

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
School of Public Affairs \* Department of Government

Govt 73 Comparative Politics (Doctoral)  
Comprehensive Examination  
September 2006

Directions: Answer THREE (3) of the following questions: one question from Part I, one question from Part II, and one question from either part. Your answers will be judged for their responsiveness to the specific question, their skilled and ample citation of the relevant literature, and their clarity of organization. Any arguments you advance should be defended against plausible counter-arguments. The material used in your answer to any question should not substantially overlap with the material used in other questions. Take time to organize your answer.

Part I (Answer at least ONE question from this section)

1. The theme of the American Political Science Association's annual meeting can sometimes serve as an indicator of the way the wind is blowing in the field. The theme of this year's meeting was "Power Reconsidered." Do you think comparative politics has contributed to this theme, over the past several decades? What insights does comparative politics bring to the study of power? Sketch some appropriate, interesting new research questions.
2. The study of institutions has been a constant feature of the comparative politics field, starting in the pre-behavioral years, continuing through the height of the behavioral period, and developing into neo-institutionalism and the constructivist view of the state. Discuss these changes in comparative politics' study of institutions over the years, as well as the continuities.
3. "Theoretical innovations in comparative politics advance regularly upon us with all flags flying, yet they never result in theories of greater explanatory power, and our ignorance is as great after as before these revolutions." Comment, in detail, citing literature on both sides.
4. Analyze and critique theories of democratization, and situate them within their scholarly and normative pedigrees..

Part II (Answer at least ONE question from this section)

5. Does the rise of supranational and regional institutions pose a challenge to the traditional dichotomy between comparative politics and international relations? Might they change the division of academic labor between the two fields?
6. Social movement theory has evoked a wide variety of methodological approaches, each with its own premises, assumptions, and interests. Compare and contrast these methodologies, and show what each has contributed to our understanding of social movements.
7. What new insights have been developed by comparativists about the role of political parties

and mass politics to channel political participation and to enhance representation in contemporary political systems?

8. Since the days when Anthony Downs' *Economic Theory of Democracy* shook the pillars of political science, classic works have had a major impact on the development of the field. Discuss a classic, of your choice, in comparative politics, and trace its roots and its impact.
9. Anne Norton's *95 Theses on Politics, Culture, and Method* makes a broad attack on quantitative methodology in political science. Does comparative politics escape her critique? Cite specific literature.
10. The guiding definition of democracy has, for U.S. policymakers, been the presence of 'free and fair elections,' yet when the results are displeasing to those same policymakers they repudiate the elected regime. How well does democratization theory handle this paradox?
11. "Political science, including comparative politics, has been hampered in its development by the lack of an Adam Smith to provide an initial conceptual grounding." Do you find this true or false? Do you have any nominations? What would your theorist provide toward the further development of comparative politics?
12. What is the most interesting research question in contemporary comparative politics? Define, in detail, a research design to deal with the question you have posed. (This should include a sharply defined research question, a review of the relevant literature, and all specific practical steps, including a description of what kinds of data would be used )