

COMPARATIVE POLITICS
QUALIFYING EXAMINATION
Department of International Studies
Fall 2012

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME OR STUDENT NUMBER ON YOUR EXAM

Instructions: Ph.D. students have eight (8) hours to complete the exam and must answer the mandatory and three (3) optional questions. M.A. students have four (4) hours and must answer the mandatory and two (2) optional questions.

1. MANDATORY QUESTION

Addressing the emergence, evolution and transformation of Comparative Politics, Lichbach and Zucherman (*Comparative Politics, Rationality, Culture and Structure*, 2003, 2nd edition 2009) have asked the following question:

“Which metaphor best characterizes the field? Separate tables, a messy center of convergence, or a mixed bag of partial synergisms?”

How would you answer Lichbach and Zucherman’s question? Write an essay explaining the evolution of Comparative Politics, addressing the historical context in which the field emerged and the paradigmatic and methodological debates that have characterized its evolution. In your view, what are the ontological, epistemological, methodological and theoretical trends that will characterize the field’s further construction in the near future?

2. THEORY AND METHODS

The field of Comparative is characterized by rival methodological approaches. Some scholars favor deductive hypotheses and/or large N research designs relying on sophisticated statistical techniques. Other scholars favor a more inductive approach and pursue more qualitative work using case study methods that require in-depth knowledge of one or a few particular cases. Still others advocate a tripartite approach combining formal modeling, statistics, and case studies. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each approach? Is there, in your view, an ideal research approach to Comparative Politics?

3. DEMOCRACY (CHOOSE ONLY ONE)

(A) At a March 2012 Symposium on “Liberal Democracies in Hard Times: Transitions, Dilemmas and Innovations” held in honor of Claus Offe, Philippe Schmitter reviewed the evolution of Democracy since 1989 and said:

“Democracy is a victim of its own success... New democracies have been consolidated, but they have become as dissatisfactory as the oldest ones... Many countries are now condemned to democracy, as it is the only game in town, and they don't like it.”

Write an essay explaining the apparent “disenchantment” addressed by Schmitter. What was (is still) expected of democratic regimes, and in this sense, have they failed or succeeded? What are the analytical factors that can explain why the transitions to democracy around the world haven't had a more positive impact on the lives of many citizens of democratic regimes? Your essay should identify the most influential authors in this debate and give specific examples to illustrate your arguments.

(B) The debates about the most appropriate way to examine post-authoritarian political systems have yet to be quieted. In recent years some comparative analysts have questioned the relevance and effectiveness of various concepts – e.g., transition, *consolidation* – in the study of post-authoritarian political developments. Others have questioned the applicability of the conceptual framework developed in the study of democratization in Southern Europe and Latin America to the process of political change in postcommunist Europe. Still others have argued that throughout much of Central Europe the question of *transition* is a moot one. Rather, the relevant concern is how best to integrate the study of the new democracies into the general study of democratic systems.

Assess the nature of the various debates that have occurred in the field of democracy studies. Who were the major analysts involved in those debates? What were the most important differences in their respective approaches to the study of democracy in post-authoritarian societies?

(C) The literature in the so-called “transition/consolidation school” has come under increasing criticism for an alleged elitist emphasis and a conservative conception of democracy. The gist of this critique is that the mainstream literature gives short shrift to the importance of structural constraints and opportunities and the role of subaltern actors such as labor and social movements. Building upon the work of authors such as Barrington Moore, Reuschmeyer, Stephens and Stephens, Graeme Gill, Ruth Collier and others, write an essay providing a coherent account of the

central issues in this debate and how they relate to assessments of historical and contemporary instances of democracy and democratization.

4. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Two decades ago Samuel Huntington wrote about the "Third Wave" of democratization. Both before and after Huntington's book, there has been a flood of publications discussing the preconditions for democratization, the importance of the pre-democratic system in shaping the process and outcome of democratization, the process of democratic consolidation, and related issues. Drawing upon this literature, evaluate and compare the process of political development in any two countries — preferably from different geographic regions or from different "historical waves" of democratization. Be sure to discuss the framework within which your examination will occur, provide precise definitions of terms, and provide enough historical evidence to support your argument.

