

Comparative Politics Comprehensive Examination
January 2017

Majors: Please answer three questions from three different sections.

Minors: Please answer two questions from two different sections.

In each essay, you should:

- Answer the question asked. Refine if necessary but do not expand.
- Unless directed otherwise, discuss at least two theoretical accounts and at least two bodies of evidence as they relate to the theories (a “body of evidence” is a study or related set of studies that address a problem empirically).
- Include critical assessments of the theoretical and empirical literature you discuss.

Section I: Approaches

1. Under what conditions should empirical work precede or follow the development of (formal or non-formal) theoretical models? Evaluate with respect to the accumulation of understanding in two major literatures in comparative politics.

Section II: Building Blocks

2. How have coordination games been used to advance our understanding of issues in comparative politics? Evaluate the application of coordination games to two unrelated research questions.
3. When is it possible to distinguish between cultural and institutional explanations for differences in political outcomes? Discuss this question with reference to two major research questions in comparative politics.

Section III: Political Structures

4. We have seen dramatic shifts in voting patterns and party systems. Why? In your answer, draw on appropriate theory and compare two countries.
5. Why do authoritarian regimes survive in some places and not in others?

Section IV: Outcomes I

6. To what extent do explanations of individual participation in armed rebellion help explain why civil wars occur in some places and not others?

Section V: Outcomes II

7. How successfully can rational choice, mobilization and civic duty explanations explain patterns of electoral turnout within or across countries?

Section VI: Outcomes III

8. What explains the extent to which countries have scaled back or expanded their social policies in the last three decades?

Section VII: Wild Card [Note: this is an extra section which may be answered by majors or minors instead of any other section]

9. What are the best explanations that political science has to offer for why democracy seems takes root in some countries but not others? Pick a geographic region and critique arguments that account for variation in democracy across at least two countries within that region.