

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
School of Public Affairs * Department of Government

Govt 73 Comparative Politics (Doctoral)
Comprehensive Examination
September 2007

Directions: Answer THREE (3) of the following 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. Does the evidence from the Third Wave of democratization lead you to conclude that certain kinds of governing institutions are better at creating consolidated democracies than are other institutions? Does successful consolidation result from the choice of parliamentary or presidential systems, or is it more dependent on civil society? Use specific theories and examples in your answer.
2. Social movements and theories designed to explain them have become one of the most dynamic areas within comparative politics in recent years. For a social movement of your choice, consider whether it is best explained by resource mobilization, political opportunities, or ideology-framing theories.
3. Comparative political scientists engage in an ongoing debate over whether the field prefers to work with a 'messy center' or eclecticism in theory, or whether some sort of 'solid center' can be found that reconciles disparate methodologies. Consider the theories in comparative politics that have flourished over the years, and evaluate the possibilities for convergence..
4. Select what you consider to be the most pressing social problem in today's world, and devise a research project within comparative politics that would contribute to the selected problem's solution. Be concrete in the research design, covering theory, hypotheses, data collection and data analysis (which may be qualitative or quantitative).

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

5. Finish this sentence: "There are no democracies in the Arab world because" Say whether or not you agree with the proposition you have created, and if so, why. Do theories of democratization explain it, or are other theories preferable? Be specific.
6. Can a viable case still be made in the 21st century for primordial ethnic identities? Be sure to draw extensively on the key primordial theorists, and engage fully in the debate between them and their critics.
7. Structural theory has had a long, if irregular, history within comparative political studies. Consider its origins in Marx, its major exemplars in comparative politics, and the arguments for and against its use as a major tool within the field.
8. "While *religion* was once an important variable in explaining people's political beliefs, *religiosity* is now far more important." Probe the meaning of this statement in a variety of theorists of your choice, and evaluate its utility in understanding some specific cases.
9. How has the idea of path dependence and historical institutionalism in comparative politics "brought back in" further attention to history as well as culture?
10. Choose a major theorist in comparative politics and explain how he/she has influenced the field in terms of debates, approaches, and empirical research. Explain also the theorist's background, what aspects of the past were and were not incorporated in his/her work.
11. Examine the notion of state autonomy in comparative politics. How do phenomena such as globalization, free trade, and the rise of supranational institutions influence our understanding of the state?
12. Feminist critics have long challenged liberal and Marxist approaches to such varied issues as the state, political participation, class, political culture, voting studies and social movements. How have these critiques influenced new theoretical and methodological approaches in political science?

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