

Comparative Politics

Past Comprehensive Exam Questions

(Note: you may see duplicate questions)

September 2008

Part I: Core

1. Formal approaches to political science take preferences of agents as fixed (or given, or primitive). This paves the way to institutionalist approaches to political science, since with fixed preferences, institutions constrain individuals' behavior in desirable ways. However, scholars who focus on the role of culture in human affairs are skeptical of the ability of institutions to replace habits, attitudes and skills that citizens have acquired over long periods of time. Which of the two approaches - that of political culture or that of institutions - is a more fruitful way of studying comparative politics? Which subject matters of the discipline in particular lend themselves to political culture approaches and which are better tackled from an institutionalist perspective?
2. Some scholars have done cross-regional research, i.e., comparisons of countries in very different geographical regions rather than area-studies or case-study research. Give a couple of examples. How do scholars justify comparing countries that are so different? Do you find their justifications convincing? What pitfalls tend to occur in cross-regional research? Can they be avoided? Do you think cross-regional research is becoming more common? Why or why not?

Part II: Cross-Regional

1. Comparative political scientists study two types of representation: electoral representation by candidates and political parties and non-electoral representation by other means. Give examples of both types of representation in at least two world regions. What reasons are there to privilege electoral representation over representation through non-electoral channels? What reasons are there to prefer non-electoral representation?
2. In many societies, political competition is centered on ascriptive identities, such as ethnicity and race, rather than ideological or policy distinctions. Please provide at least three major explanations for why ascriptive identities, like ethnicity or race, have been more politically salient in some societies than in others. In your view, which explanation is the most compelling? Be sure to make reference to actual real-world cases to support your view.

Part III: Area Studies

1. How are state policies with respect to national integration and multi-culturalism similar and different across three advanced industrial democracies? What are the goals and trade-offs associated with different policies? How can the similarities and differences be explained?
 2. Discuss the degree to which the nature and core functions of the state in the advanced industrial democracies have changed since WWII and specifically elaborate upon one area of state policy or responsibility that illuminates the reasons(s) for change; i.e., why change has occurred. Are traditional states becoming obsolete?
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January 2009

Important Instructions: *Be sure to indicate whether you are taking this exam under the old rules (closed book, 6/7 hours, no word limit) or the new rules (open book, 8/9 hours, limit of 1750 words per question, in-text citations required, direct quotations discouraged). Consult the “Grading Standards for Comprehensive Exams in Comparative Politics” for what demonstrates good understanding of relevant theory, critical judgment, and case knowledge.*

Part I: Core

A. A large volume of work has been published on comparative methods during the past two decades. Against this backdrop, apply to any 3 exemplary pieces of scholarship from the list of canonical works (which you read for this exam) at least 2 methodological “lessons” drawn from the seminal literature on comparative methods written after 1990. What ultimately in your view are the major methodological strengths and weaknesses of the aforementioned 3 exemplary pieces of scholarship?

B. Imre Lakatos once wrote,

The hallmark of empirical progress is not trivial verifications: Popper is right that there are millions of them. (...) But so-called “refutations” are not the hallmark of empirical failure, as Popper has preached, since all programmes grow in a permanent ocean of anomalies. What really count are dramatic, unexpected, stunning predictions: a few of them are enough to tilt the balance; where theory lags behind the facts, we are dealing with miserable degenerating research programmes. [“Introduction: Science and Pseudoscience,” in John Worrall and Gregory Currie, eds., *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes: Philosophical Papers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 6.]

Is comparative politics a progressive or degenerative research program? That is, has theory in comparative politics tended to lag behind events, or has it sometimes made stunning predictions? Support your answer with examples from our core reading list.

Part II: Cross-regional

A. Institutions and Institutionalisms

In the 1980s, scholars of comparative politics began to pay renewed attention to institutions. Some sought to “bring the state back in” and understand institutions in their historical context; others explored how rational actors would respond to institutional incentives. What perceived analytical absence(s) were these scholars responding to? Twenty years later, how would you assess the strengths and weaknesses of this increased attentiveness to the role of institutions to explain political outcomes? Which approaches do you find most useful? Why? Please highlight your response with relevant examples from the literature.

B. Social Movements and Revolution

Some theories of protest make no distinction between the peaceful or violent nature of the activities. They try to explain mobilization, whether that mobilization is violent or nonviolent. Other theories of protest are instead concerned exclusively with explaining violent mobilization or exclusively with peaceful political mobilization. Still other theories distinguish between peaceful and violent protest and focus on the factors that make one type evolve into another. In your view, should we seek to explain violent and nonviolent protest with the same variables and hypotheses? Are some variables useful for

explaining mobilization, whether violent or nonviolent, while other variables are useful for explaining only one or the other? Which variables or hypotheses do you think are most convincing? Support your answer with empirical examples from at least three different social movements, protests, or revolutions (or situations that were ripe for protest where protest nevertheless did not materialize). Be sure to provide clear definitions of all terms and concepts.

C. Regimes and Regime Change [Note: If you answer this question, you may not also answer question III.B.]

It has often been noted that some approaches to understanding democratization focus on the micropolitics of elites, while other approaches focus on macropolitical factors such as economic development, class structure, social divisions, or even geography. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each approach (micro vs. macro)? Support your argument with at least three sources. What advice would you give to someone who would like to combine the advantages of both approaches?

Part III: Area Studies

A. The State in Asia (China/Taiwan, South Korea, Vietnam)

"The prospect of democratic transition in East and Southeast Asia is grim. This is not because Asian political culture is undemocratic; rather, the main obstacle to democratic breakthrough is the strong state." Comment on this statement.

B. Regimes and Regime Change in Asia (South Korea, Taiwan, China) [Note: If you answer this question, you may not also answer question II.C.]

Some Chinese publicists, inspired in part by the ideas of the late Samuel P. Huntington, assert that democracy in China is best served through the development of a strong "middle class." This in turn depends on a thriving market economy, and a market economy is nurtured by a strong state able to impose strong "macroscopic" controls over the market keeping the market in its proper channels, thwarting corruption, and preventing the disruption of the market by social forces that could stand in the way of market efficiency. This in its turn requires limiting rather than expanding political participation. (1) Evaluate the logic of this argument. (2) Discuss the degree to which this kind of model explains the democratization of South Korea and Taiwan. (3) Whatever the answer to Part (2), discuss whether the Taiwan and Korean experiences are relevant to democratization in China proper.

May 2009

Instructions: The Comparative comp is an open-book written exam. Native English speakers are allowed 8 hours; non-native speakers are allowed 9 hours. The questions are e-mailed to students at the beginning of the exam period and must be returned electronically at the specified time. Any exam returned late automatically fails. There is no guaranteed grace period; "8 hours" means 8 hours and "9 hours" means 9 hours. Only the DGS may make exceptions to this, and only in extraordinary circumstances, such as a power outage or server failure. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that his or her e-mail and computer are in good working order before the exam begins. Students are advised to save their work frequently. The exam consists of three questions. No answer can be longer than 1,750 words. References and citations in the (Author, date) format will be expected, although without page numbers. All answers must be the student's own work. The university's Honor Code and conventional ethical standards for academic work apply. Students are advised not to use direct quotations or to copy

tables or figures from anyone else's work; if they do, the source absolutely must be documented to avoid charges of plagiarism.

I. Core

Answer one of the two questions in this section. Any student may choose either question.

A. Lisa Wedeen observes, "Political culture accounts, with their tendencies toward cultural essentialism have rightly come in for criticism by many political scientists. Rejecting such views as either fundamentally tautological or empirically invalid, some critics have opted for one or another strictly 'materialist' approach, objecting to cultural variables in any form" (APSR Dec. 2002, p.713).

1. Select a topic area which you think is well suited to a culturalist approach. Explain why a cultural framework is the most appropriate way to understand this topic. Next, pick a specific claim from the scholarly literature on this topic, provide its origin, and explain how you would assess this claim. What evidence would you gather? How would you know if you were right or wrong?
2. Select a topic area which you think is well suited to a materialist approach. Explain why this is the appropriate way to understand this topic. Next, pick a specific claim from the scholarly literature on this topic, provide its origin, and explain how you would assess this claim. What evidence would you gather? How would you know if you were right or wrong?
3. For one of the two claims above, come up with a counter-argument that stresses the opposite approach, i.e. consider a materialist objection to the culturalist claim or vice versa. How would you assess this challenge? What evidence would you gather? How would you know if you were right or wrong?

B. Specialists in comparative politics share very little agreement on which books or articles are essential reading. Why is there so little consensus on this? Nevertheless, there is a fairly level of agreement on a few works, most of which are on our "Current Canon" reading list. Do they share some set of strengths that explains their success, or have they enjoyed success for different reasons? Explain, and support your arguments with at least six examples.

II. Cross-regional

In this section, answer only the question you are designated to answer.

A. For...

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Spatial models such as Downs (1957) and Hinich and Munger (1994, 1997) present a useful parsimonious theory of what motivates voters and of how parties compete." Explain.

B. For...

The theory of "path dependency" assumes that the road to the consolidation of the modern state will have a direct impact on the relationship between state and society both 1) long after these initial processes have taken place and 2) regardless of the ideological proclivities or desires of a country's leaders down the road. Take any two examples of state formation in two different regions over the past couple centuries and examine the theory of path dependency by comparing these states' historical experiences with contemporary state/society relations. Whatever stand you take, make sure you consider both arguments for your position and counterarguments.

III. Area Studies

In this section, answer only the question you are designated to answer.

A. For...

The level of organization, basis for mobilization, and degree of success of social movements in pressing specific demands and toppling governments has varied widely across time and national borders in Latin America in the past quarter century. This variation raises some obvious questions: Why do social movements emerge at some points in time and not others? Why are they organized along identity lines in some places and on a socioeconomic basis elsewhere? Do social movements wax and wane at more or less the same time across Latin America, or are there significant national differences, and if so, why?

Write an essay that first *describes* the most important social movements in three Latin American countries, paying particular attention to their (1) basis for mobilization; (2) scope and timing; (3) goals; and (4) success in achieving objectives. Then, evaluate the major comparative theories of social movement mobilization for their ability to explain why social movements emerge in the form they do in these three countries or why they do materialize at all. What approach would you endorse, and why?

B. For...

Choose three advanced industrialized states (such as the US, France, and the UK) and describe how they differ in their treatment of ethnic or religious minorities. Can these differences explain differences in the frequency or severity of political violence by these minorities? If not, what other explanatory factors should we consider?

January 2010

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Part I: Core

Answer one of the two questions in this section. Any student may choose either question.

A. Do leading scholars in comparative politics agree on what a “theory” is? If so, what is it, or what should it be? If not, what are the main schools of thought about what a theory is or should be? Is there anything distinct about the nature of theories in comparative politics, as opposed to other areas of science? What is the proper role of theory in comparative political research? What, if anything, do you think needs to be done to improve theory development in our subfield? Give examples to support your arguments.

B. When Skocpol wrote *States and Social Revolutions* in the 1970s, revolutions were still a central topic in Political Science. 30 years later the topic of revolutions has gone out of vogue, perhaps irrevocably.

Since the canon remains in flux, how should scholars decide which works are worthy of inclusion and which ones should be purged over time? Of the works listed, name two which you think are most likely to be dropped and explain why. Is it the topic? The argument? The methodology? Within these works, name at least two major arguments that you think are worth salvaging and which are portable to other topics of study.

Conversely, name two works that you think are the least likely to be expunged, and explain why. What about these works makes them likely to survive over time? Are these works that have few problems, or do they survive despite their flaws?

Part II: Cross-regional

Answer one of the three questions in this section.

A. Identity, Ethnicity, Culture, and Religion

Many social scientists who study religion have noted that the world’s oldest and most transnational religions, particularly Islam and Christianity, are “ambivalent” when it comes to support for democracy. What does it mean to say that these great world religions are ambivalent with regard to support for democracy, and what is the evidence that this is in fact the case? Assuming that these great world religions are ambivalent concerning democracy, in your view what is the most important research question to be addressed by political scientists interested in the relationship between religion and democracy? Outline the essentials of a research design intended to address this important question.

B. Regimes and Regime Change

Some prominent scholars have emphasized actors’ contingent choices to explain regime change (and re-equilibration) and paid less attention to structural factors. Others have emphasized structural factors such as the level of development or income inequalities and paid less attention to actors’ contingent choices. Briefly identify some of the prominent authors who take these positions and sketch their reasons for taking their positions. In your judgment, which position, contingent choice or structural factors, is more useful for understanding regime change? Why? You need not entirely endorse one of the polar positions and entirely reject the other, but you must come down on one side of the debate.

C. The State

Some scholars argue that war makes states, but others argue that war in fact weakens states. Discuss your view with reference to both the theoretical literature and the empirical evidence from at least two world regions.

Part III: Area Studies

In this question, answer only the question you are designated to answer.

A. Social Movements and Revolutions

A large portion of the canonical literature on political protest and social movements was developed by scholars of the United States and Western Europe with minimal attention to the Middle East and Asia. Imagine instead that these scholars had looked for empirical evidence from either the Middle East or Asia in order to test their theories. Would their theories find a great deal of support, or instead would the evidence have cast doubt on the theories? A good answer will refer to at least three major theories in the political protest/social movement literature and use empirical evidence from at least three countries in either the Middle East or Asia.

B. The Political Economy of Advanced Industrial Societies

Left-leaning Americans look to European economic policies as models for the U.S. to emulate, while right-leaning Americans cite the same policies and their effects as cautionary tales. What is the evidence that European experiences with such policies are better or worse than that of the U.S.? You should discuss one policy or two policies in depth, such as labor-market policy, pensions, industrial policy, health policy, tax policy, or any other important policies related to the welfare state. Which aspects of policies found in Europe could plausibly be adopted in the U.S., and which are ruled out by structural factors?

