

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
School of Public Affairs * Department of Government

Govt 73 Comparative Politics (Master's)
Comprehensive Examination
Fall 2008

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. Take time to organize your answer.

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

1. "There is no such thing as political culture." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? Refer to specific theorists in making your argument.
2. How does context matter to the study of comparative politics? How are debates about universality relevant to the field and its schools of thought?
3. Is there progress in the field of comparative politics? Make your discussion explicitly chronological, and evaluate major developments since 1950.
4. The pendulum in U.S. policy circles seems to be swinging back to an interest in 'order' rather than "democracy." What is the relationship between order and democracy, and what theorists are most relevant to its clarification?
5. The Behavioral movement of the 1960s specialized in overthrowing received truths. Is there anything left for comparativists to overthrow? Discuss, and outline a research program that would be relevant to such an inquiry.

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

6. "Latin America is considerably more democratic than it was twenty years ago; Africa may not be. The Middle East certainly is not." Discuss.
7. Opportunity models of social movements are a subject of considerable contention. Evaluate the arguments on both sides of the issue.

8. Can China indefinitely remain a one-party, authoritarian, communist state while its economy continues to grow rapidly by participating in the globalized capitalist economy? What arguments would be made in respect to this question by proponents of the several comparative theory approaches?
9. Could ethnic identity be considered a function of modernization? Why or why not?
10. Rooting your discussion in a particular region of the globe you know well, explain how comparativists and political scientists can help to explain the critical challenges and tensions that region is now facing.
11. Rational choice theory came late to comparative politics, and has been met with courageous resistance by several different schools. Evaluate the reasons for the lateness of this debate, the intensity of the debate, and suggest whom you think ought to prevail.
12. Samuel Huntington has had a long and curious career as a comparativist. Evaluate his work in its relevance for a student of the field today.

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

--End --