

Comparative Politics Comprehensive Examination August 2019

Majors: Please answer three questions from at least two different sections.

Minors: Please answer two questions from two different sections.

In each essay, you should:

- Answer the question that is asked. Refine if necessary but do not expand.
- 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 literatures that you discuss.

Section I: Approaches

1. Suppose you have a general theory (the implications of which transcend a particular place) that you can test using a field experiment or using observational data (that transcends place). Describe the trade-offs you would face in choosing between these two strategies. Please offer a concrete example of a real or hypothetical experiment and real or hypothetical data to illustrate the points you wish to develop.

Section II: Building Blocks

2. Collective action problems are widespread in social interactions. Choose one specific context in which a collective action problem is present and discuss two distinct theoretical perspectives that have helped us understand how this problem gets solved (or not) in this context. Which of the two frameworks is more useful and why?
3. Choose some political outcome (micro or macro) for which variation could be explained using both a cultural and an institutional explanation. What are the similarities and differences in these two types of explanations in this context and what are the strengths and weaknesses of each?

Section III: Political Structures

4. Comparativists study "strong" vs. "weak" states and they also (often independently) study political control of bureaucracy. How can studies of political control of bureaucracy inform (and perhaps refine) the "strong" vs. "weak" state dichotomy? Does the study of political control of bureaucracy lead to insight about the origin of strong vs weak states? Why or why not?

5. If you were taking the American politics exam you would know that in *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups*, V. O. Key argues that modern political parties perform three distinct roles: The "party in the electorate" structures electoral choices; the "party as organization" recruits political leaders and aggregates interests; and the "party in government" organizes government and implements policies. Please bring Key's ideas into comparative politics by discussing how failures to perform each of these three roles can reduce democratic performance in established democracies.

Section IV: Outcomes I

6. Can theories of revolution and regime change help us to understand the sharp rise within democracies of support for anti-democratic parties? Why or why not?

Section V: Outcomes II

7. The World Bank just hired you to come up with a plan to reduce corruption in a fledging democracy. What would you recommend and how would you draw on existing research to justify your plan?

Section VI: Outcomes III

8. What explains variation in income-based redistribution that occurs across different **authoritarian** regimes?

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

9. Describe a theoretical framework and empirical strategy for helping us to understand why violent mass shootings are so much more prevalent in the U.S. than in the U.K. or other former British colonies that are now established democracies.