

American University Department of Government MA Comprehensive in Comparative Politics
Spring 2014

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. "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.
2. What are some of the main insights and approaches, intellectually and normatively, of comparative politics during the 20th Century that you expect to either be less salient in the 21st Century, or more salient?
3. Structuralism is one of the most powerful theories within social science. Trace its origins, its major practitioners, the reasons behind its intellectual strengths, and its major competitors.
4. 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.
5. Some scholars argue that democratization and electoral competition directly increase the likelihood of violence, while others tend to point to the weakness of institutions in new democracies as a reason for greater instability in these countries. Which stance do you think is more accurate? Make sure you address the democratization-violence and weak institutions-violence mechanisms separately, using at least one case study to support your own argument.

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

6. Is democratization a teleological process, a creeping and non-linear movement, or some combination? What determines how democratization will proceed in one case as opposed to others? Be sure to include the literature on hybrid regimes and democracies "with adjectives."
7. What do we mean by endogenous institutional change? Why is this important for contemporary research on institutions?
8. If you were a leader of a protest movement, what are the first steps you would take to build a membership and ensure participation in your protest events? What factors or events would be most important in determining your success? Answer with reference to modern social movements theory.
9. "The state creates the political environment around us; it bends individuals to its will and structures society as it sees fit." Discuss this argument in terms of the relevant literature.
10. Samuel Huntington's *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968) and Barrington Moore's *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (1966) defined the origins of modern comparative politics. Compare and contrast their theories, and those theories' impact on subsequent research in the field.
11. "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)

12. In December 2010 a series of protests spread across the Middle East which were eventually called the Arab Spring. Using the full range of literature available in the field of comparative politics, discuss the fit between theories and these events. Does the Arab Spring challenge existing understanding of democratic transition?
13. For a country of your choice, analyze its past and present political history, using at least three major theoretical frameworks in comparative politics. Which do you feel is most effective? Discuss.
14. "Ukraine's contemporary politics is a relic of the Cold War." React to this statement by considering the internal causes of the struggle between Russia and Ukraine, and the inter-state causes. Which is more predominant and why?
15. Using theories on social movements and democratization, explain some of the causes of Venezuela's contemporary social conflicts. What theories best explain the ongoing

battles there between state and opposition? What theories fail to explain the politics of Venezuela after Hugo Chavez?

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