The American politics comprehensive exam is a take-home exam with 48 hours allowed for completion; i.e., if the exam begins at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, the student has until 10:00 a.m. on Monday to turn in the exam. An additional 10 hours are allowed for non-native speakers of English, giving them until 8:00 p.m. on Monday to turn in the exam. Students must answer three questions for the exam. A maximum of 3,500 words is allowed in response to each question.

1. Students must earn a passing grade on all three questions of the exam in order to pass. A failing grade on any of the three questions necessitates that the student retake the entire exam. The option of writing a literature review when failing one question is not available for the American politics comprehensive exam, as it is already an open book exam.

2. All students taking the American politics comprehensive exam must have completed three graduate courses in American politics at Notre Dame, not including directed readings. A maximum of one course may be fulfilled by transferring credit from another political science graduate program, at the discretion of the Director of Graduate Studies.

3. The American politics comprehensive exam consists of two parts:

   Part One asks general, broad questions that bridge or cross sub-areas of the field. They are designed for generalists in American politics. Students receive four questions of which they must answer two. Everyone taking the exam receives the same questions.

   Part Two is an area of specialization chosen by the student prior to the exam. These may be any of the topic areas listed or something similar with the approval of the field chair. Everyone choosing the same area of specialization receives the same questions. There are two questions of which students must answer one.

   - Mass Behavior and Public Opinion
   - Political Participation
   - Race and Ethnicity
   - Religion and Politics
   - Political Parties
   - Interest Groups
   - State and Local Politics
   - Congress
   - The Presidency
   - Judicial Politics
4. The American politics comprehensive exam is graded by a committee of faculty members, which will change for every administration of the exam.

Preparing for the Exam

In order to prepare for the American politics comprehensive exam, students are encouraged to:

1. Take a range of courses on American political institutions and behavior and become familiar with the literature covered in those courses.

2. Consult with faculty members about the literature on topics in which those faculty members specialize (especially if the student has not taken course work that covers those topics) and about the nature of exam questions and faculty expectations for students' answers to those questions.

3. Consult copies of past exams to gain a sense of the types of questions asked. Compose answers (or at least outlines of answers) to those questions to gain practice in answering exam questions. Remember that faculty members are not simply looking for a vast recollection of citations, but rather for the ability to integrate those citations into a logical and coherent argument about the literature on a particular topic.

4. Become very familiar with the seminal works in American politics, as well as the most important and influential recent books and articles. To do so, students should consult the syllabus for the American Politics Field Seminar, the syllabi for other graduate courses in American politics, and the syllabi for graduate courses in American politics at peer institutions. Students are also encouraged to regularly read journals such as the *American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, and the *Journal of Politics*, and stay abreast of new articles on American politics in these journals.

If you have further questions, please contact the American politics field chair.