**Assessment Ideas for Apportionment, Redistricting, and Geospatial Technology**

**Basic Questions**

* What are the most important issues to you in terms of elections? What might not be important to you but could be important to someone else? How could you resolve these differences?
* Describe the process of apportionment and redistricting.
* Who is responsible for conducting the apportionment and redistricting process at the national level? at the state level? at the local level?
* Whom do you think should draw the lines in your state? How can the process be transparent?
* What information is needed to conduct the redistricting process? Identify key types of data and background details that should be gathered at the beginning of the redistricting process.
* Why is population distribution important to electoral districts?
* What are some positive and negative effects of gerrymandering?
* Account for the ineffectiveness of opposition parties to redraw district lines at the state level.
* Identify key stakeholders in drawing electoral district lines.
* Is it possible to divide a state into electoral districts mathematically? Why or why not?
* As part of transparent approaches to redistricting, some states are inviting the general public to submit their own redistricting maps through an online process. Discuss the pros and cons of this opportunity for the general public. Explain three impacts you think the legislature or redistricting commission will have from the involvement of the public in this project.
* Identify three mathematical measures that can be used to determine whether an electoral district map could be considered fair. How could those measures be disputed? Justify your use of one of the measures.
* For what reasons, and with what success, were independent redistricting commissions created in states across the United States?
* Describe the effect of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 on citizen participation in elections.
* Discuss how interest groups and political parties interact to achieve their objectives when drawing electoral districts.
* Identify four demographic characteristics that could be measured within a geographic area.

**Intermediate and Advanced Questions**

* Discuss why the United States’ representative process is organized geographically. Why do some states have more representatives than others?
* How many Congressional Districts does your state have? Draw a map of your state’s Congressional Districts.
* Describe “cracking and packing” as related to drawing electoral districts. Use a visual aid if necessary.
* What kinds of factors must a cartographer take into account when drawing congressional districts in a state?
* Explain how party polarization has strengthened party influence in Congress.
* Define federalism and explain the relative power between the federal government and the states regarding electoral districts over the history of the United States.
* To what extent do you agree that fair electoral district maps are essential to the governance of a democratic republic?
* Evaluate the roles played by five of the stakeholders in drawing electoral district lines at the federal level.
* Define gerrymandering in the context of United States electoral history and discuss why it has gotten worse over the past three decades.
* Compare and contrast the reasons for, and the impact of, a Supreme Court case dealing with electoral district lines.
* With reference to at least two Supreme Court decisions in the twentieth century, explain your understanding of the requirement of equal population in each district.
* Assess the impact of Supreme Court cases about gerrymandering on two communities of interest other than African-Americans.
* Assess the success and failures of redistricting plans in states before and after the 2013 Supreme Court decision that nullified certain provisions of the Voting Rights Act.
* Identify six complaints of African-Americans in terms of disenfranchisement in the twentieth century in the United States? Discus how three of those related to the drawing of electoral districts.
* In what ways, and for what reasons, was there resistance to redrawing electoral districts at the state level in the American South in the early part of the twentieth century?
* With reference to two examples each chosen from a state with different characteristics, to what extent do you agree with the statement, “A gerrymander is simply a district plan that results in one party wasting many more votes than its adversary.”
* Compare and contrast the efforts of mathematicians and political scientists in solving the problems of gerrymandering. What tools did they choose? What concepts and skills could the discipline of geography contribute to their discussions?
* Identify five communities of interest in the United States. Discuss the general aims of these groups and explain how their interests might manifest themselves in drawing electoral districts.
* A geographic information system (GIS) uses computing power to present a wide variety of data from a spatial perspective. This geospatial information technology allows users to assess details and consider how they are related. This system consists of a geographic area and information about people, physical features, activities, and other phenomena within that space. It can be used either as a desktop program or as part of an online, interactive system. Discuss how geospatial technology has changed how cartographers draw electoral district maps.
* Identify six steps that a cartographer would need to take to determine how to draw congressional district lines.
* The legislature or redistricting commission directs the cartographer to create two different sets of maps, one drawn on the basis of having as few splits as possible among counties, cities, or other political jurisdictions, the other drawn on the basis as having as competitive a race between the two dominant parties as possible. Describe what kinds of information you would need to construct these two sets of maps. Analyze what you might expect would result when you compare these two different sets of maps.
* Would the information needed to create electoral districts at the federal level differ from that required to create districts at the state or local level? Why or why not? Discuss what would be different or the same. Identify three questions that a local cartographer might want to know from the person who drew the districts for the United States House of Representatives.
* You are serving as the redistricting expert for your state. What kinds of research would you need to undertake to collect information needed for creating Congressional Districts following a decennial census?
* Explain why drawing districts that favor one party or faction over another might lead to disputes.
* To what extent is the success of such a project as redistricting a state dependent on the involvement of key stakeholders in the process?
* Discuss how to create an electoral system that is not tied to geography.
* Identify three methods of communication with the general public to share information about the creation and use of redistricting maps.
* If a computer draws 10,000 maps, what information will you be able to glean from this large data set?

**Additional Resource**

Investigate the GeoCivics webpage with resources for teaching civics and government.

https://www.uccs.edu/geocivics/civicsgovernment/resources

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/learners/study-test

**ADVANCED PLACEMENT UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT**

**AND POLITICS QUESTIONS**

There are several different approaches to representation within a democratic political system. Define direct democracy. Define republican form of government. Describe one reason the framers of the United States Constitution chose a republican form of government over a direct democracy.

