

American Government:
Unit 5—Political Behavior: Government by the People

Under our form of government, elections are held to choose representatives of "the people" to undertake the business of government on behalf of "the people". According to the principles of our representative democracy, the affairs and interests of "the people" are guided, protected, monitored, and addressed by the government officials elected to represent "the people" at election time. But how, exactly, are these representatives of "the people" identified? How do they reach election day? And how do "the people" decide which candidate to support when election day arrives? What factors make an impact on the choices that "the people" make on election day, and between election days, to change the shape of American Government.

In this brief unit, based largely on Chapters 5 and 6 of your text, we'll be taking a close look at the origins of our two-party system of government and the impact it has on how people participate in government. We'll also examine some of the factors that have an impact on the choices people make when it comes time to cast a vote. And we'll briefly consider the role of money, interest groups, and the media play in the way people decide where their votes should go.

Key Questions for the Unit:

- *What is the role of political parties in our American democratic system?
- *How has the right to vote changed over the years?
- *What factors make an impact on the way people vote?
- *What organizations in our society are designed to influence people's votes?
- *How does our American political system impact our American governmental system?

Assignment	Pages	Questions	Due	Poss	Pts
1. Parties and What they Do (5.1)	99-102	1,2,3	5/15	15	
2. The Two-Party System (5.2 & 5.3)	102-114	In-Class	5/18	15	
3. The Minor Parties (5.4)	114-117	1-4	5/19	20	
4. Organization of Political Parties (5.5)	118-123	2-5	5/20	20	
5. The Right to Vote (6.1)	129-131	In-Class	5/20	15	
6. Voter Qualifications Among States (6.2)	132-136	2,4,5,6	5/21	20	
7. Suffrage and Civil Rights (6.3)	138-140	In-Class	5/21	15	
8. Non-Voting (6.4) & Voter Behavior (6.5)	141-144; 144-151	Handout	5/22	20	
9. Elections (7.2)	166-171	In-Class	5/22	20	
*** Vocabulary test #8 (Separation of Church and State to Yankee)			5/26	20	
10. Money and the Election Process (7.3)	173-179	1,3,4,5	5/27	20	
11. The Formation of Public Opinion (8.1)	185-188	In-Class	5/27	15	
12. The Nature of Interest Groups (9.1)	211-214	2-5	5/28	20	
Unit Essay		See below	5/29	50	
Course Final			6/1 or 6/2	150	

Note: There is no UNIT TEST for this unit, but material from this unit will appear on the course final

Unit Essay:

This unit deals with the reasons people vote or don't vote, and the forces and factors that make an impact on how people vote. Your extra credit essay, should you choose to write it, deals with these factors on a personal level.

Specifically: *How will the ideas addressed in this unit make an impact on YOU as you begin your political life?*

Write a personal essay explaining how you think the following forces will act on YOU as a participant in our nation's democracy in the years ahead:

- ❑ **Political parties:** Do you think you'll join one? Do you consider yourself aligned with one? If so, why? If not, why not?
 - ❑ **Voter behavior:** Do you see yourself fitting into any identifiable categories? Do you think you'll follow the tendencies of others like you? Do you see yourself as becoming an active voter, casual voter, or non-voter? What issues do you think will be most important to you in deciding how to use your vote? Explain your reasoning.
 - ❑ **Money and elections:** Do you consider yourself capable of making donations to a campaign at some time in the future? Under what conditions would you consider giving actual money to a candidate or political cause? If not, why not?
 - ❑ **Media influence:** Do you consider yourself capable of navigating through the many messages about candidates, political issues, and other public policies? What kinds of media do you predict you'll rely on to remain politically informed? Where will you find information to help you make your political decisions?
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Be clear and explicit in your predictions. There's no research required, just some thinking about the ideas from the unit and some reflection on what you find important, what your interests and skills are, and how you see yourself in the future.

Scoring Guide for Unit 5 Essay

GRADED ELEMENTS	Excellent	Good	Average	Weak	Poor	Missing
INTRODUCTION clearly identifies topic & gives sense of beginning for essay	5	4	3	2	1	0
POLITICAL PARTIES: Discussion of different party policies and tendencies, along with personal connections (or lack of connections) to them	8	6	4	3	2	0
VOTER BEHAVIOR: Discussion of factors that will affect own political participation & voting behavior	8	6	4	3	2	0
MONEY AND ELECTIONS: Discussion of money as a personal influence on political behavior	8	6	4	3	2	0
MEDIA INFLUENCE: Discussion of media influences and tools to be used to form political opinions	8	6	4	3	2	0
CONCLUSION wraps up essay with summary or restatement of thesis	5	4	3	2	1	0
CONVENTIONS applied correctly to support essay; Spelling, grammar, punctuation support message	8	6	4	3	2	0
TOTAL 						