

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

Govt 73 Comparative Politics (Master's)  
**Comprehensive Examination**  
**Fall 2010**

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)**

1. The democratization experiences of southern Europe, eastern Europe, and Latin America, have allowed political scientists to develop some general theoretical propositions about transitions from authoritarian regimes to democracies. For a country of your choice, use those propositions to explain why, in that country, democratization has so far succeeded or failed. Be sure to identify your theorists and their theories.
2. The State has been an enduring focus of comparative research, yet is as vehemently condemned by some scholars as it is promoted by others. Trace the history of the State concept in comparative politics, citing specific authors, and evaluate its utility for contemporary comparative research.
3. Ten years from now, will rational choice theory be a more or less popular methodology in comparative politics? What types of questions has it been applied to in the past, and what types of questions do you believe it could be extended to cover? Cite specific theorists in your discussion and deal with the approach's critics as well.
4. Behavioralism as practiced in its early decades was highly effective in destroying old and comfortable illusions held by political scientists, such as knowledgeable voters and civic-minded citizens. If you feel that there are remaining illusions in comparative politics that deserve to be overthrown, specify the ideas that are involved and devise a research design that would reveal a different underlying reality. The research design should include specific

hypotheses and an indication of the type of data you would use.

5. The form of government of various countries in the world is in many ways comparative politics' grand dependent variable, yet we still struggle along with classifications familiar to Aristotle. Use the ideas of several major comparativist scholars on this issue and suggest some better classification system than monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy.

*Examination continues over*

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

6. Charles Tilly once wrote a famous article, "Warmaking and Statemaking as Organized Crime." Evaluate this interesting proposition and explain how it fits, or does not fit, into the mainstream works of comparative political research. Be specific in your citations.
7. Dependency theory has been out of favor among academics for many years now, yet countries in the developing world still remain much poorer than the developed nations. Review the origins of dependency theory and bring mainstream theorists to the issue, to determine whether their work will 'travel' to new sites and suggest new models.
8. The rise of terrorism in the post-9/11 period has added a new dimension to study in the field of social movements. Using existing works in the field of social movements, consider their utility in explaining terrorist phenomena.
9. Mancur Olson argues that collective action is rare and difficult to sustain, yet many organizations, ranging from rebel armies to social movements, find ways of recruiting and retaining members, even in contexts where participation carries serious risks. How can we explain this paradox? Use specific theorists in the course of your argument, and say how your approach relates to Olson's work.
10. Is the rise of identity politics a consequence of post-materialism? How is the salience of ethnicity, gender, race, religion or sexuality explained in societies that are not post-materialist?
11. American comparative politics can be explained in terms of what other social science field was favored by comparative

researchers at the time, whether sociology, economics, history, anthropology, or psychology. Review the field in these terms, showing when and where elements from outside political science turned up, and their relative success in terms of answering political questions.

12. A new field of literature has recently emerged in Europe under the rough title of 'post-democracy,' arguing that democracies are not the ultimate solutions people originally hoped but contain corrupt politicians, disillusioned citizens, and dysfunctional politics. What would at least three classic comparativists say about this phenomenon?
13. Does the field of comparative politics develop? That is, have we learned anything over the past fifty years? If so, say what we have learned and who taught us. If not, discuss our disciplinary failure and suggest signs of hope, if you see any. Be specific.
14. Who is your favorite comparativist? Why?

**Remember to Answer Three Questions**  
**One from Part I, One from Part II, and One from Either Part**

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