

American University Department of Government MA Comprehensive in Comparative Politics  
Spring 2017

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. Which is stronger: the state or civil society? Take a stand on this issue, focusing the bulk of your response on one important political outcome (e.g, democratization, state formation, etc). Make sure to discuss both state- and society-centered approaches to explaining your chosen outcomes.
2. 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.
3. There are varying approaches to study institutions, their effects and change in political science. Please compare different institutionalisms and identify their respective advantages and disadvantages.

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

4. Why hasn't the Arab Spring yielded more democracy? Did it produce enough results to be considered a success? Why or why not?
5. 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.
6. "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 individual rationality or state strategies." Do you agree or disagree? Support your argument with reference to at least one case study.

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

7. When a country experiences civil war or ethnic conflict, there is often variation in the spatial distribution of violence and in the degree to which civilians are victimized. What explains why violence is worse in some areas than in others? Please compare several concrete cases as part of your answer.
8. A growing literature on democratic transition focuses on the distributional implications of democratic vs. non-democratic regimes, as well as how structural features like inequality may moderate such distributional effects. Given the literature, how will you assess the prospects for democracy in today's China, given its growing economy and inequality?
9. "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 with particular reference to cases in Latin America, where much of the "modernization" literature emerged.

**Remember to Answer Three  
Questions**

**One from Part I, One from Part II, and One from Part  
III**