Here are some questions to guide you through studying for the midterm. The midterm will include two or three of these specific questions. It will also include a few questions that you will not have seen (but will be based on material covered by the review questions below).

Why are elections important to a democracy? What specific functions do they perform? What is necessary for elections to serve their functions? What are some specific ways that democratic elections might not measure up to these standards?

Terms: Legitimacy, principle-agent problems, responsiveness

How are the rules governing American elections different from rules in other countries? How do those rules influence the behavior of political actors? How do they affect party formation? Voter decision-making? If given a hypothetical example, could you calculate seat allocations according to one proportional rule, a majoritarian rule, and a plurality rule?

Terms: Electoral system, district magnitude, electoral formula, ballot structure, SMP, majoritarian system, list systems of PR, Duverger’s law

What is the median voter theorem? What are its underlying assumptions? How does it affect candidate and party strategy? Do you agree with its assumptions? Would you run a campaign guided by this theory?

Terms: Median Voter Theorem, single dimensional issue space, single-peaked preferences

How are district lines drawn for elections to the U.S. House of Representatives? What are the pros and cons of the different redistricting criteria? What are the consequences of the way those lines are drawn?

Terms: reapportionment, redistricting, contiguity, communities of interest

What are the legal rules about redistricting? How does the Supreme Court feel about racial gerrymandering today? About partisan gerrymandering?


How do we select candidates? What effect do primary election rules have on the number and types of candidates that run for office? How do primary election laws vary in different states? How does redistricting affect congressional primaries? What role do party leaders, candidates, and party voters play in candidate nominations?

Terms: Open primary, closed primary, blanket primary, safe seat

How are presidential candidates nominated by the two parties? What are some differences between states’ presidential delegate selection rules? What are some differences between Republican and Democratic delegate selection rules? What is the invisible primary? How much

Terms: primary, caucus, delegates, nominating convention, frontloading, superdelegates, invisible primary, momentum, unit rule

How does the Electoral College affect presidential campaign strategy? How would campaign strategies change if the Electoral College were eliminated and replaced with a simple popular vote? Allocation of electoral votes by congressional district? Proportionally within states?

Terms: Electoral College, media market

Why is money necessary to political campaigns? Why is it problematic for candidates for office to raise money to run their campaigns? Who gives money? Why do they give it? What are some pros and cons to alternative sources of campaign finance? How much money is raised in a typical congressional race? How has the Federal Election Campaign Act evolved over time as it has been amended by Congress? How was it affected by Buckley v. Valeo? Why does the court treat contribution and expenditure limits differently? What “loopholes” did BCRA close? What has the Supreme Court decided about the constitutionality of BCRA? What will happen in the wake of Citizens United?

Terms: FECA, BCRA, 527s, Buckley v. Valeo, McConnell v. FEC, Citizens United vs. FEC

What different ballot types are used in the United States? Who decides what type of ballot will be used? What are the pros and cons of the different ballot types? In general, what do you think are the biggest threats to an accurate vote count? What problems, besides ballot problems, can lead to election fraud? What, if anything, do you think should be done to maximize the legitimacy of American elections?

Terms: Lever machine, punchcard, DRE, overvotes, undervotes, Easter eggs