

Columbia University Department of Political Science
Written Qualifying Examination in Political Theory
January 14, 2019

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) In the *Leviathan*, Hobbes subjects Aristotle's metaphysics, politics, and ethics to withering criticisms. Explain Hobbes's principal criticisms of Aristotle and compare his approach to political theory with Aristotle's.
- 2) "...liberty may be endangered by the abuses of liberty as well as by the abuses of power". Explain and discuss this maxim from *Federalist* n. 10.
- 3) The concept of universal human rights is "nonsense on stilts." Discuss how three of the following authors would understand and assess such a statement: Bentham, Habermas, Lefort, Schmitt, Marx, and/or Rawls.

Part II Justice, Rights, and Law

- 4) Explain the principal strengths and weaknesses (as you see them) of John Rawls's theory of justice as fairness.
- 5) Theories of justice must address primarily distributive issues. Discuss.
- 6) "Liberty is liberty, not equality or fairness or justice or culture, or human happiness." Discuss.

Part III Constitutionalism and Democracy

- 7) Compare and contrast the function and conception of deliberation in democracy in the work of three of the following political theorists: Rousseau, Burke, Mill, Arendt, and Habermas.
- 8) Is there anything intrinsically valuable about democratic institutions and procedures, or are they (merely) means to achieve desirable ends? Explain.
- 9) “The general will never errs.” Explain and Discuss.

Part IV Citizenship, Identity, and Power

- 10) Which minorities, if any, are entitled to special rights or exemptions and why?
- 11) Do ideologies have significant inherent motivating power, or are they primarily vehicles for the expression and/or pursuit of interests?
- 12) Culture and citizenship are two contested concepts in the social sciences. What are the relationships between them?