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Part I: Core

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Part II: Cross-regional

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C. The State

Some scholars argue that war makes states, but others argue that war in fact weakens states. Discuss your view with reference to both the theoretical literature and the empirical evidence from at least two world regions.

Part III: Area Studies

In this question, answer only the question you are designated to answer.

A. Social Movements and Revolutions

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B. The Political Economy of Advanced Industrial Societies

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May 2010

Comprehensive Examination in Comparative Politics

May 20, 2010

Instructions:

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The exam consists of three questions. No answer can be longer than 1,750 words. References and citations in the (Author, date) format will be expected, although without page numbers. All answers must be the student's own work. The university's Honor Code and conventional ethical standards for academic work apply. Students are advised not to use direct quotations or to copy tables or figures from anyone else's work; if they do, the source absolutely must be documented to avoid charges of plagiarism.

Part I: Core

Answer one of the two questions in this section.

A. According to Michael Coppedge, most scholars of comparative politics take one of two approaches in their research. They either use thin concepts, that are "simple, unidimensional, and more theoretically

adaptable" (as in formal theory) or thick concepts, that "tend to be multifaceted, multidimensional, and imbued with theory" (as in historical institutionalism or political culture).

Choose two works in comparative politics (not mentioned in the chapter cited above) to illustrate these two approaches and use them to discuss the advantages of thin concepts over thick and vice versa. Do you believe that the method of analytic narratives can avoid the trade-offs scholars face when having to choose between the thick and thin approaches? Explain why.

[reference: Coppedge, Michael. 2007. "Thickening Thin Concepts: Issues in Large-N data Generation," in Gerardo Luis Munck, ed. *Regimes and Democracy in Latin America*. Oxford University Press, chapter 4, p.105]

B. Choose a major work from comparative politics (could be from the core list but doesn't have to be) that uses qualitative methods and concisely describe the dependent variable, independent variables, the relationship between them, and the evidence used to come to that conclusion. Then describe how you would try to test this theory using quantitative methods. Consider what evidence you would gather and code (and how) if you had a fairly large budget to do this and what estimators you might use to test the theory. Is there a major competing explanation that you could test using this same data and method?

In the second part of the question, do the same thing but in reverse. Take a major quantitative work from the literature and describe it (dependent variable, independent variables, relationship, data) and explain how you might test this theory using qualitative evidence. What evidence would you gather? How might you interpret this evidence? Can you use this evidence to consider and judge a major competing explanation?

Conclude with some thoughts about whether most theories lend themselves to easy testing using both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Is it simply a matter of logistics or are some questions just well suited to some approaches and poorly suited to others?

Part II: Cross-regional

Answer one of the two questions in this section.

A. Institutions and Institutionalisms

Debates in comparative politics suggest a dichotomy between structural determination (in which socio-economic structures largely determine certain outcomes) and agency or contingent action approaches (in which actors have considerable leeway in choosing their political behavior, which in turn affects outcomes). Institutional approaches fit neither of these categories. They reject the idea that socio-economic structures largely determine political outcomes, but at the same time they qualify the notion that actors have great leeway in choosing their behavior.

Discuss organizational/institutional approaches in this light, comparing them to both structural and agency approaches.

B. Social Movements and Revolutions

Most scholars of political protest and rebellion agree that the political system matters, but there is considerable ambiguity in the precise role of political variables. Some scholars discuss the importance of political opportunity structures that enable protest, some object to the word "structures" but still talk in terms of political opportunities, and some discuss constraints to protest as much as opportunities. In

what ways do elements of the political system facilitate or constrain political protest or rebellion? Can discontent people protest or rebel regardless of the political system? What about protest is affected by the political system –the very occurrence of protest, the nature or number of participants, the character of the protest (violent or non-violent), or something else?

Part III: Area Studies

In this section, please answer the question below. (There is no choice.)

A. Regimes and Regime Change in Latin America (Colombia, Peru, Bolivia)

The Andean countries, like many others in Latin America, have undergone important transformations in both the nature and the quality of their regimes. Most of our attention has been drawn to the transitions from authoritarianism to democracy, but important regime changes have been taking place even in countries that are, by most measures, democratic. Using your three selected countries, (a) describe the nature of the regime changes that have taken place over the last twenty years or so (that is, recent changes in the nature of their democracies); (b) explain what, in your view, accounts for over-time and cross-country differences; and (c) discuss whether our existing theories of regime change help us understand changes within regime type, and whether/how these theories must be modified to deal with within-type regime changes or whether we need an entirely new set of theories.

January 2011

Instructions

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Part I: Core

Answer one of the questions below.

A. Political scientists sometimes speak as though the discipline's major methodological division is between those scholars who favor quantitative approaches and those who favor qualitative approaches. Is this still an important and meaningful claim about the discipline? Or is it less and less relevant to the major arguments that are now taking place among political scientists? Write an essay in which you describe each of these two positions and identify the implications of subscribing to one over the other. Then, take a stand. Which of the two claims do you find most persuasive?

B. Much has been written about the importance of reintroducing time into our theories via process-tracing, historical institutionalism, analytic narratives, and other approaches. Was this temporal dimension ever really absent from theories in comparative politics? What exactly, if anything, has really changed? Is everyone “doing time” now? What are the advantages and disadvantages of adopting a dynamic approach?

Part II: Cross Regional

Answer one of the questions below.

A. The State

It is often argued that Tilly's oft-cited aphorism "war made the state, and the state made war" applies only to the European experience. Do you agree with this criticism? Compile your own "Tilly Tally" and anchor your analysis with at least two world regions. B. Regimes and Regime Change Can the breakdown of democratic regimes be understood as transitions to democracy in reverse, i.e., are the same causal factors important for both directions of change, only with different values (substituting high values for low, or absence for presence)? Or do these processes require fundamentally different kinds of explanation? Has thinking about this issue evolved over the decades?

C. Political Parties and Elections

E.E. Schattschneider once stated that “What happens in politics depends on the way in which people are divided into factions, parties, groups, classes, etc. The outcome of the game of politics depends on which of a multitude of possible conflicts gains the dominant position.” How do political parties shape the nature of political conflict that exists within their particular country? To what extent can we consider political parties as independent variables rather than mere reflections of social divisions or natural outcomes of institutional arrangements? Please include examples from your cases to support your argument.

Part III. Area Studies

Answer one of the questions below.

A. Advanced Industrial Societies

Are there “varieties of capitalism,” as Hall and Soskice (2002) claimed? If yes, how are the varieties defined? What are their causes? Their consequences? How does the work of other scholars reinforce or undermine the varieties approach? If you would rather reject Hall and Soskice’s proposal, explain an alternative framework for thinking about similarities and differences across the political-economies of advanced industrial societies.

B. Middle and North Africa

In the *Multiple Identities of the Middle East*, Bernard Lewis contends that, “People may define their identity by country, by nation, by culture, by religion, but the allegiance they owe is payable to the state...” In light of failing and fragile Middle Eastern states, examine the accuracy of this statement and analyze the evolution of the identities of the Middle Eastern peoples from the collapse of the millet-based Ottoman Empire in 1918, passing through attempts to construct strong nation-states, to today’s clash of old and new identities. Draw on the assigned readings and cases whenever appropriate.

May 2011

Instructions

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Part I: Core

Answer one of the questions below.

A. What are the most common ways in which the term “theory” has been used in comparative politics? What kind of “theory,” if any, do you think comparative politics specialists should be trying to construct, and why? (If you believe we should not attempt to build theory, explain why.) Illustrate your argument with at least three works from our Current Canon list of the “best known if not best loved” works. They may be exemplary successes at theory-building, admirable attempts, failed attempts, or works you consider atheoretical.

B. A sign on Einstein’s wall in his Princeton’s office once said, “Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts.” The ability to measure concepts in theories of comparative politics can become a challenge for scholars in our subfield who are constructing convincing research designs. Select three or four works from our “best known if not best loved” list and discuss how their authors overcame or perhaps fell short of overcoming this challenge. In the latter case, can you suggest a more adequate measurement strategy?

Part II: Cross-Regional

Answer one of the questions below.

A. What is the relationship between economic development and democracy? How has our understanding of this relationship changed over the past half century? What findings, if any, can we trust? What would you consider to be high-priority avenues for future research?

B. Some have argued that parties primarily seek to develop ideological linkages with voters to secure their support. Others have argued, in contrast, that parties rely principally on clientelistic ties. Elaborate on each of these respective positions. How do you evaluate and/or reconcile the arguments put forward by each set of authors? When articulating your response, discuss the factors that influence whether parties choose one strategy over another. How do these arguments relate to party behaviors in your case studies?

Part III: Area Studies

Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world where food productivity per capita declined between the 1960s and 2008. While there are a number of factors that may explain this decline in food production [including population growth and soil exhaustion], in *Markets and States in Tropical Africa* (1984), Robert Bates points to politics. How does Bates explain the decline in sub-Saharan Africa’s agricultural productivity between the 1960s and the early 1980s? What are the implications of Bates’ argument for

policymakers who think that greater agricultural productivity is a pre-requisite for sub-Saharan Africa's economic growth and development? Develop at least one hypothesis intended to explain how democratization in sub-Saharan Africa is likely to affect agricultural production in the region and explain how you would test this hypothesis.

September 2011

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Part I: Core

Answer one of the questions below.

A. What is your final verdict on the usefulness of the "new institutionalism"? This is a question in three parts: 1. Who are the "new institutionalists" and what do they say about the "old institutionalists"? 2. Who were the "old institutionalists" and what would they say in response to the "new institutionalists" critiques? 3. Now that the "new institutionalism" is two decades old, should it be replaced (or has it been replaced) by a new "new institutionalism"? Or is the whole debate no longer relevant to comparative political science?

B. Some scholars have done cross-regional research, i.e., comparisons of countries in very different geographical regions rather than area-studies or case-study research. Give a couple of examples. How do scholars justify comparing countries that are so different? Do you find their justifications convincing? What pitfalls tend to occur in cross-regional research? Can they be avoided? Do you think cross-regional research is becoming more common? Why or why not?

Part II: Cross-Regional

Answer one of the questions below.

B. Political Conflict

There are systematic differences in terms of the level of analysis used to explain political conflict. Some scholars emphasize macro-level factors such as the characteristics of the state and polity. Others provide meso-level explanations, focusing on the characteristics of activists and rebellious organizations. A third group prefers micro-level explanations, emphasizing dynamics at the popular level.

1. Identify at least one author for each category, and describe the way that you think this author's scholarship is exemplary of analysis at this level. Provide details about the argument for each scholar you choose.
2. Scholars working at different levels sometimes ignore those working at other levels of analysis. Make an argument for why you think one of these levels of analysis is more important than the others. If you had a large budget, how would you test this argument? For example, if you think the macro-level is analytically central, what evidence would support your claim? What evidence would show that the meso and micro levels are less important? What evidence would contradict your claims?
3. Briefly, provide an example from your region of study where you think one of the levels of analysis provides more leverage than the others. You need not be consistent with what you have said in part 2.

C. The State

"State capacity is the key to analyzing the viability of democratic consolidation and the sustainability of economic development." Assess this statement with respect to states in two world regions.

Part III. Area Studies

Answer the question below.

C. Contrary to what many observers expected, the (re)introduction of multiparty politics in several sub-Saharan African countries has not resulted in more transparent governments or more peaceful societies. Please provide at least two different explanations for why multiparty politics may actually increase levels of corruption and political violence and make reference to country cases that illustrate the plausibility of such explanations. Develop a hypothesis to test one of these explanations and describe how you would go about testing it.

Comprehensive Examination in Comparative Politics September 2011

Instructions

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Part I: Core

Answer one of the questions below.

A. What is your final verdict on the usefulness of the "new institutionalism"? This is a question in three parts: 1. Who are the "new institutionalists" and what do they say about the "old institutionalists"? 2. Who were the "old institutionalists" and what would they say in response to the "new institutionalists" critiques? 3. Now that the "new institutionalism" is two decades old, should it be replaced (or has it been replaced) by a new "new institutionalism"? Or is the whole debate no longer relevant to comparative political science?

B. Some scholars have done cross-regional research, i.e., comparisons of countries in very different geographical regions rather than area-studies or case-study research. Give a couple of examples. How do scholars justify comparing countries that are so different? Do you find their justifications convincing? What pitfalls tend to occur in cross-regional research? Can they be avoided? Do you think cross-regional research is becoming more common? Why or why not?

Part II: Cross-Regional

Answer one of the questions below.

A. Regimes and Regime Change

To what extent has the evolving research agenda on regimes and regime change been event-driven, i.e., an effort to understand trends, waves, major transitions or breakdowns, and new regime types? And to what extent has the research agenda taken on a life of its own, producing conceptual, theoretical, or empirical innovations that build on previous work more than they respond to contemporary events? Survey the past 50 years of research and regime change and give specific examples.

B. Political Conflict

There are systematic differences in terms of the level of analysis used to explain political conflict. Some scholars emphasize macro-level factors such as the characteristics of the state and polity. Others provide meso-level explanations, focusing on the characteristics of activists and rebellious organizations. A third group prefers micro-level explanations, emphasizing dynamics at the popular level.

1. Identify at least one author for each category, and describe the way that you think this author's scholarship is exemplary of analysis at this level. Provide details about the argument for each scholar you choose.
2. Scholars working at different levels sometimes ignore those working at other levels of analysis. Make an argument for why you think one of these levels of analysis is more important than the others. If you had a large budget, how would you test this argument? For example, if you think the macro-level is analytically central, what evidence would support your claim? What evidence would show that the meso and micro levels are less important? What evidence would contradict your claims?
3. Briefly, provide an example from your region of study where you think one of the levels of analysis provides more leverage than the others. You need not be consistent with what you have said in part 2.

Part III. Area Studies

Answer the question below.

