

**COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION
IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
April 2015**

Instructions

This examination consists of four sections: World Politics A (WPA) consists of general international relations questions; World Politics B (WPB) consists of somewhat narrower or more specific questions; the last two sections consist of questions on international security (IS) and international political economy (IPE).

Majors in IR must write three essays: one from WPA, one from either the IS or IPE section, and one from any other section (that is, you may not write more than one essay in any one section).

Minors in IR must write two essays: one from WPA, and one from any other section. You are advised to demonstrate breadth as well as depth of knowledge in your set of essays. You should therefore avoid writing essays with answers that overlap substantially with respect to either theoretical arguments or substantive examples.

World Politics A. *All IR majors and all IR minors must write one essay from this section.*

1. “Because international behavior changes over time due to a variety of factors, we cannot hope to establish general IR theories.” Discuss.
2. “Arnold Wolfers is correct—states are like billiard balls and the behavior of each depends on the behavior of others.” Discuss.
3. “Theories that stress the centrality of power can explain conflict in IR; those that see institutions as important can explain the incidence and forms of cooperation.” Discuss.

World Politics B. *This section is optional for both majors and minors.*

4. A leading Middle East peace negotiator said: “It is more the years of accumulated distrust than the core issues that divide Israel and the Palestinians.” What theories and evidence can be brought to bear to explore the validity of this claim?
5. “Liberal, Marxist, and realist accounts of U.S. foreign policy assume different motives, but actual initiatives over time have been more or less the same as what each would predict.” Discuss.

6. Discuss the role of private information in creating and resolving conflicts.

7. In what sense does the formation of an international organization create a principal-agent problem? What can states do to solve the problem? Discuss and offer two real examples of international organizations, explaining what the problem was and how states tried to solve it.

8. When leaders play the nationalist card in diplomatic confrontations, what theories best capture the government's calculations and the causal mechanisms at work: tying hands, gambling for resurrection, or something else? How often are their tactics successful?

9. Under contemporary international law, when can a state legally use force in or against another state?

10. Are democracies more vulnerable to terrorism than non-democracies? Why or why not? Please be sure to define the term terrorism.

11. Under what conditions can international law deter 'bad' behavior in the international system, and when should it be expected to fail in this role?

International Security *All IR majors must write one essay from this section OR from the IPE section. This section is optional for IR minors.*

12. "Since the Cold War security problems have been overwhelmingly internal: civil wars, failed states, ethnic conflict. Thus comparative politics, not international relations theory, is the main route to understanding security in the 21st century." Discuss.

13. "No country is more secure than the US, yet no country spends nearly as much as it does on defense." What explanation for this do you find most convincing?

International Political Economy *All IR majors must write one essay from this section OR from the IS section. This section is optional for IR minors.*

14. Commitment problems pervade international relations in areas including trade, finance, aid, and others. Explain how commitment problems can impact two areas of international relations and why this can lead to inefficient policies. How and when can institutions help to solve these problems?

15. Does international trade liberalization cause a "race to the bottom" or a "race to the top" in environmental policy? Summarize the arguments on both sides of the debate and evaluate the empirical evidence.