

**American Politics
Preliminary Examination
Spring 2004
Exam #8**

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 your answers into an organized, typed or legibly written version in good English. Also be sure that you answer all the parts of each question and that you refer to the appropriate scholarly literature in each answer. This is a “closed book” exam. