

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
School of Public Affairs * Department of Government

Govt 73 Comparative Politics (Doctoral)
Comprehensive Examination First Field
September 2013

Directions: Answer THREE (3) of the following 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. Take time to organize your answer.

Part I (Answer ONE question from this section)

1. Much has been written about economic globalization and its effect on politics. Are the economic changes brought about by globalization differences in degree or in kind from the economic conditions of thirty years ago? Are the resulting political changes in degree or in kind? Define your terms and ground your response in relevant literature.
2. Existing theories of institutions have been criticized as being more capable of explaining the stability rather than the change of institutions. Evaluate this critique against the current literature and assess new research that more directly focuses on change processes.
3. The behavioral revolution of the 1960s claimed to re-orient comparative politics into new paths of substantive inquiry and to new methods of scientific research. Survey the field since that time and evaluate the successes and failures of those original goals.
4. Accountability is a central topic in political science, with some scholars stressing institutional design as a means of raising government accountability while others argue for the importance of citizen action. Review this debate, laying out the major obstacles to accountability and how they can be met by either institutional design or political action.
5. Is the Third Wave of democratization over? Are we in a Fourth Wave? In the course of answering these questions you may wish to go back to earlier theorists such as Huntington (1968) or Barrington Moore. Are we making progress?

Part II (Answer ONE question from this section)

6. The differentiation between formal and informal institutions plays a key role for contemporary research on institutions. Define formal and informal institutions using important frameworks from the literature, and theorize the differences. Assess the value of such differentiation for relevant research.
7. Przeworski in his *Democracy and the Limits of Self-Government* (2010) portrays some of the tensions in democracy as being due to the perverse incentives it offers citizens and ruling elites. Discuss his argument and compare it systematically to several other texts.

8. What is the most important subfield in comparative politics? Why?
9. In *Why Men Rebel* (1971) Ted Gurr argued that rebellion and popular mobilization arise when there exists a gap between individuals' expectations and their capabilities. Much of the modern social movement school has been devoted to discrediting this claim. Discuss and evaluate both sides of the issue and their implication for future research.
10. "Thin models of rationality are insufficient to explain individual participation in social movements, or indeed in politics in general." Discuss.

Part III (Answer ONE question from this section)

11. Is a focus on structure or on agency more important in explaining the shape of democratic transitions? Answer with reverence to the literature on democratic transitions and the experience of at least one case.
12. "When accurate measurement is too costly to be conducted repeatedly, intense analysis of a single case is preferable to relying on measurements of doubtful validity collected in an extensive design for purposes of quantitative analysis. . . . Qualitative research is best undertaken when more rigorous research designs and strategies are infeasible." Discuss.
13. Choose a region or country you know well (this can include the United States) and use comparative theory to analyze and explain some momentous change it has experienced. Which theories and scholars are most useful to explaining the radical change? What is not explained in your case?
14. If Marx, Weber, or Gramsci attended the American Political Science Association annual meeting one year, what would they learn and how would they see their legacies reflected in the work of comparativists?
15. "The Freedom House Index is arbitrary, opaque, and theoretically imprecise, but it remains the best indicator of levels of democracy available to us." Discuss this contention, comparing the Freedom House Index to at least two others, and offer specific arguments evaluating the particular properties of particular indicators.

*Remember to answer three questions
one and no more than one question from each part*