

**COMPARATIVE POLITICS  
QUALIFYING EXAMINATION  
Department of International Studies  
Spring 2014**

**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. Note: you may answer only one question from any optional group. The exam will begin promptly at 9 am at the Sociology Computer Lab (Merrick Building Room 207). You must email your exam to Dr. Yaffe ([l.yaffe@umiami.edu](mailto:l.yaffe@umiami.edu)) immediately upon completion.**

**MANDATORY QUESTION**

1. In a recent interview, Evelyn Huber said: “the fascinating history of Comparative Politics offers a panoramic view of major debates and of trends in theoretical and methodological approaches over the second half of the 20th century.”  
What are the major debates that have structured the field of comparative politics in the last 50 years? How has the evolution of these debates shaped what the field looks like today? Identify the main scholars and relevant literature to construct your answer.

**OPTIONAL QUESTIONS**

**Methodology**

2. One of the most significant debates in Comparative Politics over the past two decades centers on the meaning of the term *comparative*. Some prominent analysts proclaim the superior scientific merits of “large N” cross-national studies, contending that studies of a single country or region are not really comparative. Others argue that the emphasis on the more traditional case study approaches demanding detailed knowledge of the history, language and culture of a country or region is essential, and would be lost if small-N approaches were abandoned. Still others contend that neither case studies nor large-N comparisons are an unalloyed good: rather, both entail trade-offs. Taking care to identify the main scholars in these debates, your task is to analyze the trade-offs entailed in the contending positions. You should focus specifically on the relative merits of each approach in terms of developing and building theory, internal and external validity, exploring causal mechanisms, and confirming or refuting theories.

**Democratization**

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.

OR

4. Comparative analysts have debated 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 post-communist Europe or the aborted transitions in the Arab world. 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?

### **Globalization and the State**

5. In the current neoliberal global era, some scholars have argued that national governments' powers will be eroded or eliminated altogether, whereas others have claimed that globalization will actually "augment" state power. Review the literature in this area and discuss your own opinion regarding the ways globalization may have weakened state power and autonomy in the last decades and in what ways states may have augmented their power as a consequence of globalization.

### **Failed States, Revolutions and Civil Wars**

6. Max Weber defined a state as the entity possessing a "monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory". Sometimes, however, a given state's monopoly is not perceived as legitimate and internal armed opposition to that state arises. Why is this the case? Compare some of the main comparative politics explanations of failed states, revolutions and civil wars. In your view, which of these are most compelling and which are least persuasive? Explain your position.

### **Comparative Political Economy**

7. The past seventy years have led to the spread of mixed economies across the globe; these combine market mechanisms with a degree of government oversight and regulation. These "varieties of capitalism" take different forms in different countries, however. Review the literature in this area and discuss what forms capitalism takes around the world. In your opinion, at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century do the differences across capitalisms outweigh the similarities or are these different forms of capitalism more similar than different?

### **CP Theories and International Conflict.**

8. Immediately following the Sochi Olympics, Russia occupied Crimea, part of the sovereign territory of Ukraine, and then—despite US and EU opposition—proceeded to outright territorial annexation. How might CP’s major paradigms such as Rationalism, Structuralism and Culturalism attempt to explain this ongoing international crisis? Make sure to identify the main arguments of each theory, citing the contributions of the relevant scholars. Which theoretical perspective do you find the most useful?

### **Integration and National Identity**

9. The search for national identity has been a top priority of Latin American leaders, intellectuals and political movements since independence. Why regional cohesiveness has not been successful far from roughly defined pan-Latin American entities? Why concepts such as “supra-nationalism” (following the EU model) based on common institutions have failed? What have been the obstacles posed by populism and the presidential monopoly of power in stressing nationalist leanings? Is regional integration possible when national integration is still incomplete due to social exclusion, poverty, and a sense of not belonging?

### **Transitional Justice**

10. Recently scholars have pointed out that Transitional Justice intersects with other fields of the social sciences and the humanities. This realization has tended to complicate the theoretical (conceptual over-stretching) and empirical developments in this field of study, and may have helped create or maintain false dichotomies such as the well-known Peace vs. Justice “dilemma” that has been exploited by wily leaders of repressive regimes and perpetrators of mass atrocities. Please identify the theoretical merits and scope of the field of Transitional Justice by addressing these key questions: How can justice (trials and other forms of accountability) prevent and deter future injustices? How can truth telling and reparations for the victims be efficient as reconciliation tools? How can conditional amnesties enhance the search for justice and truth? How can an amnesty coexist with trials and other forms of accountability (i.e., lustration)?

### **Contentious Politics and Social Movements**

11. Scholars such as Doug McAdam, Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow have been highly influential in a growing movement 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 (Tahir Square, Gezi Park, Brazilian mass demonstrations, Spanish *indignados*, etc.) to illustrate the notion of contentious politics.