

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
School of Public Affairs Department of Government

Govt 73 Comparative Politics (Master's)  
**Comprehensive Examination**  
**Fall 2007**

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. Karl Marx famously remarked that “Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please.” How does this relate to the debate in comparative politics between structuralists and post-structuralists?
2. Behavioralism was the methodological force which launched the field of comparative politics on its post-World War II course of development. Review the specific works in comparative research that were influenced by behavioralism over the decades, including negative reactions. Where do methodological issues stand today, in this light.
3. Can political stability and democracy be engineered through the writing of constitutions? Discuss the positions of major theorists on the issue, and give specific country examples of success or failure.
4. Institutionalism has been a vigorous scholarly industry since the days when Samuel Huntington first established its importance in respect to political order and decay. Discuss its subsequent progress through the return of the state and neo-institutionalism, and evaluate its current viability in dealing with major analytic issues in comparative politics.
5. “Political culture as a sub-field has refused to grow up and has refused to die.” Propose a research design that would help culture research to mature (or, if you so choose, to kill it off entirely). The design should be complete, including theory, hypotheses and data acquisition.

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

6. Political parties are losing their efficacy in political life and other movements have become more important in articulating, aggregating, and promoting interests. Comment on this thesis, along with discussing the relevant literature.

7. If Marx is correct that “religion is the opiate of the masses,” why are the masses so restless? Does the role of religion in politics today challenge or confirm dominant ideas in comparative politics? Be sure to cite specific scholars in dealing with this issue.
8. For a social movement of your choice, explain which of the theories (political opportunities, resource mobilization, ideological framing, new social movements) fits it best and why.
9. “Barrington Moore did not just write history, he invented a method.” What might that method have been? After discussing it, take it into a country of your choice in either Africa or Latin American and evaluate its effectiveness.
10. If democracy is correlated with economic performance and achievement, how can democratization occur in nations that have not achieved significant wealth? What other paths to democracy are important to understand, and why?
11. If violent resistance to government is no longer globally legitimate and is framed by the terrorist discourse, what are the ‘weapons of the weak’? What theories help us to understand collective life and mobilization against strong and/or weak states?
12. King, Keohane, and Verba’s argument that quantitative and qualitative research operate according to an identical logic has offended both sides in that grand controversy. Take a position on the issues raised, and adduce scholarly evidence to illustrate and defend your discussion.

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

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