

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) "Formal institutions can be easily redesigned, while informal institutions are harder to change and are therefore more critical to determining political outcomes." Agree or disagree.
- 2) "Formal institutions and constitutions matter little in the execution of power in democracies and authoritarian regimes alike. All that matters is how interest groups align." Disagree with that statement and make your case. Cite at least five readings in your answer and discuss at least three cases.
- 3) Identity can be a powerful resource for organizing collective action, but it can also be one of the most powerful factors underlying negative outcomes, such as ethnic conflict and corruption. Evaluate the role of identity in shaping political outcomes, focusing especially on the tension between positive and negative effects.

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

- 4) "Agency-centered approaches best explain transitions to democracy, but approaches that emphasize aspects of social organization and culture are necessary in order to explain variation in democratic consolidation and success." Discuss this proposition with reference to relevant theoretical literature and one case study.
- 5) "Transaction costs" is a critical concept used by economists and political scientists to study institutions. Provides your definition of transaction costs and examine the relevance of this concept for contemporary literature on institutions.
- 6) Recently, there has been an interpretivist, cultural, ethnographic, and hermeneutic 'turn' in the study of social movements. At the same time, resource mobilization theory and other approaches adopt the individual as the unit of analysis and other scholars adopt Marxian or neo-Marxian approaches. Is there something particular about social movement theory or social movements which leads to more diverse approaches and theorizing than in other areas of comparative politics?

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

- 7) Which theories in comparative politics help explain the recent rise of populism and ethno-nationalism in politics, both in the US and globally? Is research on ethnicity and identity politics that emerged from comparative politics and was oriented more regionally also relevant to the emergence of ethno-nationalism and populism in democratic and wealthier nations?
- 8) Why hasn't the Arab Spring yielded more democracy? Did it produce enough results to be considered a success? Why or why not?
- 9) Consider measures of democracy, such as (but not limited to) Polity IV, V-Dem, and Freedom

House. Convey the strengths and weaknesses of at least three such indicators, and then explain which you would use to compare hybrid regimes, and why. Give examples of hybrid regimes and state why you would use **one** set of indicators as opposed to others. You are not expected to know each nation's numerical value according to the measure, only explain the logic of choosing cases to study and which indicator you would use.

**Remember to Answer Three  
Questions**

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