5. REVOLUTIONS AND CIVIL WARS

Revolutionary movements and civil wars have been the subject of study and permanent debate among CP scholars. Theories developed by Moore (1966), Skocpol (1979), Wickham-Crowley (1993), and Woods (2003), among others, address the conditions that precipitate the outbreaks of civil wars or revolutions. No consensus has been reached, as some scholars prioritize economic factors, whereas others stress the role of institutional and social factors, and others focus on ethnic cleavages. Write an essay surveying this literature, identifying the most influential authors and their arguments, theoretical approaches and methodologies employed. In your view, what is the current status of the debate in the social sciences on the causes of revolutions and civil wars?

6. INSTITUTIONS

What is the so-called "new institutionalism"? What are its main variants? Your task is to present a well-structure analysis that properly answers these questions, identifying the key authors and arguments and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of rival institutionalist arguments. Your answer must examine these arguments in light of the persuasiveness their accounts of stability and continuity versus processes of dynamic change, such as revolutions or other major historical transformations.

7. POLITICAL CULTURE

What is the status of the field of political culture today? Why did early studies (Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's book *The Civic Culture* and Eckstein's "congruence" theory) generate major controversies? What were those controversies? Why did they lead to a decline in interest over cultural explanations in Comparative Politics? More recently, scholars such as Ronald Inglehart have claimed that the problems with the earlier efforts of advocates of political culture have been overcome and that we now have a more robust understanding of the role of mass beliefs in explaining democratic institutions. Do you agree with Inglehart's position? How successful, in your judgment, has the latest generation of political culture approaches been in explaining the emergence, survival, and development of democracy? Does political culture explain how to make democracy work better?

8. COMPARATIVE POLITICAL ECONOMY

Have globalization and the acceleration of international integration of markets in goods, services, and capital seriously eroded state power and national autonomy? Does the welfare state belong to a previous era? Is it out of step with globalization? Or do the challenges that welfare states have to address remain vital and have, in some instances, intensified (e.g., poverty, inequality, racial segregation, lack of access to public goods, etc.)? Has globalization, rather than weakening state power, actually increased the scope and intensity of social welfare policies, and contributed to the continuing vitality of democracy and partisan politics? Your task is to address these questions examining these diverse viewpoints and explaining what empirical evidence and operational indicators you believe are most relevant to adjudicating rival arguments about states, democracy, and partisan politics under conditions of rapid globalization.

9. DOMESTIC POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL TRENDS

Recent elections in Latin America, political upheavals in the Arab world, and trends in Europe have shown the reappearance of native political formats (new populism, religious fundamentalism, secularism, right wing tendencies, racism). There seems to be a pattern of *vive la difference*, in contrast with successive democratization waves of the past and the prediction of the "end of history" and the establishment of orthodox liberal democracy. At the same time, traditional ideologies supporting standard parties seem to be threatened by new trends. Trace an approximate map of the shifting political and ideological patterns in Europe, Latin America, the Middle East/ Arab world, and beyond if applicable, proposing geographical, cultural, economic, and social identifiers. In sum, how the world is and will be governed in these first decades of the new century.

10. CONTENTIOUS POLITICS

Scholars such as Doug McAdam, Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow have been highly influential in a growing movement among political scientists and sociologists that challenges the standard, variable-driven, statistical correlation approach to the study of non-conventional forms of political participation as well as the traditional subfield distinctions between the comparative study of topics such as revolution, civil war, social movements, protests and so on. Your task is to discuss this relatively new field of contentious politics and explain the preference for causal “mechanisms” (rather than variables) as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the contentious politics literature. What is your position vis-à-vis the claim that different forms of contentious politics (peaceful protest, violent civil war, revolutions, etc.) share certain fundamental characteristics? Be sure to discuss the appropriate theoretical and empirical literature, and utilize a case of a recent wave of mobilization to illustrate the notion of contentious politics.