

Political Theory Comprehensive Examination

(revised 9.11.2023)

The comprehensive examination on political theory is meant to test knowledge of the field. The examination will last eight hours and consists of four essays on four separate periods that students designate in advance from the list of six periods below. The examination will ask students to choose one of two questions for each of these four periods. Of their four essays, students must choose to write one essay on either the ancient or the medieval period, and one on either the early modern or late modern period. They are also given the option of devising their own topic, which they may substitute for one of the four periods (see below).

The examination will be taken in a room on campus on a computer provided by the department. This is a closed book exam, meaning that students are not permitted to consult notes, books, or other materials, and are not permitted access to the internet, during the exam. The examination is designed to test the student's knowledge of the material that he or she has studied.

In cases in which a student fails a question on the comp, he or she may be given the opportunity to retake a portion of the exam. Normally this option is available only if the answers to the other questions are strong. The field is not obligated to offer this option; it is available only at the field's discretion. If a retake is allowed, it should be completed within two weeks of the initial decision.

This reading list below is meant to help students prepare for the examination.

With the permission of the theory field faculty, a student may devise one reading list on a topic of his or her own choosing that is not offered on this list below. He or she will substitute this topic for one of the four fields (except for the required fields, ancient or medieval, and early modern or late modern), and will be expected to write one of his or her four essays on this topic. Examples are feminism, democratic theory, technology and politics, environmentalism and politics, and Christian political thought.

In order to be approved, the list must be:

- comparable in magnitude and significance to the existing lists;
- internally coherent and comprehensive for the topic;
- useful in preparing the student for his/her professional development, including dissertation writing and teaching;

There must also be at least one faculty member willing to advise the student about the list and to be on the comprehensive grading committee.

Students may also apply to the theory field to replace one author or text from each of the existing lists with another, if he or she can provide a sound justification for this substitution.

Students who wish to apply for permission to alter the list in either way must contact the theory field chair to initiate the process. Students writing at the start of the fall semester must have their request for alterations submitted by the last week of the spring semester in that calendar year; students writing at the start of the spring semester must apply to have alterations approved by the first week of the fall semester of that academic year; students writing at the end of the spring semester must have their request submitted by the end of the fall semester in that academic year.

Ancient

Plato: Apology; Crito; Republic; Gorgias

Aristophanes: The Clouds

Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics; Politics

Cicero: Republic; Laws I, II (1-23); On Duties

Thucydides: The History of the Peloponnesian Wars. Book I entire; Book II, sections 1- 70; Book III, sections 1-85; Book IV, sections 1-41, 58-135; Book V, sections 1-28, 43- 47, 84-116; Books VI and VII entire; Book VIII, sections 45-99.

Medieval

Augustine: City of God, Books 1, 2, 4-8, 11, 14, 19, 22 (ch. 1-7).

Thomas Aquinas: Summa Theologica, I-II, 49-52, 55-64, 90-108; II-II 47-80, 120.

Medieval Political Philosophy, ed. Joshua Parens and Joseph Macfarland:
“Political Philosophy in Islam,” pp. 11-143; “Political Philosophy in Judaism,” pp. 147-230; Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics, pp. 268-86, and Commentary on the Politics of Aristotle, pp. 287-313; Marsilius of Padua, The Defender of the Peace, pp. 376-409.

William of Ockham: 'A Letter to the Friars Minor' and Other Writings (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought), "Letter to Friars Minor", pp. 3-15; Work of 90 Days, pp. 19- 115; Dialogue, Pt. III, Tract 1, chs. 1-6, 9, 13, 17, 20, 24, 27 (pp. 121-142, 150-152, 158-164, 171-178, 185-190, 198-200); Dialogue, Pt. III, Tract 2, Bk. 3, ch. 6 (pp. 286-293).

Early Modern 1500-1800

Niccolò Machiavelli: *The Prince*; Discourses on the First Ten Books of Livy
Thomas Hobbes: *Leviathan*, Parts I-II

John Locke: *Second Treatise of Government*; A Letter Concerning Toleration

Montesquieu: *The Spirit of the Laws* (Cohler translation, Cambridge) Author's Preface, Foreword, Books 1-5, 9-12, 14-16, 19, 20-22, 24-25, 29

Jean-Jacques Rousseau: "Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts;" "Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality among Mankind;" *The Social Contract*

Mary Wollstonecraft: *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Dedication, Introduction, Chapters 1-3, 6-7, 9-12)

Immanuel Kant: *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*; and in *Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss (Cambridge Blue Book): "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective"; "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?"; "On the Common Saying: This May be True in Theory but It Does Not Hold in Practice"; "Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch"; *Metaphysics of Morals*.

