Chapter 1

1. Which of the following is the *primary* or proximate goal of members of Congress?

\*a. Reelection

b. Passing laws

c. Fundraising

d. Monitoring bureaucratic agencies

2. Which of the following is *not* likely an affect a member of Congress’s reelection chances?

a. Whether the member returns to the district often to meet with constituents

\*b. How many laws Congress passed in the previous year

c. The member’s position on an issue important to their constituents

d. Whether the member seems trustworthy

3. Which of the following would a *trustee* consider most important according to Edmund Burke’s concept of the ideal Congress?

a. Making sure her party wins the most seats in an upcoming election

b. Talking to constituents in her district to determine what their views are on funding charter schools

\*c. Discussing immigration reform with fellow members of Congress to figure out a policy that is best for the country as a whole

d. Voting in favor of new environmental regulations that a majority of her constituents prefer, even though she personally prefers a different policy

4. Which of the following actions fits best under the delegate model of representation?

\*a. Fighting to retain funding for an important industry in the legislator’s district

b. Compromising with other representatives to make cuts that lower the national debt, even if it means cutting a popular program

c. Meeting with citizens from around the nation to ask their opinions on a proposed health care policy

d. Voting one’s conscience, even if it means making many voters angry

5. Which of the following best describes the way members of the House of Representatives are elected?

a. The President appoints members of his own party

b. State legislatures vote for individual members from each district

c. Proportional representation

\*d. A plurality vote within geographic constituencies

6. Which of the following is true of proportional representation systems?

\*a. Representation based on party affiliation is more important than geographic representation

b. Representatives are always tied to specific geographic districts

c. Parties have very little ability to influence representatives because of strict campaign finance laws

d. Representatives are more cross-pressured by competing interests than in the U.S. system

7. Which of the following pairs best describes the “dual nature” of Congress?

a. Congress has two chambers—the House of Representatives and the Senate

\*b. A lawmaking institution and an assembly of local representatives

c. Congress can both raise taxes and spend money

d. A combination of elected representatives and appointed representatives make up Congress

8. Which of the following is explicitly outlined in the U.S. Constitution?

a. Members of the House must follow the delegate model of representation

b. Congress must balance the federal budget each year

\*c. Congress is responsible for writing the nation’s laws

d. Two major parties will compete in each congressional election

9. Which of the following is *not* explicitly outlined in the U.S. Constitution?

a. Senators serve a six-year term

b. Members of the House of Representatives are directly elected by voters

c. Specific powers are enumerated to Congress

\*d. Congress must pass legislation proposed by the President

10. Which of the following issues would a Senator from a large, diverse state with many competing interests be most likely to focus on during his campaign?

\*a. Funding to keep a large military base located in the state open

b. His ties to the national Democratic party

c. His consistent voting record in favor of a ban on partial-birth abortions

d. His work negotiating a controversial treaty with Iran

11. What did the 17th Amendment to the Constitution accomplish in 1913?

a. Prohibitions on campaign finance reform

\*b. Direct election of Senators

c. The right to vote for African Americans

d. The right to bear arms

12. Which of the following is a basic principle of proportional representation?

a. The number of years a representative serves should be proportional to the level of support he or she receives from voters

b. Cross-pressured representatives who are not beholden to a political party tend to make the best decisions

\*c. The number of seats a party wins in the legislature should be proportional to the level of support it receives from voters

d. A political system must provide representation for multiple minor parties in order to adequately represent voters

13. Members of Congress typically focus exclusively on their Washington, DC activities in order to win reelection.

a. True

\*b. False

14. The primary goal of members of Congress is to be reelected.

\*a. True

b. False

15. Most voters evaluate their own member of Congress on the basis of the performance of Congress as a whole.

a. True

\*b. False

16. The writers of the Constitution intended the House of Representatives to be the most representative element in the U.S. national government.

\*a. True

b. False

17. Members of Congress today are more able to cooperate with national party leaders than they were in the past, without risking their chances of reelection.

\*a. True

b. False

18. Most countries in the world have legislative bodies that are modelled closely on the U.S. Congress.

a. True

\*b. False

19. The constituencies for Senators tend to be very homogeneous and present few cross-pressures.

a. True

\*b. False

20. Members of Congress typically try to portray the institution of Congress very favorably in their campaign materials in order to boost support among voters.

a. True

\*b. False

21. Because of their longer terms, Senators rarely spend time on constituency service and campaigning.

a. True

\*b. False

22. Members of Congress must carefully balance their lawmaking duties and attention to their districts at home.

\*a. True

b. False

23. Congress is addressed first in the Constitution because the Framers believed it to be the most important branch of the national government.

\*a. True

b. False

24. Political parties tend to be stronger under proportional representation systems than under the U.S.’ single member district plurality system.

\*a. True

b. False

25. In opinion polls, Congress is consistently one of the most popular government institutions in the United States.

a. True

\*b. False

26. In a 2014 primary election, Dave Brat was able to beat House Majority Leader Eric Cantor because he raised significantly more money and was able to purchase more campaign advertisements.

a. True

\*b. False

27. The lengthy recesses Congress takes when it is not in session tend to be used by members to visit their districts and attend to local concerns.

\*a. True

b. False

28. Describe what is meant by the “dual nature” of Congress. Give an example of how members must attend to both definitions of Congress.

