

Political Theory Written Comprehensive Exam January 2017

Instructions

All students should answer **one** question from Part I of this examination.

For the **minor**, students should also answer **one** question from **any other** part of this examination (Part II, III, or IV).

For the **major**, students should answer **two** additional questions, one each from **any two** additional parts of this examination (e.g. one question from Part II and one from Part IV).

You should incorporate into your answers discussion of the theories you deem most relevant to the question. Make sure, however, to answer the question directly as well as you are able; do not simply offer a literature review.

Part I Core

1. Montesquieu thought that a modern republic could secure liberty better than an ancient one. Explain and discuss.
2. Many modern political theorists seem to assume that progress can be sustained indefinitely, but pre-modern theorists often believed that human history is either a cyclical story or a story of decline. Which view is more accurate? Discuss with reference to any three major thinkers in the history of political theory, including at least one who wrote before 1600.
3. Compare and contrast the conception and role of deliberation in the work of Rousseau and two other political theorists.

Part II Justice, Rights and Law

1. Is justice best conceived of as a quality of individuals and political systems, or as a quality of individual actions and state policies?
2. Some have sought to replace a “traditional”, moral conception of human rights with a “political”, functionalist or pragmatic one. Discuss with reference to at least three authors.

3. Does liberalism imply open borders? Which arguments (if any) in favor of restricting the movement of persons across states are compatible with the core principles of liberalism?

Part III Constitutionalism and Democracy

1. Are constitutional provisions that prevent democratic majorities from prevailing ever a good thing? If so, in what circumstances and for what reasons are they good? If not, why not?
2. Discuss at least two features that distinguish constitutional clauses from statutes. Which in your opinion is the most important?
3. "The liberal, secularized state is nourished by presuppositions that it cannot itself guarantee." Discuss.

Part IV Citizenship, Identity and Power

1. Is nationalism politically pernicious? Why or why not?
2. Discuss the theories devised by at least three modern or contemporary authors regarding the category of "the people" in relation to the representativeness and legitimacy of government.
3. Liberal justice requires groups differentiated citizenship rights particularly when minority cultures and religions are at stake. Discuss.