

Name: _____

Humanities 2018

Study Guide: Readings on Congress

Directions: After reading the appropriate section from *Magruder's American Government*, respond to these questions in the space provided, and on separate sheets of paper if necessary.

Part 1: The National Legislature (pp. 262-265).

1. Why is Congress called a *bicameral legislature*? What are the historical, practical, and theoretical reasons for this structure?

2. Why do some people consider the Senate undemocratic? Do you believe that the Senate should be abolished and power instead given to a legislative body based strictly on population? Why or why not?

3. How long does a Congressional *term* last? Why? How long does a *session* last? Why?
4. What is a *special session* and how does it differ from a *regular session*?

Part 2: The House of Representatives (pp. 267- 273).

1. How many members are there in the House of Representatives, how long do they serve, and how are they apportioned among the states?
2. What impact does the short (2 year) term of Congress have on House members?
3. What is *reapportionment* and what connection does it have to the decennial (every 10 year) census?
4. Study the map on page 268. What general trends in population growth does the map show? What does this mean for the distribution of power in Congress?

5. Presidents serve for 4 years while Congresspersons only serve for 2 years. Given this fact, what are “*off-year*” (aka “mid-term”) elections? What typically happens to the political party in power during these elections? Why do you believe this happens?

6. What is a *congressional district* and who is responsible for drawing district lines?

7. What is *gerrymandering*? Who is responsible for creating *gerrymandered* districts?

8. Why do politicians *gerrymander* districts? Which political party is responsible for *gerrymandering*? What problems does it create?

9. What did the U.S. Supreme Court rule in the case of *Wesberry v. Sanders* (1964)? How did this decision change the makeup of Congress?

10. Study the chart on page 272. Which are the most significant differences between the Senate and the House? How do you think these differences affect the ways in which the Senate and House operate, and Senators and House members carry out their jobs?

11. What are the formal qualifications for House members?

12. What is the standard used by the House in determining whether to expel or discipline one of its members? What are some examples of the House's disciplinary actions?