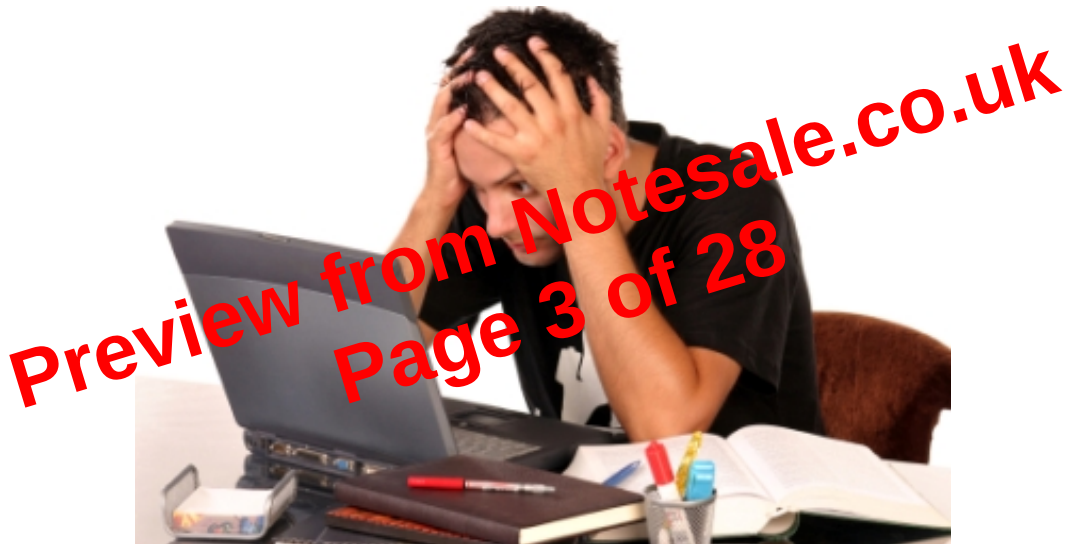


- Also make sure to present 3 or 4 really well thought-out arguments for each side of the question
- Conclude with a summary of the question, concluding with a strong 'Trump card' statement in order to blow the examiner out of the seat and make them think you actually know what you're talking about
- Finally, make sure you have Finesse in your essays. What the hell is that?
 - Finesse is all about linking your topic to multiple niche sections of the course, showing that you have a breadth of knowledge across the entire syllabus and you're not just a keen on learning the entire syllabus cover to cover
 - The best way to do this, is to read the news **daily**. New York times, Bloomberg and Washington post are some useful American news sites with a variety of political and economic material to ensure you stay up to date with America's rapidly changing situation.



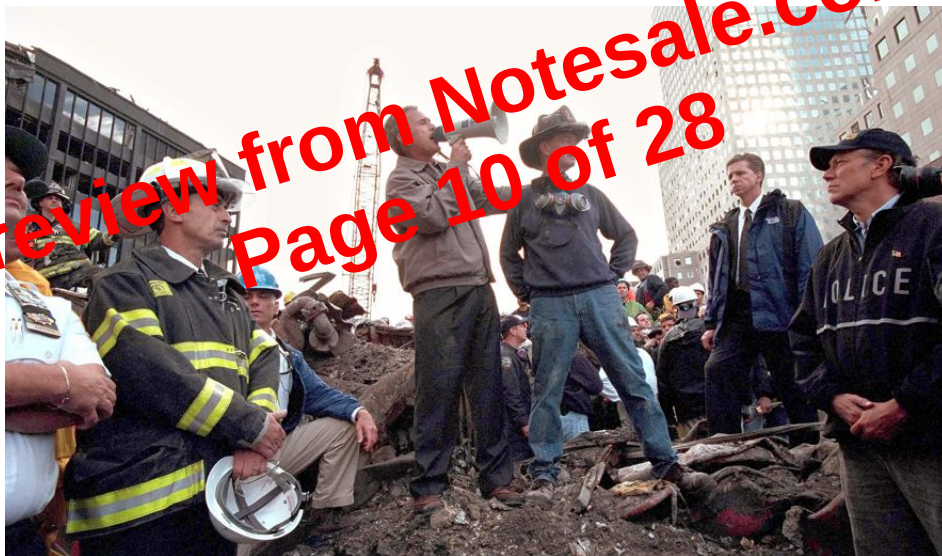
Finally, to practice make sure to do plenty of past paper questions. Not only will this get you used to doing 'stock' questions, but it will also help to practice writing under stress and will get you so used to writing in a certain style and structure, that even under exam pressure it should flow naturally.

- Another reason that the incumbent enjoys re-election success is because of their huge funding advantage. ***In 2012, incumbents raised \$1.6 million on average compared to \$267,000 from challengers***
- Incumbents also use 'pork barrelling' to seek re-election. Incumbents have specific name recognition, and can use their success of attaining 'pork' for their constituents as persuasion for votes. If an incumbent has raised funding and support for their constituency in their last term, chances are they will be able to do it again. This is attractive to voters.

