

Chapter 11

Essay or Short Answer Questions

Type: E

1. What major social developments will significantly affect politics in California during the next ten to twenty years?

*a. Varies. California is on its way to becoming a majority Latino state; in 2014, Latinos outgrew the white population, becoming the largest racial/ethnic group (now a plurality but not yet an absolute majority). The Latino population tends to be younger, and the White population is aging. More than 50 percent of schoolchildren are Latino.

Immigration, both legal and illegal, will continue, and the state's overall population is projected to grow to 50 million in the next 25 years. These demographic trends present challenges for politicians in the areas of education, health and human services, and infrastructure (housing, water, and transportation especially).

Type: E

2. What kinds of political issues will California elected officials uniquely face in the coming decades?

*a. Varies. Among many other issues (only a few prominent “headliner” issues are mentioned in Chapter 11), California politicians will need to consider how to adequately prepare and educate a workforce for the coming century; how to accommodate a large population of retired persons who put tremendous demands and stresses on health care systems; how to deal with immigrant populations, who tend to vote less than other ethnic groups but who are a majority in the state; how to deal with environmental challenges resulting from climate change, a trend that has direct impacts on water availability, sea life and activity, life on the coast, and life in other sensitive areas (dry forests and heightened fire conditions, etc.); effects from prolonged drought (even if aquifers are refilled through heavy rains), such as preparing for the next drought with more storage and delivery capacity, repairing damage to infrastructure caused by depleted groundwater supplies, and addressing damage to ecosystems; and how to revitalize its aging infrastructure, which will require an estimated \$500 billion of investment.

Type: E

3. The text suggests that California politics is “riddled with paradoxes.” What is paradoxical about politics in California?

*a. Varies. A few possibilities are offered; astute students will offer additional insights. (1) Hybrid democracy itself is a paradox; citizens empower representatives to make decisions, but also maintain control of a parallel lawmaking apparatus – one that is far less accommodating of political conflict, because it offers no means of securing compromises among conflicting parties – it merely imposes one solution in the form of a proposed initiative. Further, direct democracy imposes restrictions that render lawmaking difficult, inefficient, or (nearly) impossible (examples: ballot-box budgeting as with Prop 98; Prop 13 which makes raising taxes nearly impossible). (2) Californians generally distrust politicians and are averse to political conflict, so they continue to reach for ways to take politicians—and politics, for that matter—“out” of politics (examples: term limits,

open primaries; rise in No Party Preference voter registration). However, political systems are designed to expose (and deal with) conflicts, people need help to govern what is one of the largest countries in the world, and parties provide the structures needed to win elections. (3) Californians (often) expect their own personal needs and the public good will be simultaneously served, which is not possible with the delivery of many valued goods and services. Example: desiring lower taxes and also more government services.

Type: E

4. What political changes might help improve California government's long-term viability? In other words, how might some of California's political problems be solved through political reform?

*a. Varies. There is no "correct" answer to this open-ended question, but students are prompted to consider the flaws that have been pointed out throughout the book and to suggest alternative arrangements that could make a difference for governing. The question is not asking about increasing funding in areas that are currently underfunded, which could apply broadly to many areas of government (the courts, for example), or types of governments (special districts, cities, school districts, and so on). Rather, students should focus on possible rules changes in any number of areas, including: direct democracy (suggestions were listed in Chapter 3 with respect to the initiative process), the legislature (rules pertaining to budgeting, lawmaking, professionalization of the legislature, term limits), the executive branch (its organization, term limits, relative authority of the governor and a plural executive), courts (judicial elections), prisons and criminal justice (relieving overcrowding through altering mandatory sentencing laws, etc.).

Type: E

5. Imagine that you have the time and money to propose a ballot initiative to reform California government. In simple terms, what is your idea? How would it solve a particular problem without creating more? Consider the consequences of your reform and place it in historical context. Finally, what are the chances for its passage?