A. East Asian studies is often denigrated as mere area studies divorced from mainstream political science. Do you agree with this assessment? Anchor your analysis with two key themes in the literature (choose two out of the following five: the state; regimes and regime change; social movements and political violence; identity, ethnicity, culture, and religion; institutions and institutionalism).

Comprehensive Examination in Comparative Politics

September 2011

Instructions

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Part I: Core

Answer one of the questions below.

A. What is your final verdict on the usefulness of the "new institutionalism"? This is a question in three parts: 1. Who are the "new institutionalists" and what do they say about the "old institutionalists"? 2. Who were the "old institutionalists" and what would they say in response to the "new institutionalists'" critiques? 3. Now that the "new institutionalism" is two decades old, should it be replaced (or has it been replaced) by a new "new institutionalism"? Or is the whole debate no longer relevant to comparative political science?

B. Some scholars have done cross-regional research, i.e., comparisons of countries in very different geographical regions rather than area-studies or case-study research. Give a couple of examples. How do scholars justify comparing countries that are so different? Do you find their justifications convincing? What pitfalls tend to occur in cross-regional research? Can they be avoided? Do you think cross-regional research is becoming more common? Why or why not?

Part II: Cross-Regional

Answer one of the questions below.

B. Social Movements and Revolution

There are systematic differences in terms of the level of analysis used to explain social movements or revolution. Some scholars emphasize macro-level factors such as the characteristics of the state and polity. Others provide meso-level explanations, focusing on the characteristics of activists and rebellious organizations. A third group prefers micro-level explanations, emphasizing dynamics at the popular level.

1. Identify at least one author for each category, and describe the way that you think this author's scholarship is exemplary of analysis at this level. Provide details about the argument for each scholar you choose.

2. Scholars working at different levels sometimes ignore those working at other levels of analysis. Make an argument for why you think one of these levels of analysis is more important than the others. If you had a large budget, how would you test this argument? For example, if you think the macro-level is analytically central, what evidence would support your claim? What evidence would show that the meso and micro levels are less important? What evidence would contradict your claims?
3. Briefly, provide an example from your region of study where you think one of the levels of analysis provides more leverage than the others. You need not be consistent with what you have said in part 2.

E. Association, Participation, and Representation

Offer a definition of clientelism. What conditions are more and less propitious for clientelism? Make sure to cite some of the most important literature on the subject.

Part III. Area Studies

Answer the question below.

B. Outline the main features of the spatial model of voting and party competition. In addition to highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of various spatial models, discuss how well such explanations can adequately explain the character of party competition in your three comparative cases? In what ways do spatial models provide a stronger explanation for party competition in these cases than other types of explanations?

January 2012

Instructions

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Part I: Core

Answer one of the questions below.

- A. What are the two or three most important findings about democracy that have been developed by scholars of comparative politics? Provide an intellectual history of each insight, such as the first developed statement, the evolution of the debate (including counter-arguments and contradictory findings), and the current state of the evidence. For one important insight please explain the current research agenda, such as implications for elaboration, refinement, and/or refutation.

- B. The subfield of comparative politics has been repeatedly buffeted by waves of methodological controversy: behavioralism, the quantitative-qualitative divide, rational choice. Now there are many advocates for a "multi-method" approach, and some claim that a more mature consensus on this approach is becoming dominant. Do you see evidence of such a trend? Is it becoming dominant, or is the subfield still divided among competing methods?

Part II: Cross-Regional

Answer one of the questions below.

- A. **The State:** Scholars and policy-makers often speak of state weakness and state failure in the developing world, including Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East. Why are some states judged to be cases of weakness, even failure? Do you agree with such assessments? Anchor your analysis with states in two world regions.
- B. **Parties and Party Systems:** Discuss Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) "Freezing Hypothesis" argument about the foundation and persistence of the types of party systems that exist in Western Europe. Identify and evaluate the key features of their argument and discuss to what extent their argument still holds. In particular, assess how well their argument applies to non-European parties and party systems.

Part III. Area Studies (Sub-Saharan Africa: Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya and Nigeria)

Countries in Africa have had widely varying levels of civil conflict, both over space and time. Some have been largely peaceful, others have experienced episodic conflict, yet others have experienced fairly long and entrenched violence.

Provide three distinct explanations for conflict in Africa, making reference to the main authors and scholarly works. Assess the strengths and weakness of each approach and identify which explanations are stronger and why. Integrate examples from your three country cases to demonstrate the plausibility of these different approaches. Finally, develop a hypothesis to test the observable implications of one of these explanations and describe how you would test this hypothesis.

May 2012

Instructions

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Part I: Core

Answer one of the two questions below.

1. One of the central questions in political science is when and how citizens organize themselves in opposition to the government. A. Sketch out at least two answers to this question, making reference to specific authors and works wherever possible. B. If you had an unlimited supply of money, how might you test the arguments that you have developed? Come up with both qualitative and quantitative tests for your two theories. What qualitative data might help you test your theories, and why? What numerical data would be useful to have and why? If both theories can be true at the same time, how might you assess the relative strength of each explanation? C. Lastly, use this question as a lens to reflect on the real world usefulness of political science. How useful are our theories and methods for understanding the practical questions of public policy? Is reality too simple to need such complex tools or is it too complex for our simple theories and methods?
2. Some have argued that mixed methods are the way of the future but others have maintained that it really does not exist, maintaining that one is either good at one or the other but not both. What is your opinion? What are the exemplars that support your position? What are the strengths and weaknesses of your position?

Part II: Cross-Regional

1. In one of the most famous quotes in the history of the analysis of political parties, E.E. Schattschneider wrote in 1942 that "Modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties." To what extent is this still true? If this still holds, why is modern democracy unthinkable without parties? If not, what has changed so that modern democracy is thinkable without parties? Provide evidence from at least two regions to support your argument.

Part III. Area Studies: State (Brazil, Chile and Philippines)

1. According to the World Bank's World Governance Indicators, especially the indicators for rule of law and control of corruption, Chile is perceived to be a case of high state capacity relative to the world mean. These two indicators portray Brazil as a case of about average state capacity relative to the world mean, and the Philippines as a case of below average but not disastrous state capacity.

Choosing your three countries, do you believe the World Governance Indicators accurately reflect the reality of state capacity? Explain your reasoning. What features distinguish a state of high capacity compared to one of average or below average capacity? Finally, reflect on the reasons why your three countries have high, medium, or below average state capacity.

Comprehensive Examination in Comparative Politics
May 2012

Instructions

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Part I: Core

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Part II: Cross-Regional

1. In one of the most famous quotes in the history of the analysis of political parties, E.E. Schattschneider wrote in 1942 that "Modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties." To what extent is this still true? If this still holds, why is modern democracy unthinkable without parties? If not, what has changed so that modern democracy is thinkable without parties? Provide evidence from at least two regions to support your argument.

Part III. Area Studies: (Political Economy: USA, UK and Germany)

1. The financial crisis of 2008-2012 has exposed weaknesses in the political-economies of all advanced industrial societies. Considering three countries in detail, what are the distinctive challenges that each faces? What aspects of each country's domestic and international strategies are being revised? Which aspects of each country's strategies represent long-term continuities? How might several of the authors on the area studies reading list help you respond to these questions?

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When answering each part of the comp, students are advised to consult the relevant grading standards for that part. The standards are available at <http://www.nd.edu/~mcoppedg/Field/CompRules.htm>.

Part I: Core

Answer one of the two questions in this section. Any student may choose either question.

- A. Use readings from the Comparative Methods Reading list to explain how theories developed within the Analytic Narratives approach can be falsifiable. Use other readings from the Comparative Methods Reading list and the Canon to discuss the limitations of research conducted within this paradigm.
- B. Once upon a time, one of the key characteristics of comparative politics was that comparativists did field research.
 - A) What is field research? Define the term and compare your definition to the one put forward by Wood (2007). How do you draw the line between field research methods and other research methodologies?
 - B) Pick one major work from the canon (not discussed in Wood’s piece) that used field research and describe how it benefitted from the use of this method.
 - C) Pick at least one major work from the canon that did not rely on field research and describe specifically how, if at all, it might have been improved had the author engaged in field research?
 - D) What are the limitations of field research methods broadly? Are there some field research methods that are especially problematic, or some aspects of field research that can cause problems for scholarship?

Part II: Cross-regional

Answer one of the four questions in this section.

A. Institutions and Institutionalisms

Some variants of institutionalism emphasized the way formal institutions shape political outcomes. More recently, Guillermo O'Donnell, Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, and Steven Levitsky and María Victoria Murillo, among others, argued that in contexts of weak formal institutions, an exclusive focus on formal institutions misses much of the action. (In some of his work, Douglass North also argues that informal institutions are important in explaining economic growth.)

What is an informal institution? Explain the difference between a formal and informal institution, and give some examples of informal institutions. Then discuss the validity and usefulness of the emphasis on informal institutions. Finally, in what real world contexts (countries or regions of the world) is it most important to pay attention to informal institutions, and why?

B. Regimes and Regime Change

Fifty years ago, modernization was the most widely accepted explanation for democratization. How has this approach evolved in the last half century? What are the most prevalent current variations on the modernization theme? Is there any school of thought about democratization that you consider superior to modernization and its heirs now? If so, what is it, and in what ways do you consider it superior? Back up your reasoning with references to empirical findings, whether from statistical testing or case studies.

C. Political Conflict

Scholars of political violence have consistently found a strong association between natural resource wealth and civil war. Yet there are significant disagreements about the type of natural resources that may be associated with civil war and about the causal mechanisms that account for this association. Drawing on cross-national quantitative studies and on qualitative cases from at least two world regions please assess the strengths and weaknesses of this literature and discuss its contribution to our general understanding of dynamics of political violence.

D. The State

Scholars often speak of strong states and weak states. How should scholars assess state strength? Anchor your analysis with two issue areas (democratic consolidation, economic development, human welfare, conflict resolution, or another issue of your choice) in two world regions.

Part III: Area Studies

Answer one of the three questions in this section.

A. The Political Economy of Advanced Industrial Societies

Write an essay that explains the roles that states play in advanced economies. Consider the political-economies in three countries (which can be from one world region or from more than one region). What are the similarities and differences in the roles of the states in these three cases? Does your answer validate Hall and Soskice's (2001) emphasis on the contrast between liberal-market economies (LMEs) and coordinated-market economies (CMEs)? Does your answer validate alternative perspectives and works, such as those of Streeck (2012), Esping-Anderson (1990), or others? How have the roles of states changed over time? What understanding of institutional change does your answer employ?

B. Identity, Ethnicity, Culture, and Religion

Scholars have long debated the role played by certain elements of culture, such as ethnicity and religion, in shaping political outcomes, such as regime-type. Provide an assessment of the value of employing culture as an independent variable. Select a cultural variable seemingly relevant for political outcomes in your countries and make an argument for or against the use of cultural explanations. In particular, compare and contrast the utility of the cultural variable you have chosen for your three country cases.

C. Parties and Elections

Politicians can use different types of strategies to court electoral constituencies including making programmatic appeals and flaunting policy achievements. However, they can also employ clientelist and charismatic linkages. What factors shape candidates', and parties', choice of strategy to appeal to voters? Under what conditions will politicians rely primarily on programmatic linkages? Use empirical examples from your three countries to demonstrate different types of linkage mechanisms as well as the reasons for variation among the different strategies that parties and politicians employ to get votes.

September 2013

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

Question 1:

There is a lot of talk about “multimethod” research in comparative politics these days. However, at one extreme, some interpret this as a recommendation that everyone should use every major approach—quantitative, qualitative, and rational choice. At the other extreme, others suggest that researchers should continue to specialize in one of these approaches but make more of an effort to read other kinds of scholarship. Where do you stand? What would be the risks and potential benefits of going toward either extreme? Support your answer with at least four examples taken from the core or methods reading list that illustrate the pitfalls and benefits of multimethod research.

Question 2:

Seminal works are labeled as such because they introduce new ideas that influence future research. Sometimes the future research builds on insights that largely prove correct; other times the future research debunks the earlier findings. Discuss three seminal works in comparative politics, their initial contributions to knowledge, and the research they have inspired. (Cite specific work.) Which insights have endured until today, and which insights have largely proven wrong? In your opinion, are these works worthy of the attention they receive? Why or why not? What are the key unanswered questions remaining for the research agenda inspired by each work?

Part II: Cross Regional (Please respond to the following question.)

You are a new assistant professor at a good university and you have been assigned to teach a graduate class for the Fall 2014 semester: “Regimes and Regime Change.” Please provide a syllabus for the course including (1) a rationale for the course; (2) the most important reading assignments, in appropriate weekly sequence; and (3) some comments about why and how these assignments serve the objectives of the course.

Part III: Area Studies (Please respond to the appropriate question.)

Question A:

How should the similarities and differences among the political economies of Germany, France,

and the UK be understood? As “varieties of capitalism” (CME vs. LME)? Are other interpretive schemes needed? In what ways, if any, have the similarities and differences you identify influenced the ways that these countries have responded to the financial crisis over the past five years?

Question B:

“East Asian states share the same Confucian civilization but have different regime types. Culture clearly plays little role in explaining regime types, regime stability or regime change in East Asia.” Discuss this statement.

January 2014

Part I: Core (Please respond to the following question.)

"King, Keohane, and Verba's *Designing Social Inquiry* attempted to establish a common set of methodological standards that would apply to both quantitative and qualitative research. A vigorous debate ensued. What conclusions do you draw from this debate? Can quantitative and qualitative research be evaluated by the same standards?"

Part II: Cross Regional (Please respond to the following question.)

Some theories of protest make no distinction between the peaceful or violent nature of the activities. They try to explain mobilization, whether that mobilization is violent or nonviolent. Other theories of protest are instead concerned exclusively with explaining violent mobilization or exclusively with peaceful political mobilization. Still other theories distinguish between peaceful and violent protest and focus on the factors that make one type evolve into another. In your view, should we seek to explain violent and nonviolent protest with the same variables and hypotheses? Are some variables useful for explaining mobilization, whether violent or nonviolent, while other variables are useful for explaining only one or the other? Which variables or hypotheses do you think are most convincing?

