics (e.g., voting, campaigning, seeking office)

• Expressing opinions (e.g., lobbying, demonstrating, writing letters, blogging, speaking at public meetings, petitioning, meeting with public officials)

• Joining interest groups or political parties

**Ways interest groups/lobbyists influence public policy**

• Identifying issues • Stimulating interest in public affairs

• Working to build a positive image for the group

• Organizing individuals of likeminded interests

• Providing useful information to government officials

• Lobbying to persuade policymakers to share an interest group’s point of view

• Making political contributions

• Monitoring the policymaking and regulatory processes

• Organizing communities of like interests

**28. GOVT 9a. How do individuals differ in their opinions about the role of government?**

Differences of opinion about the role of government are due primarily to ideology.

An ideology is a set of basic beliefs about life, culture, government, and society. A person’s ideology provides a framework for looking at government and public policy. Ideology is shaped by many factors, including family, education, religion, socio-economic status, race and ethnicity, gender, and region.

Traditionally, American political perspective falls into three broad categories of opinion:

• Conservative opinion generally believes that the role of government should be limited and that free enterprise and initiative should be promoted.

• Moderate opinion generally seeks middle ground between conservative and liberal positions.

• Liberal opinion generally believes that the role of government should be active and that economic opportunity should be promoted.

Individuals may not always be consistent in their opinions about public policy. For example, a person may hold conservative views about the economy and liberal views about society.

**29. GOVT 9b. How does government at the national level influence the public agenda and shape public policy?**

Public policy is the action the government takes to address an issue, solve a problem, or meet the needs and wishes of the citizens. Participants in the policy process include elected officials, political leaders, interest groups, the media, and individual citizens. These participants influence the public agenda and shape public policy by

• attending political and governmental meetings

• lobbying

• working in campaigns

• contributing money to candidates and funding causes

• organizing public opinion

• filing legal challenges

• petitioning government

• demonstrating

• running for office.

**30. GOVT 9e. How do individuals, interest groups, and the media influence policymakers?**

**Ways individuals influence public policy**

• Participating in politics (e.g., voting, campaigning)

• Expressing opinions (e.g., lobbying, demonstrating, writing letters)

• Joining interest groups

**Ways interest groups influence public policy**

• Identifying issues

• Making political contributions

• Lobbying government officials

**Ways the media influences public opinion**

• Giving selective attention to issues

• Shaping attitudes and beliefs

• Providing information to policymakers