

**COMPARATIVE POLITICS
QUALIFYING EXAMINATION
Department of International Studies
Spring 2013**

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. You must email your exam to Dr. Smith (bsmith@miami.edu) and Mr. Steve Ralph (steveins@miami.edu) immediately upon completion.

MANDATORY QUESTION

1. What is the current status of the study of comparative politics? This question lies at the heart of the question posed by Lichbach and Zuckerman (2003): “Which metaphor best characterizes the field? Separate tables, a messy center of convergence, or a mixed bag of partial synergisms?” Although several responses have been provided, no consensus has been reached. Some scholars claim that the field should be governed by a “complementary approach” that involves integration and dialogue both in theoretical and methodological grounds. Other scholars, on the other hand, contend that the field is still characterized by profound paradigmatic and methodological battles among rival structuralist, rationalist, and culturalist approaches. What is your view on these debates? In your opinion, what are the trends that will likely characterize the field’s evolution in the near future?

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

Methodology

2. The field of Comparative Politics 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 methodological approach? Is there, in your view, an ideal research approach to Comparative Politics?

Democracy

3. At a recent Symposium on “Liberal Democracies in Hard Times: Transitions, Dilemmas and Innovations,” Phillipe Schmitter reviewed the evolution of democracy in the post-Cold War period 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.” What explains this “disenchantment” with contemporary democracies? What was (is still) expected of democratic regimes, and in this sense, have they failed or succeeded? What are factors that can explain why

the transitions to democracy around the world arguably have not 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.

Modernization and Democratization

4. There is a long standing debate about the social and economic correlates of democracy. In 1959, political sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset famously argued that modernization caused democracy. Subsequently, other scholars have replicated this same finding—democracy is correlated with development. However, more recently Adam Przeworski and his coauthors presented strong empirical evidence that development does not cause democratization. Rather, they argue, development reduces the likelihood of democratic breakdown, thus increasing the number of wealthy democratic countries even though it has no causal effect on transitions to democracy. Subsequently, other scholars have reaffirmed the classic Lipset-Aristotle position. How can we go beyond this impasse? Is there a clear and stable relationship between democracy and development? Or does this relationship vary by historical period and case context, especially the regime type prior to democratization? Who, if anyone, is correct? Citing the major contributors to this debate, your task is to review the theoretical and empirical studies and to adjudicate the findings in the contested field of democratization studies.

Political Development

5. Most of the participants in debates in the field of development studies ignore Max Weber's contention that "capitalism and bureaucracy have found each other and belong intimately together." Instead of focusing on the "state versus market" dichotomy, Weber's observation suggests that a more fruitful approach might be to examine a more concrete question, namely the kinds of state involvement that comparative analysis indicates work best in creating and promoting efficient markets and in stimulating economic growth and development with equity. Please comment on this debate, pointing to its practical implications for the formulation of strategies and policies appropriate to developing countries at the dawn of the 21st century. Be sure to situate your essay in the context of the relevant scholarly literatures.

Revolutions and Civil Wars

6. 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?

Institutions

7. The different variants of the so-called “new institutionalism”—rational-choice (RI), historical institutionalism (HI), sociological institutionalism (SI) and discursive institutionalism (DI)—do a reasonably good job of bringing institutions “back in” and providing persuasive accounts of stability and continuity in more institutionalized polities. However, critics claim that institutionalist theories are largely incapable of providing persuasive accounts of processes of dynamic change, such as revolutions or other major historical transformations. Taking care to identify the key authors and arguments, your task is to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the rival explanations for stability and change articulated by each variant of institutionalism.

Political Culture

8. 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?

Participation and Civil Society

9. Led by social scientists such as Robert Putnam, “neo-Tocquevillians” have argued that there is a positive and universal relationship between civil participation and democracy. This idea has nurtured a vast literature on the topics of civil society, social capital, new social movements, and the public sphere, to name the most popular ones. However, the social capital thesis has been challenged in recent years by scholars with various disciplinary backgrounds who argue that the relationship between civic engagement and democracy is not necessarily positive nor a universal one. They have argued that “making democracy work” is more complex than simply fostering civil society participation. Please address this debate in its various dimensions. Be sure to cite the most influential authors and to illustrate your analysis with relevant empirical evidence.

Comparative Political Economy

10. Since the end of World War II, East Asian (e.g., Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and mainland China) countries have achieved higher rates of development than countries in Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and so forth). There are multiple contending explanations for variations in growth rates. Some scholars focus on geography and natural resource endowments. Others argue over the superiority of alternative development models (e.g., import-substitution industrialization versus export orientation) and the role of “market-friendly” policies. Other analysts place primary causal weight on the state, especially bureaucratic capacity and linkages with the private sector. Still others scholars stress the relative efficacy of democratic

versus authoritarian regimes. Which perspective do you believe provides the most powerful explanation of regional differences in development outcomes? Be sure to discuss the most relevant literature and participants in this debate.

Contentious Politics and Social Movements

11. 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.