**Rubric for scoring exam III, essay test, fall 2017; GOVT 2305**

1. **Explain the Electoral College. Your answer should include the electoral process by which the U.S. chooses the President, the method for allotting electoral votes to each state and what is meant by “winner take all.” Each bullet point is worth 5 points. 25 out of 30 required. Answer must include bullet points 1-3 and bullet point 5.**

* As required by the U.S. Constitution, the vote that elects the President of the United States (and the Vice-President) is not the popular vote but the electoral vote. When voters cast their votes in the popular vote, they actually are casting a vote, not for the candidate, but for the candidate’s slate of electors in the Electoral College.
* Each state has a number of electors assigned to it based on its number of members in Congress: its two senators and its members in the U.S. House of Representatives. Texas has 38 votes in the Electoral College since it has 36 members in the U.S. House and, like every state in the U.S., two senators.
* To be elected President, a candidate must win 270 electoral votes.
* The presidential election is not decided on Election Day but a month later in December when each state’s electors meet in the state capitols to cast the electoral votes. The electoral vote is certified by a joint session of the U.S. Congress. Though a tie has not occurred in recent history, if a tie were to occur, the U.S. House of Representatives would choose the winner.
* In all but two states, the electoral vote count is a “winner take all” system which means that the winner of the popular vote in a state gets all of that states electoral votes.
* Because of the winner take all system, it is possible for a presidential candidate to win the popular vote but lose in the Electoral College as was the case in the 2016 election when Donald Trump was elected President with 304 electoral votes but only 46.1% of the popular vote. Hilary Clinton lost the election by winning only 227 electoral votes, though she won 48% of the popular vote, a margin of nearly 3 million more votes than Trump.

1. **Explain what is meant by the term “Party Identification.” How does party in the U.S. differ from party membership in some European nations? Which party in the American political system has the greatest number of supporters? What is meant by the term “independent? First bullet point is worth 7 points. Bullet points 2-4 are each worth 6 points.**

* Party identification – or “Party ID” refers to a person’s loyalty to a particular political party.
* In many European nations, voters hold official membership in a political party and may even pay dues to support the party. In the United States, however, there is no official membership in a political party. A party may be able to produce a list of people who voted in its primary elections or donated money to support the party or its candidates, but there is no way either party could produce a list of every Americans who considers themselves a Democrat or a Republican.
* Currently in the United States, according to polling data, the Democratic party has the greatest number of supporters: 30% of Americans identify themselves as Democrats, compared with 26% who identify as Republicans.
* However, when asked about their Party ID, the largest percentage of Americans identify themselves as Independents (43%), voters who feel no loyalty to either party. To explain their voting behavior, independents often use the phrase: “I vote for the person, not the party.”

1. **What is a primary election? Your answer should include the difference between an open primary and a closed primary. How do voters who turn out for primary elections differ from voters who vote in general elections? How does this difference impact the way candidates campaign in each type of election? How does a primary presidential election differ from primary elections for other federal offices (U.S. Senate and House of Representatives)? First bullet point is worth 5 points. Bullet points 2-6 are each worth 4 points.**

* A primary election is an election in which voters decide which of the candidates within a party will represent the party – be on the ballot -- in the general election.
* Most states hold either an open primary or a closed primary. In an open primary, a voter may vote in either the Democratic primary or the Republican primary, regardless of that voter’s party loyalty. In an open primary, voters may vote in either primary but not in both. Texas holds an open primary, and in Texas voters are not asked their party affiliation when they register to vote.
* In a closed primary, a voter must vote in the primary which corresponds to their voter registration. States that hold closed primaries require voters to declare their party affiliation when they register to vote. Thus, registered Democrats must vote in the Democratic primary; registered Republicans must vote in the Republican primary.
* Party activists who hold strong ideological views typically vote in primary elections. Primary elections get much lower turnout than do general elections.
* Thus, a candidate may have to campaign as an extreme conservative to win in the Republican Primary or an extreme liberal to win in the Democratic primary – but then each candidate might have to present a more moderate campaign message to win in the general election.
* In the Presidential primaries, voters are not choosing which candidate will appear on the ballot in the general election, as is the case for primary elections for the offices of U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives, but rather citizens votes are used to determine how many of each candidate’s supporters will become delegates to the party’s national nominating convention. In each presidential election year, presidential primaries are held during a six-month period from January to June. By the time of the National Nominating Conventions, held in the summer, the presidential primaries and caucuses have determined how many delegates to the nominating convention each candidate has won and thus, who the nominee will be for each party: who will be on the November presidential election ballot representing the Democratic party and who will be on the ballot representing the Republican party.

1. **Using the link posted on the Learning Web, watch the video: Gunned Down: the Power of the NRA. (it is less than an hour in length). From what you learned by studying the Interest Groups power point, from viewing the video and reviewing the accompanying “Notes on “Gunned Down” posted on the Learning Web, answer the following question: Why do you think the National Rifle Association is considered the most effective – “the gold standard” of all interest groups operating in the American political system? Your answer will be evaluated based on your ability to demonstrate that you understand the tactics used by the NRA and how these tactics impact members of Congress.**

**Answer is worth 25 points, scored according to how well student meets requirements described in last sentence above, as well as knowledge of the video content and power point content.**