

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
School of Public Affairs Department of Government

Govt 73 Comparative Politics (Master's)
Comprehensive Examination
Spring 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. The democratization literature has been criticized as being more wishful thinking than a theory. Evaluate this position, placing democratization in the context of recent research in the comparative politics field and suggesting what future role it may or may not have.
2. How has globalization complicated the study of comparative politics, which has tended to focus on domestic politics in other nations? How does this changing nature of state sovereignty affect citizenship rights and state power?
3. Comparative politics has in recent history tended to underestimate the problems of divided societies (such as Iraq, Kosovo, India, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, among others) in developing either theories of or solutions to such countries' problems. Evaluate the literature on consociational and majoritarian solutions for power-sharing, as well as other theoretical explanations. You may emphasize either theoretical or practical aspects of the problem.
4. Is there theory in comparative politics? What makes something worthy of being considered theory in the field? For any given subfield within comparative politics, compare two approaches, one of which you consider a theory and the other which you do not consider a theory. Explain and justify your choices.
5. Comparative politics, like political science in general, has been highly influenced by certain classical works, many of which are never again used in active research. Select one such classic and develop a research program to bring it into current research practice. Your research design should include ample methodological details, including data sources.

Part II continues on the reverse side

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

6. What might institutional, socio-economic, structural, and cultural explanations within the democratization or other literature say about the fall of the Soviet Union? Evaluate the success of these explanations, or combination of explanations, from your own viewpoint.
7. Can comparative politics be studied without relying on international relations? Explain and defend your position.
8. Has the rise of identity politics complicated democratic transitions and the centrality of political parties to the political process? What kinds of political actors are resorting to informal or extra-systemic avenues for political participation and oppositional politics?
9. What is the most important published work in comparative politics in the last fifty years? Explain your choice, and discuss its relevance to the changing current world in both practical and theoretical terms.
10. Discuss the debate over the lack of democracy in the Middle East, within the context of the US intervention in Iraq. Based on the literature on other cases, consider whether there are structural, institutional, or cultural barriers to democratization in the region. Be specific.
11. For a social movement of your choice, consider whether it is best explained by resource mobilization, political opportunities, or ideology and framing theories. Which of the theories do you believe to be more compelling?
12. The resurging interest in qualitative methods in political science has created new attention to 'analytic Marxism' in comparative politics, and an argument that rational choice theory is entirely compatible with Marxism. Evaluate this claim, and discuss its possible implications for empirical research in comparative politics.

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

--End --