Late Modern 1800-1950

G.W.F. Hegel: *Philosophy of Right*, Part III; Nesbit, *Philosophy of History*: Introduction, plus Part II "The Greek World" (entire pp. 225-278); Part III "The Roman World" pp. 314-336; Part IV "The German World" pp. 341-346; Part IV, section 3, "The Modern Time," pp. 412-457.

John Stuart Mill: On Liberty; The Subjection of Women, Utilitarianism

Karl Marx: The Communist Manifesto; "Alienated Labor" from the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844; "On The Jewish Question"; German Ideology, Pt. I; Theses on Feuerbach; "Wage Labor and Capital"

Friedrich Nietzsche: Beyond Good and Evil; The Genealogy of Morality

Max Weber: "Science as a Vocation"; "Politics as a Vocation", The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Chapters 1-3, 5.

Martin Heidegger: Being and Time, Introduction and Part I, Division I; "The Letter on Humanism"; "The Question concerning Technology"

Contemporary 1950-Present

Isaiah Berlin: 'Two concepts of liberty'

Leo Strauss: An Introduction to Political Philosophy: 10 Essays by Leo Strauss, Hilail Gildin ed.

Hannah Arendt: The Human Condition; "What is Authority?"; "What is Freedom?"

John Rawls: A Theory of Justice, Sections 1-4, 8, 11-17, 20-30, 33-35, 39-40, 66-67, 77-79, 82, 85-86; "Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical," Philosophy and Public Affairs 14:3 (1985), pp. 223-251; "Idea of Public Reason revisited"

Jürgen Habermas: The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, Parts 1-11; Between Facts and Norms, chs. 1,3,7,8,9, appendix 1

Michael Oakeshott: Rationalism in Politics (title essay plus "Political Education," "Tower of Babel," "The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind")

Charles Taylor: "The Politics of Recognition;" Modern Social Imaginaries

Alasdair MacIntyre: *After Virtue*, chs. 1-6,9,14-17

Susan Okin: *Justice, Gender, and the Family*, chs. 1, 2, 5, 7, 8

Michel Foucault: from *Foucault Reader*: "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History"; "Disciplines and Sciences of the Individual", "Bio-Power", "Sex and Truth", "Practices and the Science of the Self"

Michel Foucault "Discipline and Punish, Pt.I ch1; Pt.II ch.1; Pt. III chs. 2-3.

American Political Thought

Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution

The Federalist Papers: 1, 2, 6, 9, 10, 14-17, 23, 31, 35-37, 39, 46-47, 49, 51-53, 62-63, 70-72, 78, 84, 85

James Madison "Vices of the Political System of the United States"; Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments" (20 June 1785); "Property"

Jean Yarbrough, ed. *The Essential Jefferson*, *The Anti-Federalist*, ed. Herbert J. Storing (one volume, University of Chicago Press) Federal Farmer, Brutus, Pa. Minority, Centinel

Sarah Grimké, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes*

Tocqueville: *Democracy in America* (Lawrence translation or Mansfield / Winthrop translation); Author's Introduction, Vol. I, Pt. I, Ch. 1-4, 5 (pp. 61-68, 87-98), 8 (pp. 151-70 only); Vol. I, Pt. II, Ch. 1, 2, 5 (pp. 189-202, 208-12; 220-30 only), 7-10 (pp. 395-400), conclusion to Vol. I (408-13); Vol. II, Pt. I, Ch. 1-6, 8, 10, 13-14, 17, 20; Pt. II, Ch. 1, 2, 4-5, 8- 15, 17, 19-20; Pt. III, Ch. 1, 4, 7-12, 17-26; Pt. IV entire.

John C. Calhoun, *Disquisition on Government*

Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Declaration of Sentiments"

The Lincoln-Douglas Debates. Lincoln's Speech at Springfield, June 16 1858

("House Divided Speech"); First Joint Debate Ottawa August 21, 1858; Second Joint Debate Free Port, August 27, 1858; Seventh Joint Debate Alton, October 15, 1858; Stephen Douglas, Speech at Chicago, July 9 1858; in Johannsen (ed.) in *The Lincoln Debates*, 22-36

Abraham Lincoln, Speech on the Repeal of the Missouri Compromise, Peoria, Illinois, October 16, 1854

Dred Scott v. Sanford (1857)

Abraham Lincoln, Speech on the Dred Scott Decision, June 1857

Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address, November 19, 1863

Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural, March 4, 1865

Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"; Free Blacks Must Learn Trades"; Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln"

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Solitude of Self"

Herbert Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, ch. 7

Theodore Roosevelt, "the New Nationalism"

Franklin Roosevelt, "Commonwealth Club Address"; "Second Bill of Rights"; Four Freedoms"

Martin Luther King, Letter from a Birmingham Jail; "I Have a Dream"

Irving Kristol, "Capitalism, Socialism, Nihilism" in *Neoconservatism: the Autobiography of an Ideal*