

**American Politics
Preliminary Examination
Fall 2006**

GENERAL RULES AND DIRECTIONS: You will have eight hours in which to answer the required questions. **The exam must be handed in no later than 4:00 p.m.** Be sure to save some of your time for putting the answers into an organized form in good English. This is an open book exam. Students may use notes or books, but they may not discuss the examination with anyone while taking it.

Question 1. Please answer 1 of the following 3 questions.

1. It has become standard political rhetoric to say that “everything changed” after the attacks of 9-11. Drawing on the literature in at least 3 subfields of American politics, evaluate this claim. Does its validity vary depending on whether you approach it from a behavioralist rather than an institutionalist perspective? In what ways?

2. In recent years, a number of challenges have arisen to the classic liberal understanding of American political culture, both as normative theory and as an explanation for American political institutions, public policy, and political practices. What are these challenges, what is the evidence (be sure to discuss evidence at multiple levels of analysis, including public opinion, political institutions, and public policy), and what do you conclude about whether the American Creed is a viable understanding of American politics?

3. The framers created the separation of powers to guarantee that no single branch of government can gain too much power over the others. Political scientists have examined this institutional check on federal power from many angles. In particular, scholars have assessed how the separation of powers affects relationships between the three branches of government, while generally ignoring the role that other actors, including the public, the media, and the federal system at large (i.e., states) play in this process. What role, if any, do these other institutions play in the separation of powers? What role, if any, should the public play in this interaction? What does political science research tell us about how the separation of powers – including actors beyond the main three branches – affects decisions made by our political leaders? Be sure to include a discussion of the conventional understanding of the SOP in your answer, as well as a discussion what other actors (if any) may play a part in these interactions.

Question 2. Please answer 1 of the following 3 questions.

4. Discuss relationships among the mass media, the mass public, political elites and institutions, focusing on the ways in which they interact with and influence one another. Address the balance between elite responsiveness to the public and elite manipulation of the public. Discuss how the race issue in American politics and national elections can be used to illustrate your arguments.

5. The study of institutions focuses on individual strategic calculations as well as on how institutional rules constrain behavior, whereas the study of political behavior focuses on the factors that shape and direct individual behavior in the political arena. What value (if any) does theory and research in political psychology offer to the study of institutions? And what value (if any) does theory and research in institutions offer to the study of political psychology? If there is value in merging these research areas, do you expect the analytic payoff to be unidirectional, bidirectional, or conditional? Your answer should be thoroughly grounded in existing research and applied to specific theories and research approaches in political psychology, as well as in the study of specific institutions such as Congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, interest groups, and/or the courts.

6. Studies of the presidency and of bureaucratic politics--while having obvious natural connections--have not always spoken to each other or incorporated the findings of the other. In what ways do you think that each of these two specific areas of research can or should be linked together? Please give specific examples of research questions and relevant literature.

Question 3. Please answer the following question.

7. Pick a literature that you're most familiar with, and answer the following: What is the most undertilled area of the literature, and why is it undertilled? What is the most overtilled area, and why is it overtilled? How might one go about tilling the undertilled?