Support your answer with empirical examples from at least three different social movements, protests, or revolutions (or situations that were ripe for protest where protest nevertheless did not materialize). Be sure to provide clear definitions of all terms and concepts.

Part III: Area Studies (Please respond to the following question.)

“Ethnic and religious conflicts are as prevalent in China as in India and Pakistan. The only difference is that a stronger Chinese state has managed to repress identity expressions by minorities.” Comment on this statement.

September 2014

Instructions

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Part I: Core

Answer one of the questions below.

- A. Our field of comparative politics studies the domestic politics of individual countries, yet we know that influences from outside a given country can sometimes be the most important ones. What have been the most influential ways for analyzing international influences on domestic politics? Which major theories in comparative politics have done a good job incorporating international factors, and which have not?
- B. Take a "classic of comparative historical research" (e.g., Skocpol, Moore, Lijhardt, Collier and Collier, Linz or another influential work) and analyze the case selection strategy of that book. For example, what was the explicit or implicit rationale for choosing cases? Are there weaknesses in the selection strategy? Are there cases or kinds of cases which should have been included? (This is not an exhaustive list of things to consider. Depending on the work other questions might be relevant.)

Part II: Cross-Regional

Political Conflict: The cross-national quantitative literature on civil war relies on structural (GPD per capita or income inequality) and time-invariant (mountainous terrain) factors to account for the outbreak of domestic wars. Scholars have noted the paradox of explaining a dynamic process – the decision to go to war – with structural/time-invariant factors. How could theories of social movements and state repression, which emphasize social and political processes, contribute to outline a more dynamic explanation of the onset of civil war? Please discuss.

Part III. Area Studies

Answer one of the questions below.

- A. What are the likely implications of the new government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is described by many as a Hindu nationalist party, for conflict and peace in South Asia? You can answer this question by concentrating on only one interstate or within-country conflict.

- B. Does the fact that India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have all had women as Prime Ministers reflect adequately the position of women in society? In your answer please discuss the cases of at least two of the three countries.

Comprehensive Examination in Comparative Politics September 2014

Instructions

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Part II: Cross-Regional

Parties and Elections: Some scholars have argued that political parties are vote or seat maximizers. Identify at least one pivotal work in this tradition. What is the logic for making what is obviously a simplifying assumption? Other scholars have argued against the assumption that parties' sole objective is to maximize votes or seats. Identify some of these scholars and discuss the reasoning behind their arguments on this point.

Part III. Area Studies

Ethnicity, Identity, Culture and Religion: “Diversity in ethnic, cultural and religious identities is the root cause of the rocky roads to democratization in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand.”
Comment on this statement.

Comprehensive Examination in Comparative Politics September 2014

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theories of social movements and state repression, which emphasize social and political processes, contribute to outline a more dynamic explanation of the onset of civil war? Please discuss.

Part III. Area Studies

South Africa has a single-party dominant system. Since 1994, only one political party in South Africa has formed governments. Of course, that party is the Africa National Congress [ANC]. In Kenya, no party has dominated the presidency or the parliament since the return multiparty elections there in 1992. Despite the fact that Kenya has had more party turnover in government/the presidency than South Africa, most observers and organizations consider South Africa to be more democratic than Kenya. Why might observers consider South Africa to be more democratic than Kenya? How can a country, ruled by only one party for over 20 years, be considered more democratic than a country where several parties have come into and gone out of power? What are the conditions that may explain why democratic institutions are more 'developed' in South Africa than in Kenya?

Comprehensive Examination in Comparative Politics September 2014

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Part I: Core

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Part II: Cross-Regional

Political Parties: Some scholars have argued that political parties are vote or seat maximizers. Identify at least one pivotal work in this tradition. What is the logic for making what is obviously a simplifying assumption? Other scholars have argued against the assumption that parties' sole objective is to maximize votes or seats. Identify some of these scholars and discuss the reasoning behind their arguments on this point.

Part III. Area Studies

Identity, Ethnicity, Culture and Religion: How can we account for the fact that religious institutions exercise such different levels of impact on contemporary democratic politics? Pick a single controversial issue and use it to answer this question from a comparative perspective in the cases of the UK, US, and Germany.

January 2015

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Part I: Core

Answer one of the questions below.

Current Canon:

What is "middle-range theory"? Are there alternatives to middle-range theory? Give examples from the applied literature of different approaches to theorizing. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of each approach?

Comparative Methods: In order to assess whether scientific progress is being made in comparative politics, it is necessary to specify the criteria by which progress may be assessed. What is or are the best ways to assess progress political science? According to which standards has progress taken place? According to which standards has little or no progress been made? Be sure to distinguish between progress as improvement and mere change as differences over time.

Part II. Cross-regional Theme: The State

“All around the world, it is the ability to control violence that explains success versus failure in building state strength.” Do you agree with this statement? Anchor your analysis with two world regions.

Part III Regional Analysis: Regimes

The military regimes in Brazil (1964-85) and Chile (1973-90) and the Fujimori regime in Peru (1990-2000) generated important authoritarian successor parties -- parties created by high level leaders of those authoritarian regimes, but that continued to be important contenders under democracy for a long time. Discuss why these regimes were able to generate relatively successful authoritarian successor parties and the positive and negative consequences of their relative success for democracy.

Comparative Comprehensive Exam January 2015

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Part II: Cross-regional Theme: The State

“All around the world, it is the ability to control violence that explains success versus failure in building state strength.” Do you agree with this statement? Anchor your analysis with two world regions.

Part III: Regional Analysis: Political Conflict: (Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo)

Dominant cross-national explanations of political violence in economics and political science suggest that poverty and state capacity are key explanatory factors of the outbreak of civil wars. In some of the most influential accounts, ethnicity has no explanatory role. How useful are these predictions to explain dynamics of conflict and peace in your three countries? In what ways would a close reading of these three countries identify important omissions and suggests corrections in the cross-national literature?

Comparative Comprehensive Exam January 2015

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Answer one of the questions below.

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Part II: Cross-regional Theme: The State

“All around the world, it is the ability to control violence that explains success versus failure in building state strength.” Do you agree with this statement? Anchor your analysis with two world regions.

Part III: Regional Analysis: Political Conflict (Liberia, Uganda and Rwanda)

Dominant cross-national explanations of political violence in economics and political science suggest that poverty and state capacity are key explanatory factors of the outbreak of civil wars. In some of the most influential accounts, ethnicity has no explanatory role. How useful are these predictions to explain dynamics of conflict and peace in your three countries? In what ways would a close reading of these three countries identify important omissions and suggests corrections in the cross-national literature?

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Part I: Core

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According to which standards has little or no progress been made? Be sure to distinguish between progress as improvement and mere change as differences over time.

Part II: Cross-regional Theme: The State

“All around the world, it is the ability to control violence that explains success versus failure in building state strength.” Do you agree with this statement? Anchor your analysis with two world regions.

Part III: Regional Analysis: Regimes

Discuss similarities and differences among the political regimes of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. On balance, which is the most democratic and which is the most authoritarian? Justify your summary judgment. What are the criteria scholars should use to assess whether one country is more or less democratic than others?

Comparative Comprehensive Exam

January 2015

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Part I: Core

Answer one of the questions below.

Current Canon:

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Part II: Cross-regional Themes: Political Conflict

Canonical studies in the cross-national literature on civil wars argue that state capacity reduces the probability of political violence. Yet a significant literature in repression studies shows that state policing

and repression sometimes deter the outbreak of armed rebellions but others actually lead to the escalation of peaceful mobilization into violent rebellion, including civil war. How can we reconcile the macro findings of the cross-national literature with the micro arguments of the repression literature? Please discuss.

Part III: Regional Analysis: Regimes

In the 1980s, Guatemala and El Salvador, along with Peru, had the most severe violent internal conflict of any countries in Latin America. Colombia probably ranked fourth on this undesirable list--though its severe internal conflict has continued to the present (although it appears that it could finally be on the verge of resolution).

Based on the examples of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Colombia, discuss whether a recent (or even current in the Colombian case) history of severe violent internal conflict generates some distinctive dilemmas in the process of attempting to build democracy. Does this history create some distinctive challenges compared to other Latin American countries that share with these three countries past histories of authoritarianism, social exclusion, and economic inequality? If so, what are the challenges created by a recent history of violent internal conflict? How fully have Guatemala and El Salvador addressed the challenges that stem specifically from this history of violence?

(Note: Unlike El Salvador and Guatemala, Colombia underwent a transition to a competitive regime in 1958--but in terms of social exclusion and economic inequality, it is not radically different from the other two).

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Part I: Core

Answer one of the questions below.

Current Canon:

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Comparative Methods: In order to assess whether scientific progress is being made in comparative politics, it is necessary to specify the criteria by which progress may be assessed. What is or are the best ways to assess progress political science? According to which standards has progress taken place? According to which standards has little or no progress been made? Be sure to distinguish between progress as improvement and mere change as differences over time.

Part II: Cross-regional Theme: The State

"All around the world, it is the ability to control violence that explains success versus failure in building state strength." Do you agree with this statement? Anchor your analysis with two world regions.

Part III: Regional Analysis: Institutions

"Comparativists are sometimes tempted to study political institutions in a static, ahistorical fashion. The problem with this approach is that these institutions have histories. If we ignore this fact, we can neither understand a specific state's parties nor engage in fruitful comparison of them in different states."

Assess the significance of the above claim by considering the evolution of a prominent political institution of your choice in your countries of interest (Germany, Italy, France).

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Part II: Cross-regional Theme: Political Conflict

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Part III. Regional Analysis: Regime Change: Egypt, Turkey and Algeria

Discuss similarities and differences among the political regimes of Turkey, Egypt, and Algeria. On balance, which is the most democratic and which is the most authoritarian? Justify your summary judgment. What are the criteria scholars should use to assess whether one country is more or less democratic than others?

May 2015

Instructions

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Please return the exam by either 5:30 p.m. (native speakers) or 6:30 p.m. (non-native speakers) today to Geoff Layman and Sean McGraw.

Part I: Core *Answer one of the questions below: either Current Canon or Comparative Methods*

Current Canon:

Where does the study of culture fit in comparative politics? Is it an approach that is just as valid and promising as the study of institutions, rational actors, and socioeconomic structure? Why or why not? What are the advantages and limitations of a focus on culture? Which methods are most appropriate for understanding culture, its origins, its dynamics, and its consequences?

Comparative Methods:

Can qualitative methods in comparative politics be taught? If yes, identify three specific methods and explain how you would teach them to first-year graduate students. How would you assess students' ability to implement the methods? If not, explain why the specific methods cannot be taught and whether their use in comparative politics should be discontinued.

Part II: Cross-regional Theme: The State *(Answer the following question)*

“State-building is a regional phenomenon. This means that we cannot study a single country in isolation but must examine how neighboring countries interact. Paradoxically, this also means that there is little to gain from making cross-regional comparisons.” Comment on this statement based on your knowledge of at least two regions.

Part III. Regional Analysis: Political Conflict *(Answer the following question)*

Can civil wars be prevented? Have we developed sufficient knowledge about the origins of political violence to effectively intervene in conflicts before they become violent? In your answer, first summarize the relevant literature on peaceful and armed mobilization and then apply the theory to your three country cases of low and high intensity violence.

January 2016

I. Canon and Methods

a. Current Canon:

The 18 works on the “Canon” reading list for this exam were chosen as exemplars of comparative politics scholarship: works that many consider among the best, or at least most influential, works in our subfield. Group all 18 into any number of categories that reflect different ways of being exemplary scholarship. What do your chosen categories say about what is considered excellent scholarship in comparative politics?

b. Comparative Methods:

Some scholars argue that the best new work in comparative politics will employ mixed methods. Others acknowledge the difficulty of mastering multiple methods of data collection and analysis as well as tensions between different types of approaches. What are the strengths and limitations of research that employs multiple methods? Select three books or articles that employ multiple methods of data collection and/or analysis. For each, evaluate whether (and how) the inclusion of each “method” improves that specific work.

II. Cross-regional Themes

a. Political Conflict

Recent scholarship on the utility of violence has debated the logic and evidence. Some argue that nonviolence is a more effective strategy for aggrieved populations. Turn on any news channel, however, and it seems that aggrieved populations, journalists, and policymakers may be unfamiliar with the latest research. The world today sure looks like a violent place, and the violence is often presented as evidence that the violent groups are successful. Are rebels, terrorists, and other aggrieved individuals who pursue violent tactics completely misguided in thinking that violent tactics could effectively get their grievances addressed, or is the recent scholarship divorced from reality? Do pundits and politicians misrepresent the “success” of violence? What should be the metric for whether violence or nonviolence is successful as a tactic or strategy? Support your claims with reference to the literature, and provide at least three empirical examples.

III. Regional Analysis

a. Political Parties in United States, United Kingdom, Canada

Trace the evolution of the role of political parties in democratic governance and representation since WWII in your three country cases. To what degree and in what specific ways have political parties and the party system in these countries changed over time? To what cause(s) might these changes be attributed?

b. The State in Colombia, Mexico and Peru

The states of Colombia, Mexico, and Peru are highly uneven in effectiveness in across these three countries' territories. Briefly indicate general patterns of where these three states are reasonably effective and where they are highly ineffective or almost absent. Why has it been difficult to build a more effective state in the regions where it is highly deficient? What are the consequences for democracy of the huge state deficiencies?

a. Identity, Ethnicity, Culture, Religion^[1] in South Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria

Political scientists have struggled to understand the variation in the political importance of ethnic identity. In many Africa countries, ethnic identities have been largely defined by ethnicity (rather than programs and policies) and the electoral process in some countries has been marred by inter-ethnic violence. How do Nigeria, Congo, and South Africa differ, if at all, in terms of the political salience of ethnic identity? In which of the three countries do we find ethnic identity to be the most salient? In which do we find ethnic identity to be the least salient? In your view, what are the most important factors in explaining this variation in the political salience of ethnic identity? Please put forward a hypothesis to explain the variation and describe how you would go about testing that hypothesis empirically.

