

M.A. Comprehensive Examination
American Politics/Applied Politics
Fall, 2007

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**.

Students not in the Applied Politics concentration may answer two questions from Section II.

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 programs place a strong emphasis on the merits of sound empirical analysis. Reflect on all of your coursework and discuss the following, noting important scholarly work upon which you draw your conclusions. What is the case for sound empirical analysis? What are its hallmarks (e.g., criteria, standards, requirements)? In the real world of governance (e.g., elections, policymaking and service delivery), when are these standards best adhered to? When are they least adhered to? Why?
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

1. Does the Supreme Court occupy a unique place in the American system of separated and divided power, or does it behave as other political institutions do? Please discuss the influence that politics, as opposed to legal norms, has on the institutional behavior of the

Supreme Court, and the influence that politics and policy preferences have on the behavior of the individual justices.

2. Partisan polarization is one of the most studied and commented upon phenomena in American politics. A citizen's party identification is one of the strongest determinants of vote choice. Yet Karl Rove, President Bush's former political advisor and no stranger to polarization himself, was quoted by *Time Magazine* after the 2006 midterm elections as saying, "I think the country is very much up for grabs." Why might this be so? Or why not? Which voters are the least and the most persuadable and why? Support your answer with relevant theoretical and empirical insight using your knowledge of the political science literature on opinion change and vote choice.
3. What is meant by the term "the public presidency?" Why did the framers argue against such presidencies and how do we know if they exist today? Are they harmful for the office as the framers contended or are they a fact of life? Finally, what factors mitigate the president's ability to control his image?
4. Much political science research is aimed at gauging whether citizens have any control over their representatives, a necessary ingredient to the claim that American democracy is "by the people." Assess democratic representation and accountability in the United States Congress. To what extent do Congress and its members represent the American public and to what extent are they held accountable by citizens?

Section III (Applied Politics)

1. John Edwards has announced that he will accept partial public funding for the primaries and caucuses for the 2008 presidential election. John McCain has indicated that he will likely do the same. This means these candidates will be required to abide by state spending limits and an overall spending limit for the pre-nomination period. Both the state spending limits and the overall limit are far less than what candidates not subject to these restrictions are likely to spend. Discuss the strategic considerations Edwards and McCain will face as they design a strategy to win their respective party's nominations. For example, how does their decision affect their field plan, their media plan, scheduling? What other considerations come into play?
2. 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.
3. Senator Hillary Clinton is the first woman in American history to have a serious chance of winning the presidency. According to the women and politics literature, what are some of the challenges that she and other women who run for office face? In your answer, you should draw from the research on women as voters, women as candidates, and discuss other structural barriers within the American electoral system.