

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
School of Public Affairs * Department of Government

Govt 73 Comparative Politics (Doctoral)
Comprehensive Examination
August 2005

Directions: Answer THREE (3) of the following 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. In 1996 when Robert Bates was president of the APSA's "Organized Section in Comparative Politics" he wrote an editorial on "The Death of Comparative Politics?" in which he suggested that because of globalization and the growing consensus on democracy we shortly would have nothing to compare. Bring the ideas of other scholars to bear on the question, and include your own viewpoint in conclusion.
2. The European Union has recently been faced with two nations', France and the Netherlands, decisively vote against its proposed constitution. Analyze this circumstance from at least two different paradigms from the comparative politics field. Which succeeds (or fails) in what ways? Which provides a stronger basis for the empirical testing of its ideas? Does the field require theoretical amplification to handle such macro-political events?
3. Based on your analysis of the comparative politics field in 2005, devise a research program that would speak to, and work toward answering, its central questions. Justify your choice of research question through specific citations within the literature.
4. What is the relation of the field of comparative politics to the wider field encompassed by political science in general? Does this relation change over time? Does the political system itself (i.e. the national government) influence comparative politics? How, why, and when?

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

5. If the purpose is to diminish ethnic conflict in a nation, which is a preferable institutional arrangement, a parliamentary system with at least some proportional representation seats, or a presidential system based on single-member districts and a first-past-the-post electoral system? Discuss both sides in this debate, and evaluate the supporting empirical evidence.
6. Research and theorizing on civil society has slowed recently, with counter-arguments

presented in favor of strong party systems that are able to build broad-based, mass coalitions that may be able to either revitalize democratic politics or challenge authoritarian politics. Evaluate these institutional polarities.

7. Where does comparative politics stand on the utility of modernization theory, particularly in light of recent conflicts in the world? Has modernization theory been displaced by other theoretical currents? Discuss the issues involved, both theoretical and empirical.
8. Africa has been the region perhaps most victimized by ethnic conflicts, as shown in Rwanda and Sudan. Discuss the contending explanations of ethnic identity, on a continuum from primordial to instrumental, and social movement activation, including theories of resource mobilization and political opportunity structures. Apply these perspectives to a specific case, anywhere in the world, and evaluate their efficacy.
9. What are the principal differences between corporatist and pluralist interest articulation? Which would you argue is more democratic (be sure to state your criteria for democratic)?
10. What has been the impact of feminist thought on political science?
11. Marxian political analysis has long been discounted as an artifact of 'the other side' in the now obsolete Cold War, yet rational choice theory appears to have taken up many of its themes. Is this old wine in new bottles, or are the conclusions different? Evaluate the question using the works of at least three scholars from the field of comparative politics.
12. Samuel Huntington has been a leading figure in comparative politics since the 1960s, but his contributions have changed markedly over time. Describe and evaluate the impact of his work on comparative politics in general.