May 2016

I. Canon and Methods

a. Current Canon:

Political scientists generally agree that institutions matter. General agreement on this broad statement does not, however, translate into agreement on whether institutions matter under all circumstances, whether they matter the same way in different contexts, whether they shape or are shaped by preferences, or how and to what extent they structure behavior. Provide a clear, working definition of institutions and discuss the extent to which institutions matter and whether (and why) analysts should more reasonably view them as dependent or independent variables. Draw on existing work to support your argument.

b. Comparative Methods:

What does it mean to do “multimethod” research? Is it really possible to leverage the strengths of different methods without succumbing to their weaknesses? What are the challenges faced by multimethod researchers? Can these challenges be overcome, and if so, how? Give examples of either successful or failed attempts to combine methods.

II. Cross-regional Themes

b. Political Conflict

Can civil wars be prevented? Have we developed sufficient knowledge about the origins of civil wars to effectively intervene in conflicts before they become violent? In your answer, first summarize the relevant literature and refer to this literature.

III. Regional Analysis

a. Regimes and Regime Change in Latin America: Colombia, Mexico, Argentina

Mexico since 1929 and Colombia from 1958 on have enjoyed a high degree of regime stability. Mexico experienced a transition to democracy around 2000, but before then, it had one of the longest living authoritarian regimes in the world. And even when the transition occurred, it was a highly pacted transition that preserved many continuities from the old regime. Colombia has had high levels of violence and subnational authoritarian regimes in regions dominated by armed non-state actors, but at the national level, it has had a democracy (or semi-democracy) since 1958. In contrast, Argentina experienced many profound regime changes from 1916 until 1983: democratic breakdowns in 1930, 1955 (or earlier if you believe that the Peronista regime had become competitive authoritarian), 1962, 1966, and 1976, and transitions in 1916, 1946, 1958, 1963, 1973, and 1983. What accounts for the high regime stability in Mexico and Colombia and the high instability in Argentina until 1983? What theoretical approaches to understanding political regimes are useful, and which are not useful, for answering this question?

b. Regimes and Regime Change in Latin America: Chile, Brazil and Argentina

International influences have affected regime change and stability to varying degrees and through different causal mechanisms. In Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, how important have international influences been in transitions to democracy or democratic breakdowns, or in blocking transitions or breakdowns? Have international influences been markedly more important in some cases than in others? (A case here is a transition, breakdown, or an episode of thwarting a transition or breakdown.) Were they decisive in any cases? Methodologically, how would you go about trying to establish that international influences were more important in some cases than in others, or that they were decisive in some cases?

c. Political Economy- Growth-East and Southeast Asia: China, Japan, and Vietnam

The literature on the role of the state in fostering industrialization and economic development has pointed to particular forms of state involvement that draws on the historical experience of Europe and Japan. Please discuss what these forms of state involvement are and assess their relevance for the development trajectories of China and Vietnam. Finally, please also assess more broadly the benefits and limitations of the concept of the developmental state in a highly integrated global economy.

- d. Political Economy of Developing Countries: East Asia: South Korea, Japan, Taiwan:

The literature on the role of the state in fostering industrialization and economic development has pointed to particular forms of state involvement that draws on the historical experience of Europe and Japan. Please discuss what these forms of state involvement are and assess their relevance for the development trajectories of Korea and Taiwan. Finally, please also assess more broadly the benefits and limitations of the concept of the developmental state in a highly integrated global economy.

September 2016

Instructions:

The Comparative comp is an open-book written exam. Native English speakers are allowed 8 hours; non-native speakers are allowed 9 hours. The questions are e-mailed to students at the beginning of the exam period and must be returned electronically at the specified time. Any exam returned late automatically fails. There is no guaranteed grace period; “8 hours” means 8 hours and “9 hours” means 9 hours. Only the DGS may make exceptions to this, and only in extraordinary circumstances, such as a power outage or server failure. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that his or her e-mail and computer are in good working order before the exam begins. Students are advised to save their work frequently.

The exam consists of three questions. No answer can be longer than 1,750 words. References and citations in the (Author, date) format will be expected, although without page numbers. All answers must be the student’s own work. The university’s Honor Code and conventional ethical standards for academic work apply. Students are advised not to use direct quotations or to copy tables or figures from anyone else’s work; if they do, the source absolutely must be documented to avoid charges of plagiarism.

When answering each part of the comp, students are advised to consult the relevant grading standards for that part. The standards are available at <http://politicalscience.nd.edu/assets/89297/compgradingstandards.pdf>.

Part I: Core

Answer one of the two questions in this section.

A. Some advocates of the “causal identification” or “potential outcomes” approach now argue that we can learn nothing unless we do experiments or use methods that approximate experiments despite using observational evidence. What is their critique of older qualitative and quantitative methods? Are there still some benefits of using approaches that do not allow for tight controls and manipulation of treatments? If so, what are they? Discuss at least three works from our Canon reading list either to support or question the experimentalist approach.

B. Mill's methods are classics in the comparative subfield. They have been extensively used and debated at least since the 1980s, and that continues today. However, one might argue that statistical methods have supplanted Mill's methods. Which of Mill's methods fits easiest with statistical methods? Which fits least well? Explain.

Part II: Cross-regional

Answer one of the two questions in this section.

A. Political Conflict

Why do radical dissident groups in advanced capitalist democracies more commonly resort to terrorist attacks than to guerrilla warfare when they engage in violent collective action? Please discuss in reference to the literature on terrorism, armed rebellions, and civil war.

B. Protests and Social Movements

The most influential theories of political party development suggest that politically-ambitious elites create parties from above or that socio-economic cleavages give rise to political parties from below. In these accounts, social movements and civil society organizations have no role. Are social movements epiphenomenal for our understanding of political party development? Or do social movements play a more relevant role than what canonical theories of party development have come to accept? Please discuss using the social movement literature.

Part III: Area Studies

In this section, please answer the question below. (There is no choice.)

A. Parties and Elections in Advanced Industrial Democracies

Outline the main features of the spatial model of voting and party competition. In addition to highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of various spatial models, discuss how well such explanations can adequately explain the character of party competition in your three comparative cases. Do spatial models provide a stronger explanation for party competition in these cases than other types of explanations? If so, how; and if not, why not?

January 2017

Instructions

The Comparative comp is an open-book written exam. Native English speakers are allowed 8 hours; non-native speakers and nursing mothers are allowed 9 hours. The questions are e-mailed to students at the beginning of the exam period and must be returned electronically at the specified time. Any exam returned late automatically fails. There is no guaranteed grace period; "8 hours" means 8 hours and "9 hours" means 9 hours. Only the DGS may make exceptions to this, and only in extraordinary circumstances, such as a power outage or server failure. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that his or her e-mail and computer are in good working order before the exam begins. Students are advised to save their work frequently.

The exam consists of three questions. No answer can be longer than 1,750 words. References and citations in the (Author, date) format will be expected, although without page numbers. All answers must be the student's own work. The university's Honor Code and conventional ethical standards for academic work

apply. Students are advised not to use direct quotations or to copy tables or figures from anyone else's work; if they do, the source absolutely must be documented to avoid charges of plagiarism.

Part I: Core

There is a lot of enthusiasm these days for "multi-method research." In what respects is multi-method research a new approach, and in what respects is "multi-method research" just a new name for some kinds of work scholars have been doing for decades? Give a minimum of five examples of past and/or recent publications, paying attention to how typical they were/are of approaches others were using at the same time.

Part II. Cross-regional

In one of the most famous quotes in the history of the analysis of political parties, E.E. Schattschneider wrote in 1942 that "Modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties." Seventy-five years have transpired since Schattschneider wrote those words. Is his claim still accurate? If so, why is modern democracy unthinkable without parties? What is indispensable about the role parties play in democracies? If not, what has changed so that modern democracy is thinkable without parties?

Part III. Area Studies – Political Conflict

Armed rebellion sometimes scales up to civil war and to revolution but often it does not. In the last quarter of the twentieth-century, Mexico experienced armed insurgencies but never reached the level of civil war. In contrast, during this period armed insurgency in El Salvador became civil war and in Nicaragua civil war became revolution. Compare the different trajectories of armed insurgency in Mexico, El Salvador and Nicaragua using the countries' relevant literature. Based on these cases, please draw some conclusions about the conditions that facilitate conflict escalation.

May 2017 – no exam questions

September 2017

Part I: Core

Answer one of the two questions in this section.

- 1. The study of political institutions has been deeply divided between rationalists and historical institutionalists. If you were planning to conduct a study about the impact of political institutions on any policy outcome in a democratic regime, what are the advantages and pitfalls of choosing one approach over the other? Please contrast Levi (2009) and Tsebelis (2002) with Thelen (1999) and Pierson (2003).**
- 2. Most researchers these days endorse multimethod research in principle. However, some methodologists caution that using two or more methods will not necessarily yield better inferences. Do you share this caution? Why or why not? Specifically, what do you see as the potential advantages of multimethod research and what are the likely obstacles to realizing those advantages? What suggestions, if any, do you have for maximizing the advantages and minimizing the disadvantages?**

Part II: Cross-regional

1. **“Today’s weak states are doomed by the ‘original sin’ that they were born weak.”
Comment on this statement. Anchor your analysis with two world regions.**

Part III: Regional

In this section, answer only the question you are designated to answer.

Q for xxxxxxxx - Identity, Ethnicity, Culture, and Religion:

- **Political scientists have struggled to understand the variation in the political importance of ethnic identities. In many African countries, political competition has often been more about differences in such identities than about differences in policies. How do South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe differ from each other, if at all, in terms of the political salience of ethnic identity? In which of the three countries do we find ethnic identity to be the most politically salient and why might that be the case? (Please relate your analysis to the literature on the topic.)**

Q for xxxxxxx - Identity, Ethnicity, Culture, and Religion:

- **Political scientists have struggled to understand the variation in the political importance of different social identities, particularly religious identities. How do Israel, Lebanon, and Palestine differ from each other, if at all, in terms of the political salience of religious identities? In which of the three countries do we find religious identities to be the most politically salient and why might that be the case? Please relate your analysis to the literature on the topic.**

Q for xxxxxxxxxx - Regimes and Regime Change:

- **How might theories of regime change help us understand the break-up of Yugoslavia and the different political trajectories and identities of the states that emerged as a result of the country's disappearance?**
-

January 2018

I: Canon and methods — Answer one of the two questions in this section.

Canon

- In their influential book *Pathologies of Rational Choice*, Donald Green and Ian Shapiro raise important critiques against rational choice theories in political science. To what extent do their criticism of rational choice can be extended to non-rational choice research? If you are interested in collective action and social movements, could we extend the challenges that Green and Shapiro raise against Mancur Olson’s *The Logic of Collective Action* to Sidney Tarrow’s *Power in Movement*? Or if you are interested in political institutions, could we extend the challenges

against Anthony Downs's *An Economic Theory of Democracy* to Paul Pierson's *Politics in Time*? Choose one pair of authors and discuss.

Methods

- How should the community of comparativists approach generalization? Is it important to aim for general knowledge about how politics works in different settings? Are some kinds of knowledge too general? Are some kinds of knowledge not general enough? Should everyone try to generalize, or should there be a division of labor between those who do and those who don't? Is it more advantageous to start by understanding general patterns and then work our way toward more specific knowledge, or to start by understanding specific cases well and then generalize from there? Does it matter? Which methodological approaches are better for generalizing and which focus on other goals? Do such questions have answers, or is it just a matter of individual preference? Illustrate your answer with evaluations of how three well-known works dealt with generalization.

II. Cross-regional

- The field of political conflict includes the study of a wide range of actions, from political protest and social movements to revolutions and civil war. Are individual motivations for participating in collective action similar or different for different types of political conflict? That is, are the known causes of participation in peaceful political protest also factors in riots, civil wars, and other forms of collective action? If so, which variables or hypotheses do you think most persuasively explain mobilization? If not, which variables or hypotheses are relevant mainly for one form of political conflict but less for others (for example, protest but not civil war)? Support your answer with reference to both the theoretical literature and empirical evidence.

III. Regional – Answer only your designated question in this section.

Regional/Identities – for XXX and XXX

- How has the wave of populism been manifested in your country-cases? What are the key similarities and differences among your countries? Why do some countries have greater success in managing the rise of populism? Among the usual explanations in comparative politics -- including regionalism, transnational relationships, economic well-being, and state capacity, which *one* of these factors—or another of your choice—do you consider the *most* important in accounting for the varying success? In defending your position, please justify your argument by comparing it to what you consider the second most likely explanation.

Regional/The state – for XXX

- Is the Middle East a region of weak and failed states? Why? And what could leaders in this region do to build stronger states? Anchor your analysis with Egypt, Iraq, and Israel.

May 2018

I: Canon and methods — Answer one of the two questions in this section.

Canon:

Olson (1965), Scott (1985) and Tarrow (1994) provide alternative theoretical lenses to explain dissident collective action. If you were planning to launch a research project on dissident social movements in authoritarian regimes, would you choose one approach over the others or would you combine two of them or all of them?

Methods:

Some scholars writing about qualitative methods have argued that there are advantages to studying one case intensively as it developed over a period of time. They advocate doing this instead of, or in addition to, studying many cases. Who have been some prominent advocates of focusing on the development of one case? What advantages do they see in taking this approach? What advice do they give about how to get the most out of this approach?