The framers of the United States Constitution created a legislative system that is bicameral, with two houses of distinctly different character and authority. Discuss two reasons why the framers created a bicameral legislature. Identify one power unique to the House of Representatives and explain why the framers gave the House that power. Identify one power unique to the Senate and explain why the framers gave the Senate that power.

A significant feature of the Electoral College is that most states have a winner-take-all system. Describe the winner-take-all feature of the Electoral College. Explain one way in which the winner-take-all feature of the Electoral College affects how presidential candidates from the two major political parties run their campaigns. Explain one way in which the winner-take-all feature of the Electoral College hinders third-party candidates. Explain two reasons why the Electoral College has not been abolished.

Congressional reapportionment and redistricting are conducted every ten years. When redistricting is conducted, politicians often engage in gerrymandering. Define congressional reapportionment and explain at least two reasons why it is important to states. Define congressional redistricting. Explain two goals of politicians when they gerrymander during redistricting. Describe two limits that the United States Supreme Court has placed on congressional redistricting.

Identify which elected officials have the most influence over drawing congressional districts. From what document do they draw this authority?

Explain how the Civil Rights Act of 1964 increased the power of the federal government relative to state governments in terms of drawing electoral district lines.

Identify and explain how two rules of the United States electoral system act as obstacles to minor party candidates winning elections.

In *The Federalist* paper number 10, James Madison expressed concern over the possibility that both majority and minority factions would have too much power over government, and he presented ways of minimizing that danger. The United States Constitution established a democratic government but also contained several provisions that limited majority rule. Throughout the next two centuries, the role of majority rule in the United States government and politics continued to change. Identify the part of the national government that was originally most closely tied to citizens and explain how it was tied to citizens. Explain two ways the United States Constitution limited majority rule. How did expansion of suffrage move the United States from a less democratic system to a more democratic system?

Identify three features of the electoral system and explain how those features have presented obstacles and opportunities to racial minority groups in their efforts to achieve political goals.



http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-3DaYEaGoQqg/UTzmuLcQTCI/AAAAAAABJ-w/K\_CuwhntIMQ/s1600/130310-incumbent-010.gif

The graph above shows reelection rates for incumbents. Identify two patterns displayed in the graph. Identify two factors that contribute to incumbency advantage. Explain how each factor contributes to incumbency advantage. Discuss one consequence of incumbency advantage or the United States political process.

Explain how each of the political factors listed below makes it difficult for the federal government to enact public policy. Provide one example for each explanation.

* Divided government
* Weak party discipline
* Growth in the number of interest groups and political action committees

In the United States political system, there are several linkage institutions that can connect citizens to government. Elections constitute one such institution. Because of low voter turnout, elections represent an imperfect method of linking citizens to their government. Even when there is low voter turnout, however, other linkage institutions can connect citizens to government.

Describe how age and education are related to the likelihood of voting. Identify one current government electoral requirement that decreases voter turnout. Explain how it decreases voter turnout. Identify one linkage institution other than elections and explain two ways it connects citizens to government.

 “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, 1870

Despite the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, voter turnout among African American citizens was very low throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Over the past 50 years, civil rights policies have changed substantially, along with a significant increase in African American voter turnout. Explain how two measures taken by some states prior to the 1960s affected voter turnout among African American citizens. Facing discrimination at the voting booth, many African American citizens turned to alternative forms of political participation. Describe two alternative forms of participation that helped bring about changes in civil rights policies. Choose one of the forms of participation you described and explain why it was effective in changing civil rights policies.



Source: Web site of the clerk of the House of Representatives (http://clerk.house.gov/art\_history/house\_history/index.html) and the National Archives (http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/historical.html). States counted in this graphic are the eleven southern states of the former Confederacy (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia).

Over the last several decades, the composition of the Democratic and Republican parties has changed in important ways. A major partisan shift has occurred in the South, but other demographic changes have also been identified. Changes in party composition are reflected at different rates in presidential elections than in congressional elections. Identify one specific trend evident in the figure above. Use incumbency advantage and gerrymandering to explain why southern voters from 1948 to 2000 were electing Democratic candidates to Congress more frequently than choosing Democratic candidates for the presidency.



Using the chart above, compare minority representation in 1960 and 2010. Explain how the Voting Rights Act of 1965 assisted in the removal of barriers to minority voting. Identify one barrier that currently impedes minority representation in Congress. Explain why the barrier you identified inhibits minority representation in Congress.

National Interest groups such as the American Association of Retired Persons, American Medical Association, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, National Rifle Association, Sierra Club, or the National Association of Manufacturers often participate in elections. Choose a group to discuss and describe the resources and characteristics of this group. Discuss how a national interest group might play a role in the redistricting process.



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The framers created the Electoral College to elect the president of the United States. This system influences the campaign strategies of presidential candidates. Describe one reason that the framers chose to use the Electoral College as the method to elect the president. Describe the message the cartoon above conveys about presidential elections. Explain why California, Texas, and New York do not appear prominently in the cartoon above. Describe two campaign tactics presidential candidates use to win the key states identified in the cartoon above