

## STUDY GUIDE - Test 2

### Public Opinion & the Media

- Should we trust public opinion polls? Why or why not?
- What are the four key dimensions to public opinion? Explain each.
- Describe how differences in one's religious background may affect one's set of political beliefs. For example, how do the political views among Catholics differ from Protestants?
- In what ways do gender, ethnicity, and education play a role in shaping one's political views? Provide some specific examples.
- What is meant by the term, "political socialization"? What is political culture? What are some of the key components of our political culture?
- What factors influence political activism?
- Do the media influence citizens' behavior and attitudes? Why or why not? What types of factors may limit the media's ability to influence our political beliefs?
- What are the three principal roles the national press plays when it comes to reporting political information? Describe the differences between them.
- What are the 4 factors journalists use for selecting news stories?

### II. Participation and Voting

- Which amendments to our Constitution expanded the voting rights of American citizens?
- Why is voter turnout low? What can we do to increase voter turnout?
- Is low voter turnout bad for democracy?
- What types of factors influence how you vote?

### III. Political Parties

- What are political parties and how do they differ from interest groups?
- How do political parties in the U.S. compare to those in many Western European democracies?
- What are the five distinct eras in the history of political parties in the U.S.? What are the characteristics of each period?
- What is a party realignment? What are some indicators that a realignment has occurred?
- What are the differences between a realignment, split-level realignment, and de-alignment?

- Describe the factors that help to explain why the U.S. has a two-party system.
- Explain the difference between a single member district system and a proportional representation system.
- If you are running as a candidate for a third party, what are your chances of winning? Which third party candidates have historically won the most votes?
- Explain the difference between "strong party" versus "weak party" systems.

#### **IV. Campaigns and Elections**

- In what ways have presidential nominating conventions changed over the last 50 years? What principal purposes do they serve today?
- How does the presidential primary system work?
- People who vote in primaries tend to be party activists. What might this imply for a candidate during the time of the general election?
- What is a Political Action Committee? Why do PAC's tend to spend more money on incumbents rather than challengers?
- What is the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) of 1971? What kinds of limits do the FECA impose on individual and PAC contributions?
- What were some of the basic provisions of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act?
- What are some of the most serious problems about current campaign finance laws?
- What are some ways in which we might reform campaign financing? What are the associated advantages and disadvantages?
- Why do incumbents tend to have an advantage over challengers?
- Does spending the most money on a campaign guarantee a win? Why or why not?
- What was the significance of the Supreme Court case, *Buckley v. Valeo*?
- Name and describe the different types of primaries.
- What is a caucus? How does it work?
- Explain how the Electoral College works. Should it be replaced by the direct election of the President?

#### **V. Interest Groups**

- What are the principal types (categories) of interest groups? Give examples of each.
- Why are there so many interest groups?
- What gives interest groups their power? In other words, what are their most important resources they possess that enable them to exercise influence?

- Are interest groups good or bad for democracy? Why?
- Explain the concept of the Iron Triangle. Who are the major players?