

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
School of Public Affairs \* Department of Government

Govt 73 Comparative Politics (Master's)  
**Comprehensive Examination**  
**Fall 2009**

Directions: Answer THREE (3) 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. Organize your answers, and allocate your time evenly.

**Part I (Answer at least ONE question from this section and not more than two questions)**

"Political science is not a science. Comparative politics has the most potential within the larger field to become a science but it has failed." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Would it be a problem if political science were not a science? Bring in theorists from the field to support your various positions.

Analysis of the state has attracted an odd variety of theorists, most of whom came to contradictory, or at least contrary, conclusions in respect to its causes, its justifications, and the possibility of its explanation. Trace the history of this discussion of the state and evaluate the analytic success of the literature.

Does economics explain politics or does politics explain economics? Engage the relevant political economy literature in your response, as well as other relevant approaches.

Political development as a category for analysis originated after World War II in a spirit of optimism about the possibilities it described for the Third World. Trace the trajectory of this school of analysis from its start to the present, and evaluate its success as a contribution to the field of comparative politics.

What role do new constitutions play in the stability of emerging democracies? Can consolidated democracy be "engineered" by the "right" constitution in a disordered state? Your answer should use the existing literature on democratization and democratic consolidation, but may go beyond that literature.

Devise a research design that will clarify the theory of peasant behavior. Say what your questions would be, what your

hypotheses, and how you would collect your data.

**Examination continued over**

**Part II (Answer at least ONE question from this section and not more than two questions)**

Focus on the domestic politics of Iraq (i.e. relations between the country's three major ethnic/religious groups, and how these are politically represented) in terms of the various forms of institutionalism, and say which best succeeds in explaining the observable phenomena. Be sure to define and distinguish the several institutionalist varieties.

Kenneth Shepsle and Mark Bonchek, in *Analyzing Politics*, seem to extol the virtues of plurality electoral systems, while Arendt Lijphart, in *Patterns of Democracy*, seems to favor proportional representation. Who do you think wins the argument, and why?

Samuel Huntington, Barrington Moore, and Gabriel Almond, while very prominent in the field of comparative politics, seem to have no successors and have started no schools. Pick one of this group and explain whether the appearance is correct, and why.

Are Islamic societies more resistant to democracy than Western societies? Your answer should include the universalist/relativist debate, as well as work specifically on the Middle East.

Consultants from the United States are often now being hired to run campaigns outside of the U.S. As a comparativist, what might be the advantages and disadvantages of this global export of consultants? How would you advise political consultants steeped in American elections and campaigns to revise their theories to operate abroad?

What strategies can erode the political 'glass ceiling' for women outside the United States? What strategies have been useful in increasing gender equality in the political and economic spheres? What theories explain these developments?

**Remember to Answer Three Questions**

**One from Part I, One from Part II, and One from Either Part**

--End --