

# Terms to Watch for in Essay Exams

Note: Material enclosed in quotation marks is quoted from Chief Faculty Consultant, "Student Performance on Q and A: 2001 AP United States Government and Politics Free Response Questions"

**List** -- Write an itemized series of concise statements (i.e., concepts, events, laws) without explanation.

**Identify** -- Write an itemized series of concise statements (i.e., concepts, events, laws) without explanation. "Can be done quickly with a few words."

**Describe/Discuss** -- Give a detailed account. Make a picture with words. Include characteristics, qualities, and parts.

**Analyze** -- Break into its component parts and discuss, examine, or interpret each part.

**Explain** -- Make an idea/concept/process/relationship clear. Show the logical relationship between components of the question. Provide reasons for an event or series of events. Often requires a thesis statement. Provide supporting evidence/data (expert testimony, examples, statistics). "Requires explicit linkage (implying a linkage is not sufficient) between what is being explained and how or why it exists, happens, or whatever the question spells out."

**Compare** -- Show the similarities (and sometimes the differences) between two or more things. May involve a variety of factors among which maybe objectives, size, structure, selection process, time, recruitment methods, power, authority, legitimacy. Consider the Big 12 in relation to government.

**Contrast** -- Show the differences between two or more things. See compare for incomplete list of factors involved.

**Support/refute** -- Provide evidence which proves (supports) or disproves (refutes) a statement or quotation. Requires a thesis and supporting evidence.

**Evaluate** -- Make a judgment on a problem, condition, quotation. Provide data on both sides. Pick one side and justify your position with data, expert testimony, examples.

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