Answer THREE of the following questions, but no more than TWO from SECTION A or SECTION B. All answers must be typed. Your exam will be graded as a whole, so avoid repeating yourself.

Section A

1. President Obama will soon leave office after eight years of holding the presidency. Journalistic narratives have noted that Obama has embraced the unilateral authority of the president to act, despite his claims of skepticism of unilateral authority before taking office.
   a.) What are the structural and contextual factors that explain Obama's turn to unilateral activity? Is this a unique pattern?
   b.) What are three specific examples of Obama's use of unilateral power? For each, how successful has his actions been at shaping policy? Is it likely to have long term implications for policy?
   b.) What are the limitations that exist on presidential authority to act in this manner?

2. "In America, all politics is local" is an old adage that was once undergirded by specific institutional arrangements in all the major realms of American government: federalism, political parties, the House, the Senate, the presidency, the bureaucracy, and the Supreme Court. Focusing on THREE of these critical realms, consider the cumulative impact of the major inflection points in the development of American government (i.e. the Civil War, the progressive era, the New Deal, the rights revolution, the Reagan revolution). What is left of that old adage? What are the implications of its erosion for American politics at large?

3. Over sixty years ago, members of the American Political Science Association wrote a report calling for American political parties to follow their European exemplars and adopt clear and divergent political platforms. Fast forward to today, and the parties are divided, with each offering clear and divergent platforms. Contemporary political scientists often bemoan polarization. What did the reformers of the 1950s get wrong? What elements of party conflict are good and what elements are problematic? What is the alternative? How, if at all, is the equilibrium observed today in American Politics different from the nature of political conflict in Europe that motivated a desire for "European-style" political parties?

4. Work by John Zaller, Gabe Lenz, and others points to the key role of elites in shaping mass preferences. 1) Referencing this scholarship, what role do elites play in shaping preferences? 2) What evidence is there (be specific, describing both data and research approaches) to support the idea that the elites shape and guide mass opinion? 3) Is the role of elites overstated?

Section B

1. Recent scholarship in political behavior makes the argument that partisan divisions in American politics have become so deep that members of each party harbor deep hatred for one another. While such an account might be expected for vituperative elite interactions, some work suggests that this affective polarization also extends to the mass public, with members of each party deeply disliking one another and seeing different political facts. Describe this evidence. How persuasive is it? What are the best critiques of the perspective that affective polarization is deep and that partisanship has deeply distorted our competing world views?

2. In the last half-century, the states and federal government have enacted a number of populist reforms designed to weaken parties and the role of organized groups in society. Three examples include (1) opening primary elections to independents to generate more moderate candidates; (2) limiting campaign contributions to political parties to weaken the parties' power over candidates; and (3) allowing ballot initiatives so that citizens could overcome entrenched interests in the legislative arena.
Pick two of these reforms:
      a.) Have the reforms accomplished the goals that they are designed to achieve? Why or why not?
      b.) What do our theories of mass preferences and participation tell us about the limits of these reforms?
      c.) What about elites? How have elites responded to these reforms? What does political science have to tell us about elite behavior?

3. In Congress, many important powers are delegated to committees. One key task of committees is overseeing how bureaucracies implement the law. A) What are the key strategic dynamics between legislative committees and the federal bureaucracy? (Hint: To what degree are legislative committees able to get what they want? What tools are at Congress's disposal? How might bureaucrats react to the use of those tools?) What do those dynamics tell us about interbranch relationships in the American system of government? B) What are the tradeoffs associated with a legislative chamber delegating oversight authority to committees? How are those tradeoffs managed and what effects are they likely to have on policy outcomes?

4. An area of persistent debate in political science is over the role of education in shaping political preferences. Suppose you have been asked to review a paper that includes the following regression table. (This is a made-up table with made-up data.) The table examines whether education alters the relationship between material interests – here, measured as income – and expressed policy opinions. Specifically, the model estimated is this:

Government Spending Preference = B0 + B1*Income + B2*High Education + B3*Income*High Education

These variables are coded as follows:

Government Spending Preference: Response on 0-100 scale for whether government spending should be decreased or increased (0=decreased a lot, 100=increased a lot, 50=don't know/kept the same)

Income: Categorical scale running from 1-10, with 10 indicating incomes >= $200,000 and 1 indicating incomes<$20,000.

High Education: A categorical/dummy variable coded 1 for those who have completed a BA degree or higher, and 0 for all others.

	Coefficient (Standard Error)
Income	4.0 (2.2)
High education	1.0 (0.4)
Income * High Education	1.0 (0.3)
Constant	25.0 (0.2)

N=1,600, OLS regression coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable is Government Spending Preference (0-100).

1)   Read the regression table:
   a. What is the predicted opinion of someone who has an income of $200,000 and low education?
   b. What is the predicted opinion of someone who has an income of $200,000 and high education?
   c. How is the effect of moving from low to high education on opinions different for those with very low incomes (Income Variable = 1) from those with very high incomes (Income Variable = 10)?
   d. How is the effect of moving from low (1) to high (10) incomes different for those with low and high education?

2)   The author of the article writes, "This evidence shows that education increases the correspondence between material self-interest and policy preferences, which suggests that education increases citizens' abilities to understand what is in their best interest. If education were increased, this evidence shows that the poor would be more likely to get what they want by more clearly expressing more left-leaning politics." Assuming the model is correctly specified, does the data support the conclusion? Why or why not?

3)   Suppose that the model is correct (that is, that there are no omitted variables and no concerns about endogeneity/reverse causality). What is another important reason that showing survey evidence of the relationship between income and preferences differs by education might not reveal differences in true underlying preferences? How would you, if you could, deal with this threat to inference?

4)   Why might the model not be correctly specified? What are the other weaknesses, if any, of the research design?