

University of Notre Dame
Department of Political Science
Comprehensive Examination in Comparative Politics – Krause
May 2007

Part I: (Please respond to one of the following questions.)

Question I

Describe the contributions of three works in the canon written before 1975 and three works written in 1990 or after. What theoretical insights have they contributed, and/or what body of literature did they launch? Have their insights been largely supported or unsupported by research that has followed? What accounts for the lasting impact of the older works? In twenty years from now, will the newer works still be on this list of the “best-known”? Why or why not?

Question II

John Stuart Mill’s method of similarity and method of difference could be said to be the classic methods of comparative politics. Contrast these Millian methods with a) a statistical approach such as regression and b) process-tracing. What do these newer methods have in common with Mill’s methods? What is different about them? Are they improvements? Are Mill’s methods now obsolete?

Part II: (Please respond to one of the following questions.)

Parties and Elections

Are political parties less important in democratic politics today than 50 years ago, as Philippe Schmitter claims in his article, “Parties Are Not What They Once Were?”

Regimes and Regime Change

Some attempts to understand democratization (some of which may deserve to be called “theories”; others may be merely “hypotheses,” “propositions,” “frameworks,” or “approaches”) call attention to processes at the micro level, such as strategic bargaining among elites and pact-making. Other attempts to understand democratization call attention to factors and processes at the macro level, such as class structure, modernization, social cleavages, institutions, characteristics of the state, or diffusion. If you were going to write a dissertation on democratization, would you rather a) work exclusively at the micro level, b) work exclusively at the macro level, or c) try to bridge these levels of analysis? Why? Justify your decision by discussing one book or article on democratization that inspires you and contrasting it with two others that you consider inferior in some way.

Part III: (Please respond to the following question)

State/Latin America

For many years, scholars of Latin America have spoken of “state failure.” Have states in the region, in fact, failed? Is state failure more glaring in some countries than in others? Is state failure more glaring in some policy areas than in others? Write an essay that sketches out where – in what countries and in what policy areas – you believe states have failed – or succeeded – in Latin America. Then mount an argument for *why* you judge these states to have succeeded or failed. Please refer to at least three countries in your answer. If you choose to go beyond three countries, you may deal with additional cases briefly and schematically.