

Essay and Discussion Questions

Forms of Government Higher Education Questions

Help students understand how a country's form of government determines whether citizens' voices are magnified or minimized through these essay and discussion questions.

Question 1

What are the pillars of a democracy and how do they contribute to a functioning government? Winston Churchill once said that, “democracy is the worst form of government—except for all the others that have been tried.” Discuss Churchill’s argument by considering both the major benefits and challenges of a democratic system. Cite specific examples.

- What are the benefits of democracy? What challenges arise from democratic governance?
- Why is political equality a key aspect of democracy?
- What are some examples of different forms of democracy around the world?
- What distinguishes direct democracy from representative democracy?
- What distinguishes presidential democracy from parliamentary democracy?
- How can artificial intelligence support democracy?

Question 2

Why is authoritarianism a common form of government? What are some of the benefits authoritarian governments can offer citizens that democracy cannot? Authoritarian countries seek to preserve power by emphasizing order. What impact does this focus on order have on human rights? To what extent, if any, is it possible to protect human rights in an authoritarian system?

- What distinguishes a communist system from a capitalist system?
- What distinguishes autocracy from a democracy?
- How can artificial intelligence strengthen the power of autocracies?

Question 3

What is the relationship between the government and the economy? How is a government’s choice of economic system tied to its goals and values? What is the difference between left-wing governments and right-wing governments? Discuss the core goal of each ideology by addressing the benefits and drawbacks of prioritizing certain goals over others. What distinguishes left-wing and right-wing ideologies?

- What characterizes so-called “liberal democracies”
- What distinguishes a communist system from a capitalist system?

Question 4

What factors have contributed to the global increase in democratic backsliding since 2005? In what ways have China and Russia contributed to these changes around the world? What factors play a role in strong, healthy democracies? How do weak democracies, like Hungary, push people to accept more autocratic rule? Provide recommendations for what can be done to reverse the trend of democratic backsliding.

Question 5

What drives revolutions? What sorts of grievances lead to revolutions? What factors are important to a successful revolution? What are the foreign policy effects of a revolution?