Midterm Elections

Midterms take place in the middle of a presidential term, and are increasingly considered to be a referendum on the president, and their actions thus far. The incumbent president typically loses seats in congress, apart from the following exceptions:

- ***1994 Republican Revolution*** in which Republicans gained 54 in the House and 8 in the Senate
- ***2002*** midterm elections were 14 months after 9/11 and saw a ten seat gain for Bush's party following his reaction to 9/11 and the need for unity in congress
- ***2006*** Democrats swept to victory by taking control of both houses



So that wraps up the elections topic. Here are a key knowledge points you must have:

- Knowledge and understanding of the electoral processes in the USA, including the primaries and the presidential nomination process
- Ability to critique these processes by evaluating their benefits and drawbacks
- Understand factors which have affected outcome of recent elections
- Evaluate the extent to which the elections hold politicians to account
- Awareness of the criticisms of the electoral system (including the electoral college)

What methods do pressure groups use?

Pressure groups have a number of different potential methods at their disposal in order to seek political success. The political climate, type of pressure group and funding that they have available will affect which methods they will utilise.

Electioneering

This is a vast method spanning into multiple different sub-methods which pressure groups can use to achieve political success. With the frequency and intensity of elections in America, it is possible for pressure groups to capitalise on these by supporting or opposing candidates who may be in favour of their cause. The first, and most common way this can be done is through funding.

The increasing need for congressmen and those seeking election to receive funding places an ever increasing tie between elections and pressure groups. Pressure groups can take advantage of the constant need for funding to shift the policy position of candidates. Pressure groups can also serve as an organised 'money pot' collecting funds from the public and those who have a specific candidate to support and spending the funds cooperatively in order to maximise its impact. There are three key groups which do this: 527 groups, PACs and Super PACs.

527 groups were born from the **Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) 2002** which meant that PAC funds could no longer go directly towards adverts which support or oppose a candidate. 527 groups then began to appear. They circumvent the BCRA by avoiding words which explicitly advocate a candidate's election. Although they have been eclipsed by the more powerful Super PACs, they still play a key role in voter mobilisation. **Emily's List spent nearly \$10m in 2012 through its 527 voter-mobilisation program.**

PACs are the more traditional funding group. PAC stands for Political Action Committee, and there are many different PACs involved in the various American elections. The **Federal Election Campaign Act 1974 (FECA)** limited campaign donations directly to candidates, and so the PAC was formed, a way to circumvent this limiting legislation. The maximum contribution which can be made to a PAC is \$5000. But the combined power of PAC funding can prove potent. **In just two months after the Newtown shooting, the NRA had raised \$2.7m through its PAC.** This shows the immense fundraising power, regardless of the donation limit.

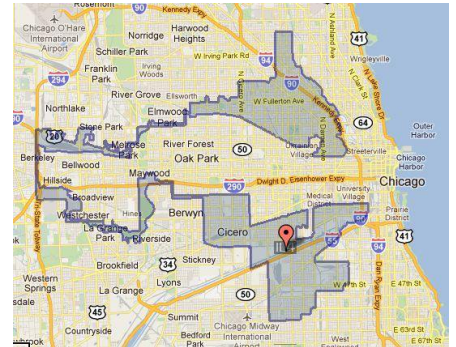
The final group is the Super PAC. **Born from the Citizens United v FEC 2010 case**, the Super PAC is free from many contribution and spending limits. Super PACs can raise unlimited amounts of money, although they must publicly disclose their finances, and cannot coordinate with candidates or parties directly. These groups have incredible fundraising power, as **in 2012 Restore our Future and American Crossroads spent more than \$246m between them.**

Equality today

There is still debate in today's America as to race should still require government involvement, or whether society has abolished racism on its own accord.

Liberals would argue that there are still political inequalities in America:

- ***Despite black people accounting for 12.2% and Latino for 16.3% of America, only 10.5% of the House and 3% of the Senate is black. While 7.8% of the House is Latino and 4% of the Senate.***
- To date, ***10 African Americans have served in the Senate*** and three of them are in the current Senate
- Gerrymandering has led to a repressed African American impact as the creation of 'majority-minority' districts (***like the Latino 'earmuff district' in Illinois***) has reduced voter impact.



Liberals would also argue that the political inequalities are compounded by social problems such as:

- A 'glass ceiling' for educational attainment for minority students. ***1 in 10 white students achieving an advanced level in maths compared to 1/50 Latinos and 1/100 African Americans.***
- Racialized anti-crime political appeals. Several instances of racist policy such as sentencing disparity between crack cocaine crimes and powdered cocaine crimes have led to ***1/106 white males being incarcerated compared to 1/15 African Americans.***
- Many have argued that following the ***2012 Arizona v USA ruling, SB1070 still allows law enforcement officials to stop and search anyone suspected of being an undocumented immigrant.*** This promotes the 'cloud of suspicion' attached to ethnic minorities and promotes a racist society.

There are also economic disparities such as:

- ***95.8% of Fortune 500 CEOs are White males***
- 2013 study found that the wealth gap between white and African Americans had grown to ***\$236,500***
- Recent unemployment rates stood at ***6.8% for whites, but 13.8% for blacks***

