

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

Govt 73 Comparative Politics (Doctoral)  
Comprehensive Examination  
September 2008

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. The Behavioral Revolution was revolutionary at least in part because it swept away old misconceptions about the political world, but in retrospect not all misconceptions disappeared. Identify an area in comparative politics in which you believe conceptual and empirical inaccuracies still exist and describe a concrete research program to reveal these weaknesses.
2. As per Bismark's request of the German people to "think with your blood," Walker Connor takes the view that nationalism is based more on feeling than on reason, and that "what ultimately matters is not *what is* but *what people believe is . . . .*" Evaluate this contention in the specific as well as a wider context.
3. "Comparative politics is a subfield of political science where scholars talk past each other rather than building on the research of others. All these political scientists do is reinvent the proverbial wheel over and over again." Consider the history of comparative politics in the past fifty years and determine to what extent this argument is valid. Be sure to refer to specific theorists and individual works in your discussion.
4. What are the limits, if any, to the triangulation of methods? Discuss the most cogent scholars and perspectives that you find appealing and useful when considering methodological and epistemological issues in comparative politics.
5. What challenges does neo-liberalism pose for collective life in countries engaged in structural adjustment and democratic reform of various degrees?

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

6. Is the supra-nationalism of the European Union a realistic model for other areas of the world? Is the model of the European Union likely to result in the withering away of the state? Discuss these issues in respect to specific areas of the world, and adduce appropriate comparative theorists to expand upon, support, and critique your argument.
7. Is "strong methodological individualism" reconcilable with the various social movement theories popular in comparative politics? Would social movement theorists argue that this should be a standard against which they should be judged? Do not overgeneralize here, but distinguish different schools within social movement theory and refer to specific theorists.
8. Select a "divided society" and explain the criteria by which it so qualifies and what kinds of institutional reforms would best alleviate its problems.
9. The democratization literature is replete with debates over the relative merits of presidential or parliamentary systems, voting systems, and so on. Discuss the relationship between these debates and the role of social structure, economy, and culture in promoting democracy; focusing specifically on whether institutional engineering can overcome social deficiencies.
10. Recent comparative politics research has devoted increased scholarly attention to the ways in which authoritarianism either lives comfortably with elections or successfully overwhelms such democratic formalities to remain in power. Investigate past theories and theorists in the comparative politics tradition to shed a clearer conceptual light on this problem.

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