

M.A. Comprehensive Examination
American Politics/Applied Politics
Fall, 2005

Directions: This exam consists of questions drawn from the field of American Politics, and questions drawn specifically from our Applied Politics concentration offered through the Public Affairs and Advocacy Institute, the Campaign Management Institute, and the Women in Politics Institute.

You will write three essays.

All students must answer **one** question from **Section I**. Students in the **Applied Politics** concentration must answer **one** question from **Section IV**.

You may not answer more than one question from any section. Identify clearly the questions you choose to answer.

You should be able to demonstrate your familiarity with the relevant literature that pertains to the questions you choose to answer. Do not rely on the same literature for different questions.

Please use 12-point type, double-space, and standard margins when preparing your essays.

Section I (General)

1. Scholarly work within the discipline of political science has not always been useful in the world of practical politics. Select an area in which you believe research is needed as the foundation for political activity or policy development, and devise a complete research plan for its investigation. Your discussion should include a review of existing literature on the topic, the development of a formal research question, the construction of a theory or model to explain the behavior in question, and an outline of the testing procedures you would use, including the acquisition of data and its analysis.
2. How does the nature of American public policy, programs, and issues influence public policy decision making and politics? Include references to relevant literature and specific examples in public policy making. Discuss how issues get on the public agenda, how policies are adopted, how they are administered, and how they are evaluated.

Section II

1. The constitutional structure of separated powers is a unique feature of the American political system that often sets Congress and the president at odds with one another. Evaluate the nature of the relationship between the president and Congress in periods of unified and divided government. What tools does the president possess when bargaining with Congress? How effective are these tools? Who, if anyone, has the upper hand in this relationship?

2. Members of Congress face multiple constituencies throughout the legislative process. Who are these constituencies, and how do they influence the legislative process? Are some constituencies more important than others? How do elected representatives deal with the different demands placed upon them by various constituencies?

Section III

1. The beginning of modern political science was marked by the research of scholars like Berelson et al. and Converse. In fact, we are still answering questions raised by these authors decades ago. Discuss the conclusions that these authors drew regarding the political aptitude of citizens and discuss the subsequent research that is still attempting to deal with these conclusions by illustrating how citizens participate despite their limitations. How does the picture of political behavior painted by political scientists look different now than it did forty years ago or has anything really changed at all? Explain.
2. Explain the theories of cognitive dissonance and cognitive heuristics and describe how they relate to voter evaluations of candidates and issues.

Section IV (Applied Politics)

1. Research is an important aspect of political campaigns. Describe the types of research campaigns may use, and how each is important to the overall campaign. If you were working on a campaign with very limited resources, how would you prioritize the research needs of the campaign, and why would you prioritize the research needs the way you do? Would your answers vary depending on the type of race, and if so, how?
2. Research has demonstrated that several factors contribute to women's underrepresentation in political leadership positions and identified several recommendations to increase the number of women leaders. Please identify four broad factors that explain women's absence from leadership positions and the political science research that supports these claims as well as three suggested remedies to increase the number of women in positions of power. Conclude by considering whether it matters—that is, do women lead differently than men in politics. Summarize this research and outline a study you believe should be done to further our understanding of when and how women differ from men in their execution of leadership.
3. Describe the various elements of a lobbying and advocacy campaign in American politics. Apply those elements to a current case in policymaking (e.g. ANWR, Medicare reform, clean air policy, tax reform, etc.). Where appropriate refer to the scholarly literature in political science that is useful in developing your campaign.