

**Constitutional Underpinnings Test**  
**AP Government**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructor:** "Bowling" Bob Alley

Instructions: Answer FOUR of the following.

1. Discuss the idea that the Constitution and its amendments are a reflection of centuries of English and American history. How did this history affect the plan for the new government devised at the Constitutional Convention? In other words, what motivated the Framers of the Constitution to create the system they did? Is there any debate as to their motivation? What do you think and why?
  - a. Must cite appropriate examples from history that influenced the Framers and correctly discuss their relevance by relating them to provisions in the Constitution
    - i. Magna Carta
    - ii. Reformation and Enlightenment
    - iii. Hobbes and Locke and the Social Contract Theory
    - iv. House of Burgesses and Mayflower Compact
    - v. Development of Colonial governments as limited representative democracies
    - vi. American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence
    - vii. Articles of Confederation and problems highlighted by Shays' Rebellion
  - b. Discuss the argument regarding the motivations of the Framers that was sparked by Beard's thesis and defend an opinion as to its validity
    - i. Most students will argue that while Beard is right that the Constitution suited the economic interests of the Framers, their experiences and knowledge of the history cited above explained their actions more than personal economic interests
  
2. Discuss the political implications of the various demographic changes currently occurring in the United States. How have past changes affected the system? How are current changes likely to affect the future?
  - a. Cite past waves of immigration and their effects on American history and government
    - i. English and Western European
    - ii. Chinese
    - iii. Irish
    - iv. Northern and Eastern European
    - v. Southeast Asians, Cubans, Mexicans, and others
  - b. Specifically cite the implications of recent and evolving changes in the areas of race and ethnicity, age, and family
    - i. Rise of Hispanic Population
    - ii. Aging Population
    - iii. Family
      1. Size, Divorce, and Changing Gender Roles

3. Describe John Locke's Social Contract Theory. How was the theory affected by Locke's view of human nature? How does it compare to the views of Thomas Hobbes? How did it affect the history of the United States?
  - a. Social Contract Theory
    - i. State of Nature
    - ii. Loss of total freedom to government
    - iii. Protection of Natural Rights
    - iv. Consent of the Governed
  - b. Locke's positive view of human nature caused him to think people could govern themselves
  - c. Hobbes' negative view caused him to think a powerful dictatorial government was needed to control people
  - d. Locke influenced Jefferson in writing the Declaration of Independence
  
4. How did Madison's views about tyranny and the separation of powers, expressed in the *Federalist Papers*, affect the government created by the Constitution? Madison thought that the legislature was the branch most likely to dominate the others. Evaluate that opinion by comparing the powers of the three branches as listed in the original Constitution. Then comment on how and why that balance of power may have shifted over the past two centuries.
  - a. Tyranny is the concentration of power in the hands of one person or group
  - b. The best way to guard against tyranny is to divide power as much as possible
  - c. The government created by the Constitution divided power between the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial Branches. It divided the legislature into two houses, and it divided power between the national and state governments.
  - d. Make an argument that the legislature is or is not the dominant branch by citing and comparing the various powers of the branches
  - e. Cite examples of how the powers of the branches have changed over the years
  
5. The United States Constitution has endured for more than two centuries as the framework of government. However, the meaning of the Constitution has been changed both by formal and informal methods.
  - a. Identify two formal methods for adding amendments to the Constitution.
  - b. Describe two informal methods that have been used to change the meaning of the Constitution. Provide one specific example for each informal method you described.
  - c. Explain why informal methods are used more often than the formal amendment process

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**8 POINTS TOTAL**

**Part (a):** 2 points (1 for each method identification)

**Part (b):** 4 points (1 for each description; 1 for each example)

**Part (c):** 2 points

**Part (a):** (1 point for each method identification; 2 points total)

**Formal methods:**

Methods of amendment must include one method of proposal and one method of ratification.

**Methods of proposal:**

- By two-thirds vote in both houses of the Congress
- By national constitutional convention the called by Congress at the request of two-thirds of the state legislatures (never been used)

**Methods of Ratification:**

- By legislatures in three-fourths of states
- By conventions in three-fourths of states

Students do not have to give the exact fractions, as long as they understand that it is an extraordinary majority and that it involves federalism.

Simple majority is not adequate.

Do not have to use exact terms (propose, ratify, supermajority, federalism).

**Part (b):** (1 point for each description of informal methods; 1 point for each example; 4 points total)

*Informal methods may include:*

- Courts (judicial review/judicial interpretation/application)
- Elastic clause
- Development of political customs/traditions
- The example chosen must be linked to the method described.

**Part (c):** (1 point for basic explanation; 1 point for elaboration; 2 points total)

Can get one point for a basic explanation, (i.e., "it's harder to amend formally")

Second point requires further elaboration

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**Score of zero (0)** for attempted answer that earns no points

**Score of dash (-)** for blank or off-task answer