

Columbia University Department of Political Science
Written Qualifying Examination in Political Theory
August 2022

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. Some political philosophers have argued that a modern republic can secure liberty better than an ancient one. Explain and discuss with reference to three thinkers.
2. Should partisanship be eliminated from politics? If partisanship is inevitable, which kinds of partisanship are most healthy, and which kinds most pernicious? Answer with reference to three of the following thinkers: Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau, Madison, Burke, Tocqueville, Marx, Gandhi.
3. Compare and contrast the philosophy of history we find in the works of three of the following thinkers: Kant, Smith, Hegel, and Marx. Specifically, what role do historical narratives and conjectures play in their respective political thought? If we find these historical accounts unsatisfactory, to what extent does this affect the persuasiveness of their political and normative teachings?

PART II. JUSTICE, RIGHTS AND CONSTITUTIONALISM

4. Are liberal constitutionalism and democracy antithetical or in permanent tension? Is it possible to have a modern democracy without constitutionalism? In your answer discuss at least three authors' views on this matter.
5. How, if at all, does justice *within* a political community differ from transnational or global justice? Discuss with reference to at least three writers who have contributed to discussion of this topic.
6. Is there a right to civil disobedience?

PART III. DEMOCRACY AND ITS ALTERNATIVES

7. Do populist movements, parties, and governments present a challenge to or a deepening of democracy?
8. In your view, what role does the idea of constituent power play within democratic theory and democratic *praxis*? Should we treat constituent power as a historical and/or sociological reality, a useful fiction, a useless fiction, or something else?
9. Democracy is commonly associated with political equality and majority rule. Yet majority rule does not always seem to treat all persons equally, for example it can override and exclude members of minorities from power and influence. Discuss.

PART IV. POWER, IDEOLOGY AND IDENTITY

10. Critics of modern political doctrines such as liberalism, cosmopolitanism, or human rights often contend that they cannot live up to their universalizing aspirations because they originated in the West. How damaging is this line of critique to the doctrines in question?
11. What makes gender oppression different from other forms of social and political domination?
12. To what extent, if at all, does liberalism serve as a veil for domination? Discuss with reference to at least three writers.