\*a. Answers Vary

@The dual nature of Congress means that representatives must attend to both their role as a member of a national lawmaking body with its own rules and norms and their role as a local representative who must attend to the specific needs of their own district. Examples could be varied but might include Cantor’s need to attend to his leadership role in the Republican party and maintain a national reputation but also to spend time in his local district and make sure he understood issues important to his constituents (particularly immigration).

29. Why is reelection considered the primary or proximate goal of members of Congress?

\*a. Answers Vary

@Without being reelected, members of Congress cannot accomplish other goals they may care about, such as changing public policies, helping their party, or advancing to Congressional leadership or higher office. Even if members care very strongly about, for example, passing immigration reform, they will not be able to do so if they do not win reelection. Thus, they must attend to this primary goal before considering how to accomplish any secondary goals.

30. How has representation in the Senate changed over the course of U.S. history?

\*a. Answers Vary

@The Senate has become more representative. In the original Constitution, Senators were selected by state legislators rather than directly by voters. But the 17th Amendment changed this arrangement so that Senators are now directly elected. Despite their longer terms, Senators tend to consider themselves “constituency servants” and spend considerable time campaigning for reelection.

31. Explain one reason why parties have become more important in the U.S. Congress since the 1970s.

\*a. Answers Vary

@There are various possible answers here, but the most obvious from the text is that the American public has become sorted into more ideologically coherent political parties, resulting in less cross-pressure on members. Students might also note the importance of a more polarized activist base. The best answers will tie this to the reelection motive.

32. Explain why Eric Cantor lost his primary election in 2014.

\*a. Answers Vary

@Despite an impressive record in Washington, DC, Cantor neglected his district at home and did not place sufficient weight on the need to be reelected. His opponent, Brat, was able to identify an issue, immigration, that was important to Cantor’s constituents and on which his position differed from that of voters in his district.

33. What is meant by “lowest common denominator” representation, and which types of representatives are most likely to adopt this style?

\*a. Answers Vary

@This style of representation emphasizes local issues and personal connection and accessibility and avoids hot button or controversial issues and party affiliation. Representatives are most likely to adopt this style if they represent swing or cross-pressured states or districts, because they must satisfy a diverse group of constituents in order to win reelection.

34. Why do individual members of Congress tend to be more popular than Congress as an institution?

\*a. Answers Vary

@Congress tends to be judged by the policies it adopts, the processes it uses to come to decisions, and overall satisfaction with the economy and other national indicators. These tend to be fairly poorly understood by voters. In contrast, individual members are judged on personal qualities and positions, which they can closely tailor to the opinions of their district, as well as constituency service.

35. Imagine a state with ten congressional districts. In each of the ten districts, 60% of the voters are Republicans and 40% of the voters are Democrats. If everyone voted, how many representatives of each party would the state elect? How would this change if the United States adopted a proportional representation system?

\*a. Answers Vary

@The state would elect ten Republican representatives and no Democrats. Under a proportional representation system, the state would elect six Republicans and four Democrats.

36. What is the difference between a trustee and a delegate? In considering reelection, should members of Congress take a trustee approach to representation or a delegate approach?

\*a. Answers Vary

@A delegate listens carefully to constituents and follows their guidance. A trustee attempts to work with other members to further the common good and is more likely to trust his/her own judgement. Voters tend to prefer a delegate approach.

37. Describe Edmund Burke’s ideal view of a legislature. Does the modern Congress fulfill Burke’s vision?

\*a. Answers Vary

@Students should outline the two views of a legislator identified by Burke (delegates advocating for their constituents versus a deliberative body advocating for the common good) and should identify that Burke preferred the latter of these concepts. They should then take a position on whether the modern Congress fits with this ideal model. They might consider evidence from the text on constituency service, the reelection motive, Supreme Court justice John Paul Stevens, and so forth.

38. Compare and contrast the U.S. system of electing members of Congress with a proportional representation system. Which do you believe is best suited to providing adequate representation?

\*a. Answers Vary

@Students should define and describe both a single member plurality system of electing representatives and a proportional representation system. They could make an argument favoring either system but should provide clear pieces of evidence supporting their position. Evidence might include the effects of assigning seats on a proportional versus winner-take-all basis, balancing party representation versus local/geographic constituencies, the power of centralized parties in each system, how each system connects to the delegate or trustee models of representation, and the role of third parties.

39. Is the increased importance of parties in congressional politics since the 1970s good for representation?

\*a. Answers Vary

@Students could take a variety of views here but should clearly define what they mean by representation (i.e., delegate, trustee, or something else), make a clear argument about how the importance of parties has influenced representation, and provide evidence for this claim. Students might note that ideological sorting among voters may reduce cross-pressures on members, making delegate-style representation easier. They might also note that a need to respond to a polarized activist base could make deliberation and compromise, and thus the trustee model of representation, more challenging.

40. Select a member of Congress and research his/her most recent campaign. How does this member seem to balance national lawmaking duties with local representation and attention to constituents? Is this member a good representative of his/her district?

\*a. Answers Vary

@Students should use a variety of sources to identify major legislative and/or leadership accomplishments of the member, as well as activities that are more district-focused such as attention to local issues or constituency service. They should examine campaign materials to see where the member (and his/her challenger, if any) focuses the attention of voters. In assessing whether the representative is “good,” the student should define relevant criteria for evaluating a representative and then present evidence relevant to this criteria.