

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
School of Public Affairs * Department of Government

Govt 73 Comparative Politics (Doctoral)
Comprehensive Examination
22 January 2010

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. Recently Senator Tom Coburn (Republican/Oklahoma) asked the Senate to eliminate National Science Foundation funding for political science because political science has made no real practical contribution to the improvement of Americans' lives. Do you think this criticism applies also to comparative politics? Why or why not? Discuss comparative politics' failures or contributions in reference to specific scholarly books and articles.
2. Why are there so few democracies in the Middle East? Is this a coincidence, or is there a region-wide pattern with causal reasons behind it? Or should we wait a while longer before passing judgment? Relate your answer to major works in the comparative field.
3. Comparative politics as a field is frequently defined, both by participants and observers, in terms of classic works that shaped thinking and research in major ways. There is however disagreement on what the classics should be. Outline a one-semester list of your classics and explain in detail what ideas they present and why they are deserving of inclusion.
4. What methods have led to the most important contributions in comparative political science, large N quantitative analysis, comparative case studies, or other forms of qualitative analysis? Examine examples of these various possibilities (you may add your own) to determine what contribution they have made, and explain whether methodology had a role in this contribution or, if not, what did.

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

5. Why is democratization "from below" such a rarity? Is it still

possible in the Twenty-first Century, or is it only a romantic notion by Old School, archaic comparativists that social movements and reformist interest groups can somehow overcome the status quo?

Examination continues over

6. Systems analysis comes in a frightful variety of forms, from the coldly scientific to the airily metaphorical. Evaluate the various sub-varieties, explain their similarities, and especially their differences. Do you find any place for such theories on contemporary comparative politics?
7. James Scott's work on *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* remains an idiosyncratic member of the comparative politics literature. What are the origins of this book, what are its premises, and what ramifications has it had in the field generally?
8. What role might the media play in democratization? Feel free to pick a concrete case or two, but also be sure to discuss the media as an interest group using authors such as O'Donnell and Putnam, and, perhaps, Dahl and Lindblom.
9. The State has been an enduring focus in political science in general and comparative politics in particular. Evaluate its present utility in light of globalization.
10. Samuel Huntington's *Political Order in Changing Societies* and Barrington Moore's *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* are two foundation works in comparative politics yet they are vastly different in approach, method, and theory. Outline these differences and discuss their continuing relevance in the comparative politics field.
11. What is the line between 'liberalization' and outright 'democratization' in authoritarian regimes, and how do we measure that distinction? Is it an important difference, or are we just splitting hairs?
12. Joel Migdal, in *Strong Societies and Weak States*, argues that there is no 'corruption' in political societies, only different rules. Is his argument tenable? Use specific cases, if you wish, to illustrate your points.

Remember to answer three questions

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one from each part and one from either part

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