

**M.A. Comprehensive Examination**  
American Politics/Applied Politics  
Spring, 2008

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. Think of a hypothesis having to do with a real-world political phenomenon. Construct two research projects, one using qualitative methods and one using quantitative methods. What are the pros and cons of each? Can you think of a way to combine methods to research your hypothesis?
2. Behavioralism scored many of its early triumphs by revealing the falsity of political scientists' beliefs, for instance in the information levels of the average American voter. The revolution was not, however, complete, and false beliefs still abound. Choose one and devise a research design that would test the accuracy of some popular political science idea. Be sure to describe the background of the idea, and fill out the research design completely, in terms of theory, operationalization, hypotheses and data testing.
3. 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. Presidential primaries follow a schedule that varies every four years. In 2000, the turnout rate among eligible voters in both the Democratic and Republican presidential primaries in New Hampshire was 44%, while in 2008 it was 53%. Of those who voted in the New Hampshire primary in 2000, only 38% voted in the Democratic primary, whereas in 2008, 55% voted in the Democratic primary there. By contrast, in the Texas presidential primary in 2000, the turnout rate was a mere 15% of eligible voters, compared to 28% in 2008. Yet of those who voted in the Texas primary in 2000, 59% voted in the Democratic primary, while in 2008, fully 67% voted in the Democratic primary. Despite the shuffling of primary dates in 2008, the Texas primary was held on about the same date this year (March 4) as it had been in 2000 (March 9). And of course, New Hampshire maintained its first-in-the-nation primary in both years.

From the perspective of the Downsian model of voter participation as well as other rational, economic models of participation, what explains the difference in turnout rates between states and between party primaries in these two states? Does scholarship on the effect of the substance and timing of campaign events alter our understanding of voter participation? Why or why not?

2. 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.
3. What proof do we have that the lines between presidential campaigning and governing blurred? What are the drawbacks of this situation and can you think of any pros? What does this mean about the type of candidates and thus presidents the campaign process produces?
4. Referencing the relevant congressional research, assess the role of party leaders in Congress. What tools do congressional party leaders use to influence members of their party? How influential are they in doing so? Does this vary between chambers? Have leaders become more or less influential over time?

## Section III (Applied Politics)

1. In the very recent past, women have reached the highest levels of power in the American political hierarchy. Yet, Speaker Nancy Pelosi presides over a House that is only 16% female. According to the women and politics literature, does this matter? What impact, if any, does the presence of women have on legislation? Do women have a distinct legislative style?

2. Thus far in the 2008 presidential nominating process there has been much attention by the candidates to both paid advertising - the "air war" - and grassroots organizing - the "ground war." Is one more important than the other in a campaign? Compare and contrast the importance of the air war and the ground war in a campaign. Does the office being sought (Senate, House of Representatives, Governor) affect the importance of paid media and grassroots organizing?
  
3. Apply what you know about the critical elements of a public advocacy campaign by using a specific recent case. What were the most effective tactics used by the proponent and opponents of this large advocacy campaign? What worked well, what failed, and why? Define your terms carefully and refer to the relevant scholarly literature and wisdom from practitioners in answering this question.