

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
School of Public Affairs * Department of Government

Govt 73 Comparative Politics (Master's)
Comprehensive Examination
Spring 2006

Directions: Answer THREE (3) 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 United States has recently increased its commitment to democratization abroad. What contributions might the discipline of comparative politics make to the policy planning process in this area, in terms of debates and research on democratization and authoritarianism. You may draw either from the general theoretical literature to answer this question, or you may choose to focus on a particular region of the world.
2. Comparative politics has borrowed methodologies and theoretical approaches from many other disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, anthropology and economics. Evaluate the utility of these borrowings over the years, and discuss in conclusion recent work that utilizes or reacts against these approaches from the other social sciences.
3. What are the post-positivist trends in comparative politics? Examine a range of methodological debates that have been controversial in political science lately, from within and outside the discipline. You should analyze the debates for their epistemological, normative, and intellectual implications, but need not resolve them in partisan terms.
4. Choose a particularly controversial contemporary political phenomenon and explain the ways in which comparativists would theorize about it and conduct research.

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

5. Assess the importance of institutional design for the success of democratization. Which institutional factors are most important to democratization, and why? Do the

institutional problems facing democratizing systems differ from those encountered by established democracies?

6. Many theoretical approaches to comparative politics (e.g. dependency theory, world systems theory, globalization), especially those that focus on small and less developed countries, emphasize the impact of international factors on domestic political dynamics. Select a country you know well and discuss this impact not only descriptively but drawing on the relevant theoretical traditions.

7. Drawing on the debates and literature in comparative politics, discuss how we can best understand the politicization of religion in many areas of the world. You may, if you wish, focus your answer upon a particular region, but may also deal with the question broadly.

8. Physics can predict how physical objects will behave; can comparative politics predict how people behave? Should comparative politics be able to make predictions?

9. What are the best institutional methods for dealing with ethnic conflict, and why? In answering the question address the following points: (a) on what factors do institutional choices depend? and (b) what is the meaning of >dealing with ethnic conflict=? (e.g preventing it, managing it, solving it?).

10. Are private enterprise and free markets a necessary condition for democracy? Consider this question in the context of Communist regimes, and discuss in specific cases whether economic reforms were adequate to ensure regime stability.

11. Ten years from now will rational choice theory be a more or less popular methodology in comparative politics? What types of questions is it well-suited to answer, and what sorts of answers does it give?

12. How has the concept of path dependence and historical institutionalism in comparative politics Abrought back in@ further attention to history and to culture?