II: Cross-regional

Political conflict

To what extent does collective action theory help explain political protest? Which aspects of the theory, if any, are usefully applied to the study of political protest, and which aspects, if any, fail to find support? If collective action theory is inadequate to understand political protest, what other theories or factors are important? Support your answer with empirical examples from at least three different social movements, protests, revolutions, or situations that were ripe for protest where protest nevertheless did not materialize. Be sure to provide clear definitions of all terms and concepts.

III: Regional

The State

“States in the Middle East may appear strong, but they are in fact weak.” Comment on this statement and anchor your analysis with Egypt, Iraq, and Israel.

September 2018

I. Canon or methods. Choose a prompt and respond.

1. Choose three works from the canon list that were published in the 20th century. Explain why they should or should not stay on the canon list, and if and how they have been superseded by newer theorizing and empirical research.
2. Tell us about process-tracing. It has been defined in several different ways; what do you consider the essential elements of the most useful kind of process-tracing? For which research goals is it most appropriate? What advantages does it have, if any, over quantitative analysis of panel data (many cases observed over time)? Describe one application of process-tracing from any of our reading lists and evaluate how well it lived up to the potential of this approach.

II. Cross-regional. Choose a prompt and respond.

1. Why is guerrilla warfare a less commonly used technique of armed rebellion in advanced capitalist democracies than in developing countries? Why are radical dissident groups in advanced capitalist democracies more likely to resort to terrorist attacks when they engage in

- violent collective action? Please discuss.
2. Armed rebellion sometimes scales up to civil war and to revolution but often it does not. What are the conditions that facilitate conflict escalation? Please discuss.

III. Region. Respond to the following prompt.

1. Scholars have argued that ethnic and religious identities are constructed and reinforced by political factors. Assess this claim through a comparison of three countries in your region. Which identities are most salient? Are these identities exogenous, or determined by political forces?

January 2019

Instructions

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The exam consists of three questions. No answer can be longer than 1,750 words. References and citations in the (Author, date) format will be expected, although without page numbers. All answers must be the student’s own work. The university’s Honor Code and conventional ethical standards for academic work apply. Students are advised not to use direct quotations or to copy tables or figures from anyone else’s work; if they do, the source absolutely must be documented to avoid charges of plagiarism.

I. Canon or methods. Choose one prompt and respond.

Prompt A. How would you distinguish a robust and defensible notion of path dependence from the self-evident argument that explanation of anything in the present requires understanding of what came before: that is, “history matters”? How would an analyst convincingly show that path dependence is explanatory in more than a tautological sense? Use an example work, or contrasting examples, from the Canon reading list, and lay out a set of criteria that you would employ for making the determination of path dependence as the cause of some phenomenon. Consider objections to your argument.

Prompt B. Multi-method research designs have become all the rage in comparative politics. What are the strengths and limitations of multi-method research in comparative politics? Has the “multi-method turn” contributed to progress in the field of comparative politics? Has it helped to address the apparent methodological divide between qualitative and quantitative approaches? Why or why not? In your answer, take a position, make an argument, and draw on key works and strands of research to illustrate your claims and arguments.

II. Cross-regional. Respond to the following prompt.

Some say that party systems are being disrupted by the decline of older parties and the rise of new parties or anti-party politicians. Give examples from at least two regions of the world. More importantly, how well do existing theories of party systems explain this phenomenon? What are the most relevant theories and what do they have to say about conditions that favor or inhibit changes in the composition of party systems? Which theory offers the most promising ideas for explaining your chosen examples?

III. Region. Respond to the following prompt.

The emerging literature of weak institutions suggests that the strength of political institutions varies considerably in the Southern Cone. Based on this literature, identify at least three indicators of institutional strength (not including parties) and use them to compare Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. Given the observed variance, discuss three alternative hypotheses that could account for such historical variation in neighboring countries.

September 2019

Instructions

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PART I: Core

Please respond to one of the two prompts below.

1. Several works on our canon reading list urge comparativists to incorporate history, or "time," into our analyses. What approaches in comparative politics, if any, tend to ignore history? What approaches, if any, already take time seriously? What are the advantages and disadvantages of any approaches that may already be in use when it comes to understanding time? Illustrate your answer with readings from the canon list, plus any other readings you consider relevant.
2. In the last ten or fifteen years, experiments in political science, including comparative politics, have proliferated. How have experiments contributed to our knowledge in comparative politics? What are their limits?

PART II: Cross Regional

Political Economy of Advanced Industrialized Societies

Describe and explain recent changes in income inequality in high-income countries. Are there differences in trends in income inequality across these countries? What explains such differences, if they exist? If you think similarities are more important than differences, examine the most important similarities in inequality trends.

Political Conflict

In the comparative politics reading list there are separate sections for state repression and then several on civil war. Is there any overlap between these two topics in the literature on this reading list? Should there be and if so what theoretical or empirical research or frameworks on civil war could be the link?

Political Conflict

After more than a decade of studying civil wars (with a particular focus on sub-Saharan African countries), scholars in conflict studies are increasingly paying attention to criminal wars (with a particular focus on Latin America). What are the similarities and differences between civil wars and criminal wars? What are the advantages and potential disadvantages of the geographic biases in these literatures? Please use 75% of the essay to respond to the first question and 25% for the second question.

Identity, Ethnicity, Culture and Religion

We still do not understand very well why certain social identities become more politically salient than others. Many observers have noted identity-based politics has ‘trumped’ (economic) interest-based politics in many parts of the world, including Europe and North America. It is thought that many voters in various parts of the world are voting based as much or more so on cultural/identity-based issues than on economic issues. Populist-nationalist candidates have done quite well in recent elections. Making reference to some of the classics on the topic, (a) what might explain the appeal of populist-nationalists across countries and (b) what might explain the variation in the political salience of culture/identity/ethnicity across time? Which explanation for such variation do you find most compelling and why?

Institutions and Institutionalisms

What explains the persistence of political institutions? Using different analytical approaches and types of institutions, explain why there may be differences in the degree of this persistence across countries.

PART III: Regional

The State

How valid is the strong-state stereotype of European states? Consider France, Germany, and the UK. Do these states differ in their capacities in significant ways? Do these states exhibit internal variation in their capacities, such as by policy domain?

Evaluate the effort to “bring the state back in” in Comparative Politics. Discuss any gains and inadequacies. Anchor your answer with regime change in the Southeast Asian region.

Regimes and Regime Change

Consider the expected trajectory of liberal democracy in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico over the next decade. Would you expect to see any improvements or erosion of liberal democracy in the near future? How would you rank the three countries in terms of their prospects? To address those questions: (a) discuss the concept of liberal democracy (e.g. as conceptualized by the V-Dem project), (b) discuss how theories of democratization and regime change help us identify critical variables to account for (liberal) democratic trajectories, and (c) compare the current situation of the three countries with respect to those explanatory variables.

Political Conflict

Mexico, Guatemala and El Salvador experienced major outbreaks of large-scale criminal violence after transitioning from authoritarian rule to democracy or after signing peace agreements to end protracted civil wars. What are the common drivers and the country-specific causes of the outbreak of criminal violence in the three cases? Why did Guatemala experience an important reduction in criminal violence between 2008 and 2018 whereas Mexico and El Salvador experienced dramatic increases in their murder rates?

Parties and Elections

In their introduction to *Challenges of Party Building in Latin America*, Steve Levitsky, James Loxton, and Brandon Van Dyck argue that “extraordinary conflict” is the most fertile breeding ground for major new parties. Sharp conflict such as “social revolution, civil war, authoritarian repression, and sustained popular mobilization,” fosters stronger brands and attachments and creates stronger incentives for building an organization.

Levitsky, Loxton, and Van Dyck present this claim as part of a think piece, and they do not provide empirical evidence to test it. Let’s say that you are tasked with empirically testing this claim for Latin America since 1978. Present a strategy for testing it. Then tell us some cases that seem to support the claim and others that seem to defy it—and of course, tell us why these cases support or defy their claim. Based on this exercise, is your ex-ante (before developing the empirical test) inclination to agree with or be skeptical about their argument?

January 2020

Instructions

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*The exam consists of three questions. **No answer can be longer than 1,750 words.** References and citations in the (Author, date) format will be expected, although without page numbers. All answers must be the student’s own work. The university’s Honor Code and conventional ethical standards for academic work apply. Students are advised not to use direct quotations or to copy tables or figures from anyone else’s work; if they do, the source absolutely must be documented to avoid charges of plagiarism.*

PART I: Core

Please choose to write in response to 1 or 2:

1. Compare the concept of political institutions as employed by Kathleen Thelen and by George Tsebelis. Do these authors refer to the same object when they talk about institutions? How are institutions able to explain political outcomes in each case? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each perspective? Most important, are those views of institutions reconcilable? (You are welcome to reference works by other authors to illustrate your argument in response to this question.)
2. While there are some accepted standards that guide different types of quantitative approaches, the guidelines for excellent qualitative work are less clear. What are some of the unique contributions that good qualitative work can make? How do we know good qualitative research when we see it? Are there certain shared standards that published qualitative research should aspire to? If so, what are they? Discuss these questions in reference to at least one reading on the canon list.

PART II: Cross Regional-

The State

Take stock of the agenda to “bring the state back in” with regard to political science studies on the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa. Has the agenda contributed to better understandings of the regions? What are the downsides? Should scholars of these two regions stay focused on the state as they seek to move the literature forward?

Regime and Regime Change

If we survey all transitions to democracy since the beginning of the third wave in 1974, few of these new regimes blossomed into fairly high-level democracies. Scores broke down either through coups or executive takeovers. Many others stagnated, in most cases with gaping democratic deficiencies.

Why do you think the overall record of the third wave is not more positive than this? Your answer should engage with the theoretical literature on democratization.

PART III: Regional

Identity, Culture, Ethnicity, Religion

Social scientists often argue that politically-relevant identities are constructed. How malleable are identities? What conditions cause them to be activated or de-emphasized? Anchor your analysis in the cases of Lebanon, Israel, and Palestine.

Political Conflict

The literature on civil conflict shows that countries that experience large-scale political violence and civil war are likely to experience renewed civil conflict in the future. Please explain why Mexico (a country with a long history of armed insurgency and state repression) and Guatemala (a country with a long history of civil war and state terror) experienced the outbreak of criminal wars among drug cartels

and/or street gangs following these periods of political conflict but Peru (a country with a long history of civil war and state terror) did not? Is there a connection between past political violence and contemporary criminal violence in Mexico and Guatemala? How did Peru manage to break these political-criminal linkages and establish the foundations of a less violent society?

June 2020

Instructions:

The Comparative comp is an open-book written exam. Native English speakers are allowed 8 hours; non-native speakers are allowed 9 hours. In light of COVID-19, 2 additional hours will be given for the June 2020 comp for a total time of 10 hours for native English speakers and 11 hours for non-native speakers. The questions are emailed to students at the beginning of the exam period and must be returned electronically at the specified time. Any exam returned late automatically fails. There is no guaranteed grace period; “10 hours” means 10 hours and “11 hours” means 11 hours. Only the DGS may make exceptions to this, and only in extraordinary circumstances, such as a power outage or server failure. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that his or her email and computer are in good working order before the exam begins. Students are advised to save their work frequently.

*The exam consists of three questions. **No answer can be longer than 1,750 words.** References and citations in the (Author, date) format will be expected, although without page numbers. All answers must be the student’s own work. The university’s Honor Code and conventional ethical standards for academic work apply. Students are advised not to use direct quotations or to copy tables or figures from anyone else’s work; if they do, the source absolutely must be documented to avoid charges of plagiarism. When answering each part of the comp, students are advised to consult the relevant grading standards for that part. The standards are available [here](#).*

PART I: Core

Please choose to write in response to 1 or 2:

1. Critique our subfield’s “cannon” reading list. We won’t mind! We understand that an ideal list is unattainable. This one necessarily reflects the idiosyncratic choices of our faculty. What would be your criteria for a useful reading list that would orient you well to comparative politics? In what ways does our list satisfy your criteria, and in what ways does the list as a whole, and the specific items on it, fall short? What conclusions, if any, does this exercise suggest to you about the nature of the comparative politics subfield of political science?
2. What are the strengths and limitations of multi-method research in comparative politics? Has the “multi-method turn” contributed to progress in the field? Has it helped to address the apparent methodological divide between qualitative and quantitative approaches? Why or why not? In your answer, take a position, make an argument, and draw on **at least two substantive areas** of research in comparative politics to illustrate your claims and arguments.

PART II: Cross Regional

The State

“State capacity is what determines civil-military relations.” Discuss the validity of this statement with reference to two world regions.

Regime and Regime Change

First, briefly provide your working definition of democracy. Given your definition, what is the earliest date at which it is reasonable to call the US a democracy? Why was it not a democracy before then?

Over the course of US history, some actors have pushed to expand democracy, while others have pushed to restrict it. In light of your definition, what were the most important periods of expansion of US democracy, in what way(s) did it expand during that time, and who were the actors who were primarily responsible for this expansion? What were the most important periods of contraction of US democracy, in what way(s) did it contract during that time, and who were the actors primarily responsible for this contraction? Finally, suggest one or two lessons that the US case tells us about the broader literature on democratization.

PART III: Regional

MENA/Africa-Ethnicity, Identity, Culture, Religion

Provide a definition of ‘religious extremism’ you consider to be best. In your view, what are the most convincing explanations for the variation in religious extremism we have seen in the world in recent decades? According to your view, where would you expect religious extremism to be most problematic in the coming decades: Iran, Iraq, or Turkey?

Europe/US-Identity, Culture, Religion

Here are three stylized descriptions of the nexus between religion and politics in three countries: “We don’t do God” in the UK, a Moral Majority and Evangelical alliance with the GOP in the US, and Christian Democracy (CDU/CSU) in Germany. What is the truth behind each stylized description and what is missing? What comparative framework would you use to understand the similarities and differences you find in the religion-and-politics interactions in these three countries?