*a. Varies. This open-ended answer prompts students to consider a range of problems introduced in each chapter but leaves room for creativity. Answers might include modifying existing laws or structures, or suggestions for new ones. They could cover the structure or organization of a branch (executive, legislative, judicial, or direct democracy – the people's branch), rules that pertain to each branch (judicial elections or term limits, for example), political institutions such as local government, elections, parties, or media (campaign finance, primary rules, nonpartisanship, voter registration, elections law), and finances (taxes, budgeting), to name a few.

Type: E

6. Is California "ungovernable"?

*a. Varies. There is no correct answer to this question, but students should weigh the evidence presented throughout the book regarding California government's structure, and its ability to solve pressing problems that exist on a massive scale. After defining what's meant by governability, they should construct an argument about how well state

government's four branches (the people through direct democracy, the legislature, the executive, and the courts) work together to address basic and complex issues that arise from "hyper-diverse" conditions (highly diverse demographics, geography, society, politics, and economics). They might address whether California's hybrid government enables or inhibits "good" governance, and the ability of state officials to lead. Students may also explore this question through the lens of local governments, which are charged with solving problems on a smaller scale. Good answers will analyze how well the state has responded to some specific policy issues; a few are briefly discussed in the book (criminal justice, education, environment, etc.). Other questions implicit in the governability question – and ought to be addressed at some level in the response – could include the following: Given the political, demographic, social, and economic conditions of the state, can and does government create workable solutions to complex issues? Can and do state officials devise long-range solutions and plan adequately for the future? Can one strong leader "alone" meet these challenges?

Type: E

7. "Effective governance" has many dimensions, but a few are suggested in Chapter 11. Provide a short list of criteria for evaluating what "effective governance" means, and construct an argument about how well California state government measures up.

*a. Varies. Though there is no perfect definition for this term, "effective governance" suggests that a good fit exists between the demands of the people and what their institutions deliver; decision makers understand their constituents' needs and respond responsibly to them; and representatives grasp the dimensions of pressing problems or unanticipated events and devise fair, responsible, and timely solutions that make economic sense (in other words, respondents should capture the idea that government representatives and institutions are both responsive and responsible). Individuals often measure government's effectiveness by how well their own values are reflected in official decisions or policies (for example, a pro-business citizen might believe that government is "ineffective" when it passes laws that make it harder for businesses to operate), but this question asks respondents to consider whether state government is hitting or missing the marks on several operational measures, rather than fulfilling certain policy preferences or values. On the "plus" side, California lawmakers and the governor been able to balance the budget and pass it on time for several years running, and it has been paying down some of its long-term debts and creating a "rainy day" fund to provide funds in case of emergency. The state has responded quickly to the drought by passing financial aid packages to assist those whose water sources have been interrupted, for example. However, others would argue that state government is ineffective at planning for long-term obligations (such as liabilities in the form of pensions owed to state employees or infrastructure expansion or repairs) or extended events such as drought or El Niño, a meteorological condition that develops cyclically and brings heavy winter rains. In terms of responsiveness, some might argue that the state pays too much attention to some "special interests" than others, disfavoring some at the expense of others (these claims would need to be evaluated on the merits). Effectiveness might also be evaluated in terms of the scope of issues government covers or ignores: effective governance means remedying injustices through addressing problems, taking care of issues that negatively affect the rights and well-being of people, especially the powerless, and addressing those

problems that could lead to multiple problems in the future. Thus, respondents could weigh what problems officials have addressed and what issues remain, and there are pluses and minuses that can be found in a long list of issues (see Chapter 11). These could include: education (achievement gaps, higher education tuition costs); immigration (balancing benefits for “stateless” or undocumented populations with those of citizens); erratic weather or climate change; emergency response to unforeseen events (such as earthquakes); justice, imprisonment, and rehabilitation systems; unemployment and business-climate; infrastructure. Note there is no “correct” answer; there are only better argued responses.

8. What is the meaning of “effective governance”?

*a. This could mean many things, but Chapter 11 suggests the following: a good fit exists between the demands of the people and what their institutions deliver; decision makers understand their constituents’ needs and respond responsibly to them; representatives grasp the dimensions of pressing programs and devise fair, responsible, and timely solutions that make economic sense.