

IR/FP Comprehensive Examination

7 November 2011

Instructions: Ph.D. students must answer the mandatory and three (3) optional questions (in 8 hours). M.A. students must answer the mandatory and two (2) optional questions (in 4 hours). Note — you may answer only one (1) question from any optional group. Be sure to provide the corresponding number to the questions you answer. The exam will begin promptly at 9 am in Merrick Rooms 304/305a/305b. Do not put your name on the examination, but do include your student ID at the top of the first page.

A. Mandatory IR Theory

1. Why do ‘revolutions’ or ‘paradigm shifts’ happen in IR thought? In responding to the question, be sure to define what you mean by a revolution in IR thought, as well as explaining the nature of the ‘revolutions’ that have occurred over the past 50-60 years. What might (will) cause the next one?

Optional Questions

B. IR Theory (more specific theory questions)

2. The problem of warfare, especially among great powers, lies at the heart of much of the theorizing about world politics. Some theorists attribute war to the anarchical structure of the international system, a structure that allegedly makes great-power rivalry inescapable, even though it is not the result of anyone's master plan. Other theorists claim that war is not the result of circumstances beyond the control of those involved. Rather, it occurs as the result of rational choices of decision makers who are jockeying for position in the hierarchy of nations. Using historical evidence, and relating your discussion explicitly to the relevant theoretical literature, write an essay that assesses the strengths and weaknesses of these contending explanations of war.
3. One of the main contributions of Constructivism is the notion that state identity fundamentally shapes state preferences and actions. Constructivists agree that state identities are constructed within the social environment of domestic and international politics. They disagree, however, on the mechanisms and processes by which this social construction occurs. While some emphasize the role of norm entrepreneurs, others look at processes of socialization and social learning within international organizations. Other Constructivists explore instead the role of speech, argument and persuasion and processes of structural configuration. Explain these different mechanisms of social construction, identifying the main scholars and empirical research associated with each. In your view, which of these processes have been more relevant in the construction of state identities in the post 9/11 international system?

C. Security & Conflict

4. Analysts who focus on ethnicity and nationalism as factors that have an impact on both international and domestic conflicts have often based their arguments on very different conceptions of ethnicity, nationality and nationalism – their natures, their origins, and the degrees to which they are “portable” across state borders, etc. Write an essay in which you outline the central issues in the debates among analysts of these topics. Which are the major “schools” in these debates? What are the key assumptions and orientations that underlie each school you identify? How do those assumptions and orientations relate to the major divisions within the broader field of International Relations? What difference does it make, in concrete terms, whether one begins one’s research with one or the other of those orientations? In your answer be sure to relate your discussion to the works of individual analysts.
5. In the current academic literature on security studies, there is extensive debate about how to best define and conceptualize the notion of "national security." Develop an essay in which you review the principal positions or "schools of thought" characterizing this on-going scholarly discussion and the major authors who have contributed to it. In your view, which is the most useful school or approach (or combination of approaches)? Why? What, if anything, does the concept of “securitization” add to the security debate? Can you identify any weaknesses in the “securitization” approach? Explain.

D. Foreign Policy Analysis

6. Is foreign policy analysis an independent field of inquiry, part of IR Theory, part of Comparative Politics, or something else? Analyze the basic components of foreign policy analysis and identify the relevant conceptual literatures that, in your opinion, inform the analysis of foreign policy. Is the “levels of analysis” question relevant to the analysis of foreign policy? If so, how? Explain.
7. During political campaign seasons in the U.S., pressure is on all politicians to affirm forms of “American exceptionalism,” insistence on the U.S. being “Number One” and other such triumphalist expressions as part of official doctrine (and the Federal budget.) Yet, as Europeans found in the Libyan crisis, the US under Obama is not behaving in the same way as it did under George W. Bush. Is it simply passing through a typical, cyclical speculation over “declinism,” as Joseph Nye suggests? Or, as one British analyst has put it, “this time it’s for real?” If you

view these changes as “real”, what do they mean in terms of changes in global governance? If you do not, explain why you do not view them as “real”.

E. International Law/ Institutions/ Global Governance

8. “Many regard humanitarian intervention as legally suspect, unless it conforms to the norms permitting the use of armed force under the UN Charter. But everyone regards humanitarian intervention as politically and morally necessary at least under some circumstances.” Now: (A) discuss the legal and other bases that justify humanitarian intervention—if you believe it can be justified; (B) identify at least one ongoing conflict that you think would be a good candidate for humanitarian intervention and explain why you think so; (C) clarify how Realists, Liberals and Constructivists would analyze arguments for humanitarian intervention.

F. IPE/ International Development

9. The late Susan Strange observed that while “... states were once the masters of markets, now it is the markets which, on many crucial issues, are the masters over the governments of states.” According to this widely shared interpretation, global business interests, particularly mobile financial capital, have gained power at the expense of the welfare states, reformist parties, and the interests of the poor. Other IPE scholars, such as Geoffrey Garret, contend that, on the contrary, globalization has actually strengthened the “virtuous” relationship between social democratic politics and economic policies that reduce market-generated inequalities. In your view, which of these two interpretations is correct? Why? Be sure to define your concepts carefully, cite the relevant literature, and provide relevant examples of the state policies hypothesized to be affected, positively or negatively, by the globalization of markets.

G. Latin American Studies

10. What happened to the U.S.-led “War on Drugs” in Latin America after the terrorist events of 9/11/01? What, if any, relationship does Washington posit between the War on Drugs and the War on Terrorism? What consequences has the U.S.-conduct of the War on Terrorism since 9/11 had on the flows of illicit drugs from the Andean region and Mexico into the United States? In your view, as of year-end 2011, is the U.S. government winning or losing the anti-drug fight in Latin America? Why? What impacts has U.S. policy had on economic welfare and democratic politics in the region? Identify the authors and theoretical approaches that best illuminate these issues.

H. European Studies

11. The serious current crisis experienced by the European Union presents several detectable symptoms and suggests some possible explanations, both historical and theoretical/analytical. Financially, Europe is immersed in a dilemma between allowing some countries to default and deciding measures to save the Eurozone from collapsing. At the same time, the institutional nature of the EU itself is challenged by the results of enlargement, uncontrolled immigration, nationalism, uncertain security frameworks, and the rebirth of old historical demons (racism, discrimination) that initially led to the process of integration. Outline a selection of the most pressing issues that Europe faces today, explain their origin and examine several scenarios according to an analytical framework and a theoretical perspective of your choice.