September 2020

Instructions:

The Comparative comp is an open-book written exam. Native English speakers are allowed 8 hours; non-native speakers are allowed 9 hours. The questions are e-mailed to students at the beginning of the exam period and must be returned electronically at the specified time. Any exam returned late automatically fails. There is no guaranteed grace period; "8 hours" means 8 hours and "9 hours" means 9 hours. Only the DGS may make exceptions to this, and only in extraordinary circumstances, such as a power outage or server failure. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that his or her e-mail and computer are in good working order before the exam begins. Students are advised to save their work frequently.

The exam consists of three questions. No answer can be longer than 1,750 words. References and citations in the (Author, date) format will be expected, although without page numbers. All answers must be the student's own work. The university's Honor Code and conventional ethical standards for academic work apply. Students are advised not to use direct quotations or to copy tables or figures from anyone else's work; if they do, the source absolutely must be documented to avoid charges of plagiarism.

When answering each part of the comp, students are advised to consult the relevant grading standards for that part. The standards are available at <https://politicalscience.nd.edu/assets/284945/compgradingstandards.pdf>.

Part I: Core

Answer one of the two questions in this section.

- A. What are the strengths and limitations of multi-method research in comparative politics? Has the "multi-method turn" contributed to progress in the field? Has it helped to address the apparent methodological divide between qualitative and quantitative approaches? Why or why not? In your answer, take a position, make an argument, and draw on at least two substantive areas of research in comparative politics to illustrate your claims and arguments.
- B. The comparative politics subfield recently revised the canon reading list. If we repeat this exercise 10 years from now, name the two readings that you think are most likely to remain on the list and the two readings that are most likely to be replaced. Tell us the reasons why you expect each of these texts to be retained or removed. Based on current trends in comparative politics and political science, name at least one work that is not on our list, but you think might eventually join the canon. Explain why you think this piece would be worthy of joining the canon and complement the existing list.

Part II: Cross-regional

Identity, Culture, Ethnicity, and Religion

There are various explanations for why religious identity may be more politically salient in some countries than in others. Briefly review the most common explanations for the variation in the political

salience of religious identity. Of these explanations, which do you consider most compelling and which do you consider least compelling? Please support your position with evidence from at least three countries (not all in the same world region). Explain how you would go about more thoroughly testing the validity of your position by providing a mini research design.

Part III: Area Studies

Institutions and Institutionalisms

In recent decades, a major thrust of one body of literature in comparative politics has been the conclusion that “institutions matter.” What does this mean, generally and in the Asian context? What is the assertion that “institutions matter” an argument against? How successful has this literature been in explaining the broad patterns of economic development, political behavior, or regime resilience across Asia? How might this literature be improved to better understand the effect of institutions in Asia?

Parties and Elections

Lipset and Rokkan argued in 1967 that European party systems had been “frozen” since 1920, that is, for nearly half a century. How stable have parties and/or political behavior been in France, Germany, and the UK since Lipset and Rokkan wrote? How would you explain the key elements of stability and the key elements of change?

Political Economy of Advanced Industrial Societies

Hall and Soskice (2001) influenced the study of political economy with their contention that advanced industrial societies exhibit “varieties of capitalism.” What were the different varieties of capitalism? How did your three cases (Germany, the UK, and the US) exemplify Hall and Soskice's varieties? Since 2001, advanced industrial societies have faced notable economic shocks, including a surge of imports from China after it joined the WTO (2001) and a global financial crisis (2007-2008). How have the politics and policy responses to these shocks in your three cases developed (or dissolved) each country's variety of capitalism?

January 2021

Instructions:

The Comparative comp is an open-book written exam. Native English speakers are allowed 8 hours; non-native speakers are allowed 9 hours. The questions are e-mailed to students at the beginning of the exam period and must be returned electronically at the specified time. Any exam returned late automatically fails. There is no guaranteed grace period; “8 hours” means 8 hours and “9 hours” means 9 hours. Only the DGS may make exceptions to this, and only in extraordinary circumstances, such as a power outage or server failure. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that his or her e-mail and computer are in good working order before the exam begins. Students are advised to save their work frequently.

The exam consists of three questions. No answer can be longer than 1,750 words. References and citations in the (Author, date) format will be expected, although without page numbers. All answers must be the student’s own work. The university’s Honor Code and conventional ethical standards for academic work apply. Students are advised not to use direct quotations or to copy tables or figures from anyone else’s work; if they do, the source absolutely must be documented to avoid charges of plagiarism.

When answering each part of the comp, students are advised to consult the relevant grading standards for that part. The standards are available at <https://politicalscience.nd.edu/assets/410990/compgradingstandards.pdf>.

Part I: Core

Answer one of the two questions in this section.

A. What are the strengths and limitations of multi-method research in comparative politics? Has the “multi-method turn” contributed to progress in the field? Has it helped to address the apparent methodological divide between qualitative and quantitative approaches? Why or why not? In your answer, take a position, make an argument, and draw on at least two substantive areas of research in comparative politics to illustrate your claims and arguments.

B. The comparative politics subfield recently revised the canon reading list. If we repeat this exercise 10 years from now, name the two readings that you think are most likely to remain on the list and the two readings that are most likely to be replaced. Tell us the reasons why you expect each of these texts to be retained or removed. Based on current trends in comparative politics and political science, name at least one work that is not on our list, but you think might eventually join the canon. Explain why you think this piece would be worthy of joining the canon and complement the existing list.

Part II: Cross-regional

Answer the question in this section.

Regimes and Regime Change

To what extent are traditional theories of democratization and political regimes still useful to understand regime change in the twenty-first century? Summarize (what you consider to be) the classical approaches to regime change, and address whether each of them is useful to explain contemporary

instances of either (a) democratic demise or (b) authoritarian survival (select only one of the two outcomes). Make sure to invoke some empirical examples from at least two world regions. Are political scientists sufficiently equipped to understand this problem, or do we need novel theories to account for contemporary challenges?

Part III: Area Studies

A. Identity, Ethnicity, Culture, and Religion

Scholars have long debated the role played by certain elements of culture, such as religion, ethnicity, and kinship, in shaping political outcomes, such as regime transitions, institutions, or conflict. Provide an assessment of the value of employing culture as an independent variable. Select one or more cultural variables seemingly relevant for political outcomes in your countries and make an argument for or against the use of cultural explanations. In particular, compare and contrast the utility of the cultural variable(s) you have chosen for your three country cases.

B. Political Conflict

Countries that transition from authoritarian rule to democracy and those overcoming protracted civil wars sometimes build peaceful social orders, but others relapse into violence. A key feature of Third Wave democracies in Latin America is that while some countries have experienced peaceful developments, others have experienced major outbreaks of large-scale criminal violence. Please explain the transformation of *political* violence into *criminal* violence generally and in Guatemala, El Salvador and Mexico. If there is variation across these cases, why were some countries able to contain the outbreak of criminal violence while others plunged into protracted criminal wars?

January 2021

Instructions:

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The exam consists of three questions. No answer can be longer than 1,750 words. References and citations in the (Author, date) format will be expected, although without page numbers. All answers must be the student’s own work. The university’s Honor Code and conventional ethical standards for academic work apply. Students are advised not to use direct quotations or to copy tables or figures from anyone else’s work; if they do, the source absolutely must be documented to avoid charges of plagiarism.

When answering each part of the comp, students are advised to consult the relevant grading standards for that part. The standards are available at

<https://politicalscience.nd.edu/assets/410990/compgradingstandards.pdf>.

Part I: Core

Answer one of the two questions in this section.

A. What are the strengths and limitations of multi-method research in comparative politics? Has the “multi-method turn” contributed to progress in the field? Has it helped to address the apparent methodological divide between qualitative and quantitative approaches? Why or why not? In your answer, take a position, make an argument, and draw on at least two substantive areas of research in comparative politics to illustrate your claims and arguments.

B. The comparative politics subfield recently revised the canon reading list. If we repeat this exercise 10 years from now, name the two readings that you think are most likely to remain on the list and the two readings that are most likely to be replaced. Tell us the reasons why you expect each of these texts to be retained or removed. Based on current trends in comparative politics and political science, name at least one work that is not on our list, but you think might eventually join the canon. Explain why you think this piece would be worthy of joining the canon and complement the existing list.

Part II: Cross-regional

Answer the question in this section.

Regimes and Regime Change

To what extent are traditional theories of democratization and political regimes still useful to understand regime change in the twenty-first century? Summarize (what you consider to be) the classical approaches to regime change, and address whether each of them is useful to explain contemporary instances of either (a) democratic demise or (b) authoritarian survival (select only one of the two outcomes). Make sure to invoke some empirical examples from at least two world regions. Are

political scientists sufficiently equipped to understand this problem, or do we need novel theories to account for contemporary challenges?

Part III: Area Studies

A. Identity, Ethnicity, Culture, and Religion

Scholars have long debated the role played by certain elements of culture, such as religion, ethnicity, and kinship, in shaping political outcomes, such as regime transitions, institutions, or conflict. Provide an assessment of the value of employing culture as an independent variable. Select one or more cultural variables seemingly relevant for political outcomes in your countries and make an argument for or against the use of cultural explanations. In particular, compare and contrast the utility of the cultural variable(s) you have chosen for your three country cases.

B. Political Conflict

Countries that transition from authoritarian rule to democracy and those overcoming protracted civil wars sometimes build peaceful social orders, but others relapse into violence. A key feature of Third Wave democracies in Latin America is that while some countries have experienced peaceful developments, others have experienced major outbreaks of large-scale criminal violence. Please explain the transformation of *political* violence into *criminal* violence generally and in Guatemala, El Salvador and Mexico. If there is variation across these cases, why were some countries able to contain the outbreak of criminal violence while others plunged into protracted criminal wars?

Saturday, January 22, 2022

Instructions

The Comparative comp is an open-book written exam. Native English speakers are allowed 8 hours; non-native speakers are allowed 9 hours. During COVID students have an additional 2 hours. The questions are e-mailed to students at the beginning of the exam period and must be returned electronically at the specified time. Any exam returned late automatically fails. There is no guaranteed grace period; “8 hours” means 8 hours and “9 hours” means 9 hours. Only the DGS may make exceptions to this, and only in extraordinary circumstances, such as a power outage or server failure. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that his or her e-mail and computer are in good working order before the exam begins. Students are advised to save their work frequently.

The exam consists of three questions. No answer can be longer than 1,750 words. References and citations in the (Author, date) format will be expected, although without page numbers. All answers must be the student’s own work. The university’s Honor Code and conventional ethical standards for academic work apply. Students are advised not to use direct quotations or to copy tables or figures from anyone else’s work; if they do, the source absolutely must be documented to avoid charges of plagiarism.

When answering each part of the comp, students are advised to consult the relevant grading standards for that part. The standards are available at <https://politicalscience.nd.edu/assets/284945/compgradingstandards.pdf>.

Core & Methods

Please choose one of the following questions:

1. Comparative politics has sometimes been accused of failing to predict major changes around the world such as the Arab Spring and the breakup of the Soviet Union. A lot of major changes are happening now: the Covid-19 pandemic, declining confidence in democratic institutions, inadequate responses to climate change, political polarization, a surge in migration, and others. Based on all you know about the comparative politics literature, are there any contemporary major trends that many comparativists foresaw? If so, which school(s) of thought or individual scholars most clearly saw them coming? Are there other major contemporary trends that blindsided us? What differences do you see between the kinds of events that were foreseen and the ones that were not? Use examples of two trends in your answer. They could be both expected, both unexpected, or a mix.
2. Some scholars argue that quantitative and qualitative approaches to political research should rely on the same logic of inference, while others believe that each methodology should possess its own logic and standards of evidence. Which position do you find more persuasive? Support your arguments with examples from the methodological literature as well as at least representative empirical works.
3. The philosopher of science Imre Lakatos once remarked that “in a progressive research programme, theory leads to the discovery of hitherto unknown novel facts. In degenerating programmes, however, theories are fabricated only in order to accommodate known facts.”[1] Does comparative politics contain any progressive research programs? (Let us define a “research program” as a body of research on a shared theme that is sustained over at least 20 years and is roughly as general as one of the nine topics on our reading list, although it could be as specific as

“religious identity” or as general as “rational choice theory.”) Choose one such research program to discuss in some detail (with respect to this exam’s word limits). Do you consider it a “progressive” or a “degenerating” research program? Why? Support your argument with examples from the literature you selected. Do you consider it typical of research programs in comparative politics, more progressive than most, or more degenerating than most? Why?

Cross-regional

Regimes and regime change

1. During the Cold War, most democratic breakdowns occurred via military coup. Since the end of the Cold War, the most common route to democratic breakdown has been incremental executive takeovers that ultimately degraded the regime so much that it was obviously no longer democratic. What accounts for this change in how democracies most commonly break down?
2. The debates surrounding modernization theory historically connected questions of political economy with concerns about regime change. Review the evolution of those debates, and discuss the historical and the contemporary relevance of modernization theory. Is modernization theory still useful to understand contemporary challenges to democracy today? Provide specific empirical examples to support your argument.

Area Studies

The State

Despite the widespread use of the concept “the state” in political science literature, modern states tend to be far less coherent, omnipotent, and unified than generally theorized. Evaluate different notions of the state and their utility for understanding politics within Asia (China, Japan, and South Korea). What is the most useful way to approach the study of the modern state across Asia and why?

Conflict

1. *Are political institutions able to moderate (potentially) violent conflict in Latin America?* If your answer is positive, identify at least two mechanisms through which political institutions regulate conflict. If your answer is negative, explain whether institutions fail due to imperfect design, due to institutional weakness, or for some other reason. If your answer is “it depends,” identify the conditions under which political institutions effectively deter violence. In every case, illustrate your answer with examples from at least three Latin American countries.
2. A long tradition in conflict studies suggests that land inequality is a major driver of armed rebellions and civil war in developing countries. Using the cases of Colombia, El Salvador and Guatemala discuss the explanatory power of this argument. Is land inequality a sufficient condition to explain armed conflict or are other organizational and institutional factors involved in accounting for violent uprisings? After discussing the three cases, please reflect on the theoretical status of arguments based on land inequality for the study of political violence in countries with significant rural populations.

