

American University Department of Government MA Comprehensive in Comparative Politics
Spring 2016

Directions: Answer THREE (3) questions: one question from Part I, one question from Part II, and one question from Part III. 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 Synoptic Questions on Field (Answer ONE and only one question from this section)

1. "Transaction costs" is a critical concept used by economists and political scientists to study institutions. Provide your definition of transaction costs and examine the relevance of this concept for contemporary literature on institutions.
2. "Few relationships between social, economic, and political phenomena are stronger than that between the level of economic development and the existence of democratic politics. The correlation implies that transitions to democracy should occur primarily in countries at the mid-level of economic development. Discuss the empirical evidence on this thesis.
3. Select one sub-field in comparative politics, such as democratization, political behavior, institutions, dependency theory, development, social movements, etc., and lay out its main contributions, its major theoretical and methodological debates, and its changes over time.
4. What are the similarities and differences between the political theories proposed by Marx, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao, despite that they all are conventionally labelled as Communism?

Part II Specific Topic Questions (Answer ONE and only one question from this section)

5. Why hasn't the Arab Spring yielded more democracy? Did it produce enough results to be considered a success? Why or why not?
6. Which better explains the consolidation of democracy: structural, cultural, or agency-driven explanations? Thoroughly elaborate in your answer by considering all three types of theories.
7. "When trying to understand collective action (social movements, protests, communal violence), the social networks emphasized by sociologists are far more important than the

factors emphasized by political scientists, such as state institutions and state strategies." Agree or disagree.

Part III Practical Applications (Answer ONE and only one question from this section)

8. How would you assess the “developmental state model” theorized based on the experience of Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan in the twentieth century?
9. How would you assess the trajectory of political development in mainland China, given its political and socioeconomic history? Please compare your arguments against what theories of communism and capitalism may suggest.
10. Please respond to the following citation, using at least six citations and references to specific cases. “Agency-based theories of democratization tend to focus on urban elites. Structural theories of democratization tend to focus on rural peasants. What is needed is a more comprehensive theory considering regime change in both urban and rural spaces.”

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