

January 2018 PT Comprehensive Exam

Part I - Core

1. Compare and contrast the work that the idea of equality does in Hobbes and Locke's respective political philosophies.
2. It has been observed that a distinguishing feature of modern political thought is its authors' self-consciousness as moderns. Is it possible to be modern without being committed to the superiority of present, vis-à-vis past ways of thinking and writing about politics?
3. Machiavelli thought that "the aim of the common people is more honest than that of the nobles, since the nobles want to oppress others, while the people simply want not to be oppressed."
4. Compare Polybius and Hume on checks and balances in government
5. Explain and discuss Harrington's "divide and choose" model of government.

Part II - Justice, Rights, and Law

6. Are human rights best understood as a moral, political, or legal category?
7. Does liberalism offer conceptual and critical resources adequate to understanding and criticizing gender inequality in the contemporary world?
8. Kant wrote that "to attach the adjective 'perpetual' to it [to peace] is already suspiciously close to pleonasm." Explain and discuss.
9. Can rights be grounded in rule-consequentialism?

Part III – Constitutionalism and Democracy

10. Have democratic theorists paid enough attention to the question of socioeconomic equality, in your view? Do they need to?
11. Is nationalism a democratic or an anti-democratic political ideology?
12. Montesquieu thought that a modern republic could secure liberty better than an ancient one. Explain and discuss.
13. Discuss the tension between the absence of a written constitution in Great Britain and the claim that written constitutions are needed to stabilize democracy.

Part IV- Ideology and Identity

14. Are group-differentiated rights permissible in a liberal democratic polity?
15. Is Black Lives Matter a human rights movement?
16. A large number of theorists thought until few decades ago that labor and political freedom are mutually exclusive because people who continually work to live are not prepared for public office.
17. To what extent, if any, can ideologies be compared to optical illusions?