Political Economy

How successful is the varieties of capitalism approach to understanding similarities and differences across three different national cases? Does a VoC approach need to be supplemented with other ideas or modified in some way to account for important developments in political economies in the 21st century? Please explain.

Tuesday, May 17, 2022

Instructions

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The exam consists of three questions. No answer can be longer than 1,750 words. References and citations in the (Author, date) format will be expected, although without page numbers. All answers must be the student’s own work. The university’s Honor Code and conventional ethical standards for academic work apply. Students are advised not to use direct quotations or to copy tables or figures from anyone else’s work; if they do, the source absolutely must be documented to avoid charges of plagiarism.

When answering each part of the comp, students are advised to consult the relevant grading standards for that part. The standards are available at <https://politicalscience.nd.edu/assets/284945/compgradingstandards.pdf>.

Core & Methods

Please choose one of the following questions:

1. What is theory in comparative politics? Please devote the majority of your answer to a detailed consideration of how the main theoretical approaches in comparative politics grapple with this question, and then proceed to make an argument about which one, in your eyes, appears to have the most convincing or comprehensive answer to this question.
2. It is sometimes said that every method is useful for revealing some aspects of politics but obscures other aspects. Choose any three empirical methodological approaches often used in comparative politics and describe what they can reveal and what they tend to obscure. Then discuss the prospects for combining what can be learned from two of them to form a fuller understanding.

Cross-regional

One of the most popular subjects in the study of regime change has been the focus on “transitions from authoritarianism to democracy.” Yet over time, comparativists have struggled to accommodate their theories to the reality that the success of these transitions has been decidedly mixed. In some cases, the

transitions have been, if not perfect, better than one might have expected. In others, the transitions have either failed or significantly regressed.

On balance, which of the arguments on the Regime Change reading list are best suited to account for the complexity of this situation? And which have proven to be the least useful?

Choose at least three of the readings on the list in responding to these questions. Also, use examples from at least two world regions in making your case. If you like, feel free to consider the possibility that the literature on democratic transitions works better for one part of the world than it does for others. However, be specific about which literature and why it works for specific regions.

Area Studies

Scholars of Japan, China and Korea argue that such states are exceptionally strong in comparative perspective. Do you agree? Anchor your analysis with development promotion and democratic transition.

September 2022

Instructions:

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When answering each part of the comp, students are advised to consult the relevant grading standards for that part. The standards are available at <https://politicalscience.nd.edu/assets/284945/compgradingstandards.pdf>.

Part I: Core

Answer one of the two questions in this section.

A. Our field's list, "The Current Canon: Best-Known (if not Best-Loved) Works," includes 17 items published between 1957 and 2017. How does your own understanding of comparative politics respond to or build on insights from two or three of these works?

B. Much has been written about various ways in which case studies can serve to examine the truth of theories and hypotheses that already exist. However, case studies, if well done, can also be useful for theoretical innovation. What do you consider the characteristics of case studies that are likely to lead to fruitful new understanding – sources of knowledge that does not just confirm what we already knew, that calls attention to unappreciated aspects of political life, and that is potentially relevant for understanding other cases? How do authors of such fruitful case studies tend to pose questions, frame their arguments, gather and analyze evidence, and draw conclusions? Support your arguments with examples from at least two influential case studies.

Part II: Cross-regional

A. Regimes and Regime Change

There is consensus in the literature on democratization that the Third Wave has led over time to the proliferation of regimes that straddle democracy and dictatorship. How have these regimes been defined? Why have they been given so many names? How have these debates over titles and definitions shaped research on this type of regime? How might this literature be improved? Make sure to invoke some empirical examples from at least two world regions.

B. Institutions and institutionalisms

Many scholars have argued that formal political institutions affect the probability that democracy will survive or that authoritarianism will survive, or the probability of democratic deepening/erosion/quality, or the probability of

successful conflict management in societies with deep religious, national, or ethnic cleavages. What examples in this literature do you find convincing, and why? What examples do you not find convincing, and why? Note: “Formal political institutions” as used here include the system of government (presidential, parliamentary, semi-presidential), the federal or unitary of government, the electoral system used for the head of government and the assembly, etc.

C. Political economy of developing countries

In his history of British industrialization, Eric Hobsbawm stressed the role of export markets, together with the role of the government keen on expanding market for British companies, as key drivers of development. Is this view of the political economy of development still relevant today? If so, how? And if not, what body of thought is more relevant?

D. The State

The states in East Asia are often seen as strong. However, Victor Shih highlights that one-party autocracies tend to rule through “coalitions of the weak” to block challenges to their power. (Shih 2022, 3) This has created patrimonial and fragmented rule. (Shih 2022, 197) In your view, are the states of China and Vietnam stronger than that of Japan? Why?

Part III: Area Studies

A. Institutions and Institutionalisms

Many scholars have argued that formal political institutions affect the probability that democracy will survive or that authoritarianism will survive, or the probability of democratic deepening/erosion/quality, or the probability of successful conflict management in societies with deep religious, national, or ethnic cleavages. What examples in this literature do you find convincing for understanding politics in East Asia, and why? What examples do you not find convincing, and why? Note: “Formal political institutions” as used here include the system of government (presidential, parliamentary, semi-presidential), the federal or unitary of government, the electoral system used for the head of government and the assembly, etc.

B. Political Conflict

Some of the most violent conflicts in the world today are not considered to be “political.” What is political violence and how do we draw its conceptual frontiers? Give examples from three countries in [REGION] to demonstrate the advantages, and possible disadvantages, of your understanding of what makes violence political.

C. Identity, ethnicity, culture, and religion

Scholars of identity politics have argued that identities are constructed and endogenous, yet most empirical research on identity treats identities as fixed, at least in the short term. How can comparativists better incorporate the insights of constructivist theory in their empirical work? Provide examples of works that have been effective in this regard, as well as some works that could be improved by better integrating constructivist insights. Anchor your analysis in the three countries you have chosen, explaining how constructivist theoretical arguments can (or cannot) help improve our understanding of those cases.

Comprehensive Examination in Comparative Politics

January 21, 2023

Instructions:

The Comparative comp is an open-book written exam. Native English speakers are allowed 8 hours; non-native speakers are allowed 9 hours. The questions are e-mailed to students at the beginning of the exam period and must be returned electronically at the specified time. Any exam returned late automatically fails. There is no guaranteed grace period; “8 hours” means 8 hours and “9 hours” means 9 hours. Only the DGS may make exceptions to this, and only in extraordinary circumstances, such as a power outage or server failure. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that his or her e-mail and computer are in good working order before the exam begins. Students are advised to save their work frequently.

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When answering each part of the comp, students are advised to consult the relevant grading standards for that part. The standards are available at <https://politicalscience.nd.edu/assets/284945/compgradingstandards.pdf>.

Part I: Core

Answer one of the two questions in this section.

A. Consider one major challenge for humanity in the 21st century that has the potential for widespread disruption of economic, social, and political arrangements around the world. Examples of a major challenge are climate change (which may endanger human life on a large scale), artificial intelligence (which may render much of the human population superfluous from an economic point of view), and the bioengineering of heritable genetic traits (which could lead to an elite caste that is genetically superior to normal humans). You may select a different major challenge of similar importance. What guidance for studying the politics of the challenge and possible responses to it do you find in the canon of comparative politics? How would studying the politics of the challenge and responses to it have to depart from key insights of the canon?

B. What kinds of advantages are made possible by doing well-designed experiments rather than relying exclusively on observational evidence? Are there research questions in comparative politics that cannot be well addressed with experiments? If not, what kinds of experiments should we be doing? If so, where do the limits to experimentation in comparative politics lie? Is there any justification for addressing such questions with non-experimental methods, or should we write off such questions as essentially unanswerable?

Part II: Cross-regional

Everyone must answer the one question in this section.

A. Starting around the mid-2000s, the world's most commonly used democracy indicators such as V-Dem and Freedom House started to indicate a democratic recession at the global level. What do you think accounts for this democratic recession? Explain your reasoning. What theoretical approaches to studying political regimes are most useful, and what are least useful, for understanding this phenomenon? Note: answer the question directly and explicitly.

Part III: Area Studies

In this section, please answer the question below that pertains to the region you chose. (There is no choice.)

A. Political Conflict in MENA/Central Asia

Scholars have long debated the roles of identities versus interests in explaining political conflict. Each of these factors has been invoked to explain civil war, ethnic conflict, anti-regime mobilization, and virtually every other form that political conflict can take. In the 21st century, which of these factors generally holds more explanatory weight? Are identities, interests, or both necessary for political conflict to emerge and spread? Anchor your analysis in the cases of Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan.

B. Political Conflict in Latin America

Colombia, El Salvador, and Mexico are countries with long histories of land inequality and armed conflict. Is land inequality a sufficient condition to explain armed rebellions and civil wars in these countries? If not, what other factors may be relevant in accounting for the outbreak of recurrent episodes of organized violence?

C. Identity, ethnicity, culture, and religion in Africa

Comparativists have for some time tried to understand the variation in the political importance of various social identities. Ethnic identities, for example, may become more or less politically salient across time within a single country and we know they may vary in level of political importance across countries.

a. How have those interested in explaining the variation in the political importance of ethnic identities measured such importance?

b. Please describe at least two competing explanations for the variation in the political importance of ethnic identities. Which of these do you find most compelling and why?

c. In which of these three countries, the DRC, Nigeria, and South Africa, do we find ethnic identities most politically important in recent decades? In your view, what are the factors that best explain the variation in the political importance of ethnic identities across these three countries?

Tuesday, May 23, 2023

Instructions:

The Comparative comp is an open-book written exam. Native English speakers are allowed 8 hours; non-native speakers are allowed 9 hours. During COVID students have an additional 2 hours. The questions are e-mailed to students at the beginning of the exam period and must be returned electronically at the specified time. Any exam returned late automatically fails. There is no guaranteed grace period; “8 hours” means 8 hours and “9 hours” means 9 hours. Only the DGS may make exceptions to this, and only in extraordinary circumstances, such as a power outage or server failure. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that his or her e-mail and computer are in good working order before the exam begins. Students are advised to save their work frequently.

The exam consists of three questions. No answer can be longer than 1,750 words. References and citations in the (Author, date) format will be expected, although without page numbers. All answers must be the student’s own work. The university’s Honor Code and conventional ethical standards for academic work apply. Students are advised not to use direct quotations or to copy tables or figures from anyone else’s work; if they do, the source absolutely must be documented to avoid charges of plagiarism.

When answering each part of the comp, students are advised to consult the relevant grading standards for that part. The standards are available at <https://politicalscience.nd.edu/assets/410990/compgradingstandards.pdf>.

Part I: Core/Methods

Answer one of the two questions in this section.

A. The past decade has seen the rise of numerous political and social challenges, including polarization, violence, misinformation, the Covid-19 pandemic, and many others. In light of these challenges, does the comparative politics "canon" still have the same value that it once had? Using at least three of the readings from our subfield's canon reading list, explain how classic literature in comparative politics can---or cannot---help scholars to address the latest wave of social and political problems.

B. Consider at least three different and important methods that are used in comparative politics. Please write an essay about how these methods, when used properly, are general to science, vs. specific to social science, vs. specific to comparative politics. In other words: In what ways do these methods fulfill the objectives of science generally? In what ways are they particularly appropriate to research topics in social science? In what ways are they tailored specifically to research on questions in comparative politics? In your response, please be sure to include some specific examples of applications of the three different research methods in comparative politics.

Part II: Cross-regional

You must answer this question.

A. Students of political institutions used to take for granted that “institutions matter” – meaning that institutions constrain political behavior and therefore influence policy outcomes. However, this assumption calls for empirical investigation. Provide three examples, in any field of political science, in which exogenous institutions constrain behaviors or shape policy outcomes, and three examples in which institutions fail to do so. Why is it that institutions sometimes fail to fulfill our classical assumption? (You can identify one or multiple reasons.)

Part III: Area Studies

You must answer this question.

A. Area Studies: Political Economy of Developing Countries (China, Japan, Taiwan)

“Chinese leaders claim that China's spectacular growth in recent decades has been driven by a unique 'China model.' Upon closer inspection, China has only followed the developmental paths tracked by Japan and Taiwan.” Analyze this view

Comparative Politics Comprehensive Examination

Fall 2023

Part I: Core

Answer one of the two questions in this section.

During the last decade, comparative politics has experienced a turn towards design-based inference. Advocates of design-based inference stress that it increases internal validity, while critics claim that this advantage comes at the expense of external validity. In your opinion, what are the strengths and limitations of design-based inference? In your answer, take a position, articulate the external-internal validity trade-off, and draw on at least two substantive areas of research in comparative politics to illustrate your claims and arguments.

Democracy and democratization loom large in the current Canon. Are these "best known" works still useful when the world seems to be heading in the opposite direction and toward autocracy and autocratization? Please use at least three works from the canon reading list to explain how they can or cannot address this trend.

Part II: Cross-Regional

For nearly two decades, scholarly research on civil war has focused on studying violent conflict between armed rebel groups and the state for territorial control and for the reconfiguration of local social orders. What are the advantages and disadvantages of a shift away from equating civil war with destruction to one emphasizing the reconstruction of local orders? Use examples from at least two world regions to support your arguments.

Part III: Area Studies

Regimes across the world have used appeals to identity (religious, ethnic, or otherwise) in order to build support for their rule. What are some ways in which appeals to identity can be successful? Are cultural identities generally more of a source of support for regimes, or a threat to their survival? Anchor your analysis in the three countries you have chosen.