

Comparative Politics Comprehensive Examination August 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. “The relations we estimate in multiple regression cannot *explain* social phenomena.” Provide arguments **against** the proposition with illustrations from comparative politics theory and empirical research.

Section II: Building Blocks

2. The prisoner’s dilemma game is widely used to develop theoretical arguments in comparative politics. Drawing on at least two examples, (a) describe how this game is used, and (b) discuss its strengths and weaknesses for helping us understand the social phenomena to which it is applied.
3. Comparative politics scholars often study history to help us develop theories and concepts that are of central interest in research on the world today. Drawing on at least two examples, describe how historical studies have been leveraged to advance our understanding of contemporary issues.

Section III: Political Structures

4. Contemporary elections have often seen a rise in support for extreme right-wing candidates or parties (such as Donald Trump or the National Front in France), yet there is substantial variation in the extent to which this occurs. How are political structures – at the national and/or party level – related to this variation?
5. The Meltzer-Richards theorem suggests that inequality can hinder democratization because poor median voters would seek redistribution from the rich. Have we seen this expectation pan out in the experience of new polities? What are the explanations provided by the literature?

Section IV: Outcomes I

6. When should we expect citizens to rebel against the state?

Section V: Outcomes II

7. How can the central state reduce corruption?

Section VI: Outcomes III

8. “In ethnically divided societies, the dynamics of electoral politics ensure that members of some ethnic groups consistently receive more support from the state than members of other groups.” Discuss.

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

9. Some commentators worry that democracy is being undermined in America. Can the study of political processes in other countries shed light on this question?