STUDY GUIDE - Test 2

Public Opinion & the Media

- Should we trust public opinion polls? Why or why not?
- What are the four key dimensions to public opinion? Explain each.
- Describe how differences in one's religious background may affect one's set of political beliefs. For example, how do the political views among Catholics differ from Protestants?
- In what ways do gender, ethnicity, and education play a role in shaping one's political views? Provide some specific examples.
- What is meant by the term, "political socialization"? What is political culture? What are some of the key components of our political culture?
- What factors influence political activism?
- Do the media influence citizens' behavior and attitudes? Why or why not? What types of factors may limit the media’s ability to influence our political beliefs?
- What are the three principal roles the national press plays when it comes to reporting political information? Describe the differences between them.
- What are the 4 factors journalists use for selecting news stories?

II. Participation and Voting

- Which amendments to our Constitution expanded the voting rights of American citizens?
- Why is voter turnout low? What can we do to increase voter turnout?
- Is low voter turnout bad for democracy?
- What types of factors influence how you vote?

III. Political Parties

- What are political parties and how do they differ from interest groups?
- How do political parties in the U.S. compare to those in many Western European democracies?
- What are the five distinct eras in the history of political parties in the U.S.? What are the characteristics of each period?
- What is a party realignment? What are some indicators that a realignment has occurred?
- What are the differences between a realignment, split-level realignment, and de-alignment?
Describe the factors that help to explain why the U.S. has a two-party system.

Explain the difference between a single member district system and a proportional representation system.

If you are running as a candidate for a third party, what are your chances of winning? Which third party candidates have historically won the most votes?

Explain the difference between "strong party" versus "weak party" systems.

IV. Campaigns and Elections

In what ways have presidential nominating conventions changed over the last 50 years? What principal purposes do they serve today?

How does the presidential primary system work?

People who vote in primaries tend to be party activists. What might this imply for a candidate during the time of the general election?

What is a Political Action Committee? Why do PAC’s tend to spend more money on incumbents rather than challengers?

What is the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) of 1971? What kinds of limits do the FECA impose on individual and PAC contributions?

What were some of the basic provisions of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act?

What are some of the most serious problems about current campaign finance laws?

What are some ways in which we might reform campaign financing? What are the associated advantages and disadvantages?

Why do incumbents tend to have an advantage over challengers?

Does spending the most money on a campaign guarantee a win? Why or why not?

What was the significance of the Supreme Court case, *Buckley v. Valeo*?

Name and describe the different types of primaries.

What is a caucus? How does it work?

Explain how the Electoral College works. Should it be replaced by the direct election of the President?

V. Interest Groups

What are the principal types (categories) of interest groups? Give examples of each.

Why are there so many interest groups?

What gives interest groups their power? In other words, what are their most important resources they possess that enable them to exercise influence?
➢ Are interest groups good or bad for democracy? Why?
➢ Explain the concept of the Iron Triangle. Who are the major players?