

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
School of Public Affairs * Department of Government

Govt 73 Comparative Politics (Doctoral)
Comprehensive Examination
September 2009

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. What units of analysis would be best suited to studying the effects of globalization? Justify your answer with extensive reference to research literature and research design, and define and specify your terms carefully.
2. Analytically, comparative politics is a subfield of political science, but the historical relation between the two is not so clear. Review the recent history of the inter-relationship between comparative politics and political science, and say what this implies for the future of comparative research.
3. "Political stability is a function of socio-economic conditions and you cannot engineer political stability in an unstable political system solely by reforming governing institutions." Evaluate this statement with the aid of at least four political scientists and at least two relevant case studies.
4. Democracy is the ultimate political goal for political scientists as well as everyday folks, yet there seems to be universal agreement also that democratic politics is like sausage, not pleasant to watch in the making. What might at least three major political scientists contribute to our understanding of this paradox?
5. You have been assigned to teach a course in political *research* to an undergraduate class, and must choose a topic on which the whole group will focus for a semester. Describe your choice of the most engaging inquiry available from the comparative politics literature, and explain how you would structure the course.

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

6. Based on the theories you have learned regarding civil military relations and the breakdown of democratic regimes, what sorts of factors would you hypothesize might be responsible for the recent military coup in Honduras?
7. Africa has been a region victimized by ethnic conflicts over recent decades; you are to consider contending explanations of ethnic identity, on the continuum from primordial to instrumental, and social movement activation. Consider 1994 in Rwanda, contemporary Sudan, or cases of your choice, and evaluate opposing approaches to explanation. Note especially which theories are actually testable.
8. "George Orwell was wrong. The advance of technology has not resulted in more totalitarian states but has empowered citizens relative to the state and undermined state sovereignty." How would at least four major comparative political scientists respond to this suggestion? Use also case studies to support your evaluation.
9. Everyone has now forgotten the USSR, and everyone has also forgotten how swiftly it collapsed, and outcome which might make other nations slightly nervous. What does the comparative politics literature have to say about system stability . . . and hidden instability?
10. What insights does comparative politics bring to a discussion of the recent US and global economic recession? Does a crushing blow to the neo-liberal paradigm also suggest that political liberalization in authoritarian or semi-authoritarian polities may also recede? Bring specific comparative theories to bear on these questions.
11. In France, Turkey, Pakistan and other nations, the relationship between religious and temporal authority is being questioned. Analyze the popularity and ability of religious communities both in their home countries and in the diaspora to confront the principles and institutional arrangements of secularism.
12. Originality in research often entails returning to the classics. You may take any theorist from Socrates to Wittgenstein and create an innovative research program--either quantitative or qualitative, but you must think it important scientifically, and must describe it in detail.

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