

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

Govt 73 Comparative Politics (Master's)  
**Comprehensive Examination**  
**Spring 2012**

Directions: Answer THREE (3) 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. Organize your answers, and allocate your time evenly.

**Part I (Answer at least ONE question from this section and not more than two questions)**

1. A wide variety of countries have experimented with political liberalization and democracy during the Third Wave. What do the outcomes of these transitions tell us about theories of democratization, on the one hand, and modernization, on the other?
2. Is sovereignty dead? What factors encourage the collapse of sovereignty and what factors maintain or promote it? Be sure to cite specific theorists in your response.
3. "Comparative politics no longer answers big questions, and no longer provides findings that can improve the lives of people around the world." Is this claim true? Evaluate past theorists in the field, and consider the present, as components of your response.
4. Rational choice theory has been a major force in political science and in comparative politics for at least half a century, yet it is still divisive in the discipline. Discuss the works that have used rational choice approaches in the comparative field, explain the position of its opponents, and suggest whether, and if so how, consensus might emerge.
5. Despite the post-structuralist agreement that the State does not exist but is inseparable from society, comparative politics still relies heavily on the concept. Devise a research project, from initial question through theory and hypotheses, and concluding with an analysis of data, that would clarify the issues involved in analyzing the state.

**Part II (Answer at least ONE question from this section and not more than two questions)**

6. Despite structural conditions that would seem to make Cuba a likely candidate for the emergence of a social movement demanding democratization, regime opponents have never been able to mobilize significant popular support. Review the structural factors that should push Cuba in this direction and explain why it does not move.

7. Guerilla movements in several Latin American countries arguably transitioned successfully into political parties following the end of civil wars. Can these cases offer any lessons for African cases where independence movements came to power but democracy is still in doubt?
8. Endogeneity has been widely cited as a critical issue for studies on institutions and institutional change. Why does it matter, and how does comparative research deal with the issue?
9. One of the perennial debates in comparative politics is whether structure or agency is more determinative of political outcomes. Examine this debate, drawing on a concrete political problem of your choice.
10. What ever happened to revolution?
11. “Social movements are more likely to emerge when the state imposes additional burdens on citizens or abridges their existing benefits. Grievances therefore are very much a function of the decisions made by governments.” Evaluate this claim, drawing on two case studies.
12. The new institutionalism, in its initial formulation by March and Olsen, sought to present itself as a viable alternative to behavioral methodologies. Outline the foundation of its claims and whether you believe it succeeded or failed.
13. How can we reconcile the democratic procedural guarantees of political *equality* with the vast--and in many cases the increasing--levels of economic *inequality*?
14. Academic disciplines like comparative politics are often built upon and around standard “classic” books and articles that form the core of the discipline. Define what characteristics a scholarly work must demonstrate if it is to be considered classic, and discuss at least three examples of works that meet your criteria.

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

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