

**IR Comprehensive Examination  
Fall 2009**

**Instructions: Ph.D. students must answer the mandatory and three (3) optional questions (8 hours). M.A. students must answer the mandatory and two (2) optional questions (4 hours). Note — you may answer only one question from any optional group. Be sure to provide the corresponding number to the questions you answer.**

**MANDATORY:**

1. Power is a central concept in much of IR Theory. Yet there is often no agreement as to how power should be defined, much less measured. Is power a resource required to impose one's will on others? Is power soft or hard? Is it necessary to distinguish between "power" and "influence"? Is it useful to distinguish between "power" and the "authority" to determine the shared meanings that constitute identities, interests, and practices of states? Is power about coercive-consent organized by a hegemonic bloc? Is power a "masculinist" construct? Critically evaluate the ways in which power is conceptualized and used in the major approaches to IR theory. Be sure to cite the relevant literatures and authors. Which theoretical or hybrid theoretical perspective do you consider most useful for the study of international relations? Why?

**OPTIONAL** (Select no more than one from each sub-section)

**IR Theory**

2. Some scholars, such as John Searle, contend that Constructivists have no theoretical capability of deducing their own set of values or priorities from their Constructivist framework because all perspectives are equally "true" or "correct." Others have critiqued constructivist researchers for railing against "positivism," while in practice employing "naïve empiricism." Discuss the issues of relativism and methodology in Constructivist approaches to IR Theory. Do you consider these to be a strength or flaw in Constructivist theorizing? Why?

**Foreign Policy Analysis and International Security**

3. Which international relations theory or theories are most useful for analyzing the actions and policies of the George W. Bush Administration (2001-2009)? As the Obama Administration has unfolded its foreign policy to date, which IR theory or theories provide the most useful analytic tools for interpreting its approach to international affairs? Be sure to make reference to appropriate authors and texts in your answer.
4. Prior to the 1990s global health issues/policies were essentially ignored in the study of international relations, while today H1N1 (swine flu), H5N1 (bird flu), HIV/AIDS, and vector borne diseases (e.g., Dengue and West Nile Fever) have become more central to the foreign policy and security dialogue. Some scholars suggest that the new era in global health governance, as embodied by the revised International Health Regulations (IHRs), has been implemented to protect the health of western states. Others suggest that these new regulations will threaten state sovereignty. Discuss the scholarly debate on the recent changes in the IHRs within the larger scope of international relations and foreign policy.

## **Ethnic Conflict and Nationalism**

5. Analysts who focus on ethnicity and nationalism as factors that impact on the incidence of international and domestic conflict have, over the years, based their arguments on different conceptions of ethnicity and nationalism – their nature, their origins, the degree to which they are “portable” across state borders, etc. Write an essay in which you outline the central issues in the scholarly debates among writers on these topics. What are the key assumptions and orientations that underlie the key schools in these debates? How do these core assumptions and orientations relate to the major divisions within the broader field of International Relations? What difference does it make, in practical terms, whether research parts from one or the other of those orientations? In your answer be sure to relate your discussion to the works of individual analysts.

## **International Political Economy**

6. The 1980s and 1990s saw the spread of economic and political liberalization throughout much of the developing world. Free-market oriented economic reforms, including macroeconomic stabilization, liberalization of foreign economic policies and deregulation, took root throughout Latin America, Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and many of the countries of the former communist bloc. Many of these countries also underwent democratization at roughly the same time. At least four causal mechanisms have been emphasized by scholars studying this “diffusion” of economic and political liberalism to the developing world: coercion, competition, learning and emulation. Identify the most important scholarly contributions to this debate and explain the differences among each of these mechanisms, as well as their divergent theoretical roots. Select one or two countries in the developing world that have recently undergone political and economic liberalization. Which of these mechanisms have been more relevant in explaining liberal reforms in these countries?
7. Much of the academic literature on financial globalization emphasizes the structural constraints that increased capital mobility places on the economic policy autonomy of national governments. According to the “Capital Mobility Hypothesis,” the ever-present threat of capital flight creates irresistible pressures for a convergence of national policies. By contrast, other analysts argue that the discipline imposed on governments by capital mobility is much weaker than many scholars contend. Discuss and explain the main theoretical positions in this debate. Which perspective provides a more accurate explanation of the behavior of developed and developing countries in the contemporary international financial system? Why? Explain.

## **International Organizations & Regional Integration**

8. While the wholesale adoption of the European Union (EU) model in other regions of the world has not occurred, observers and practitioners often advocate adapting some of its features in their contexts. For example, many EU admirers advocate adoption of a common currency, a common agricultural policy, structural funds, competition regulations, and the free movement of workers, services, capital and goods. Drawing on the relevant literature, discuss the prospects and challenges of adapting these or other EU integration measures in one or two other regions of the world.
9. Eastern enlargement has characterized the policies of both the European Union and NATO for well over a decade. To what extent do the two policies/processes operate in tandem, or in conflict, with one another? What are the key factors – in both organizations and among members and candidate members – that have encouraged and/or discouraged expansion? What are the prospects for future expansion of either or both organizations? Cite and discuss relevant literature and authors in terms of their usefulness in explaining both the trends towards enlargement or expansion and the obstacles or barriers to these processes..

## **International Law**

10. States occasionally engage in military action under the “doctrine of humanitarian intervention.” Critically discuss the various bases for justifying humanitarian intervention under International Law--bearing in mind that the UN Charter permits the use of force only in self-defense or with Security Council authorization. What are the principal barriers to the effective implementation of any doctrine of humanitarian intervention? Pick an instance of humanitarian intervention--e.g. Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, Kosovo--and discuss how the Realists, Liberals and Constructivists would analyze arguments for humanitarian intervention in that case, making sure to cite relevant authors and works.