

**M.A. Comprehensive Examination**  
American Politics/Applied Politics  
Fall, 2006

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 III**.

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. Graduate students are the cutting edge of research in any discipline, including political science. Accepting this role, you are to select a research field of particular interest to you and to evaluate critically its accomplishments against both substantive and methodological standards. Then go on to develop a specific research project of your own that would advance progress in the selected field.
2. 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.

**Section II (Political Science)**

1. Some scholars argue that voting is associated with high costs. Others believe that claim is exaggerated. These costs are related both to turnout and to acquiring information. Evaluate this argument. What factors are associated with the 'high costs' of voting and acquiring information? Do these high costs bias the electorate? If so, if what way(s)?

Have steps been taken to lessen the information costs or the costs of voting? Have they been successful? To what extent?

2. Conflict and cooperation between the Congress and the President/executive branch are perhaps inevitable in the U.S. separation of powers system. Identify and discuss factors which are likely to affect conflict, and those likely to affect cooperation. Be specific as to parameters (for example, is divided or united government likely to affect the relationship the two branches and how and why), and factors more specific to each branch, or to different types of issues. What can a president do to have his views prevail? What can Congress do? And finally, illustrate your points by briefly discussing a current or recent issue; what was the outcome and how did the factors you have identified and discussed affect that?
3. What best explains judicial decision-making, the attitudinal or legal model? Cite the relevant scholarship and use an example to defend your position.
4. According to many who study politics and the media (Page 1996, Cook 1998, Yeric 2001), a well functioning democracy requires the free flow of information so citizens can know what elected officials do while at work in the nation's capital and officials can know what citizens want them to accomplish. First, list the subjects and sources (scholars) that need to be incorporated into a thorough evaluation of this two-way flow of information. Using the subjects and authors you assemble, now write a thoughtful essay on the successes and failures of the modern media to conduct the "free" flow of information spelled out above.

### **Section III (Applied Politics)**

1. Describe and evaluate the major 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 advocacy campaign.
2. The women and politics literature has evolved over time as the number of women in office has increased, first at the state level and then at the national level, allowing for greater analysis of their impact within legislative bodies as well as on policy making. With reference to these literatures, describe and analyze whether women make a difference in legislatures and in what areas.
3. Accounts of the 2004 election generally suggest that the Bush campaign ran a "better campaign" than the Kerry campaign. What does it mean to run a "better campaign?" What are the elements of a successful campaign?