

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
School of Public Affairs * Department of Government

Govt 73 Comparative Politics (Master's)
Comprehensive Examination
Fall 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. Are states a thing of the past? Review the state's history within comparative politics, and consider what factors encourage and discourage state-oriented theories, including the viability of actual states in the real world. Will there be a state system fifty years from now?
2. Assess the importance of institutionalism as an approach in comparative politics. What is the 'new institutionalism' and why is it new? What aspects of politics, if any, are best studied from an institutionalist perspective, and why?
3. "All political transitions are driven by elites, and all political ideals are articulated by elites. But transitions only lead to democratic outcomes if the political elites are embedded; that is, if they have ties to constituencies whose interests they represent and defend." Discuss this assertion in the context of the 'elite pact' democratization literature.
4. Comparative politics as a discipline is usually conceived as originating in the works of Karl Marx and/or Max Weber. Discuss this heritage and its implications for current research.

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

5. Consider the operationalizations of at least two of the following measures of democracy: the Freedom House Index, Dahl's Polyarchy, and the Polity IV data set. Evaluate the indicators as measures of democracy and democratization, and the arguments of their critics. How could these measures be improved, and better ones devised?
6. Describe three important institutional changes which could help to mitigate ethnic conflict and evaluate their effectiveness.
7. Does the social welfare state have a future? Is that future different from or similar to its

past? What might replace it?

8. What is political culture and what can it explain? Be sure to include recent writings on political culture along with its background. Methodologically, what is your definition of political culture?
9. Is there anything left that the dependency theories of the 1960s and 1970s can teach us about politics? If the theories have become obsolete, explain why. If they are not, explain how they can best be used on problems of current interest in comparative politics.
10. You have been invited to give a lecture presenting the theory of a major comparativist and his or her relevance for the public understanding of political events outside the boundaries of the United States. Who would you choose to discuss? What points would you include?
11. How can comparativists understand the rise of identity politics throughout the globe?
12. Which is more important for consolidating democracy, democratic institutions or democratic culture? Explain your reasons thoroughly.

**Remember to Answer Three Questions
One from Part I, One from Part II, and One from Either Part**

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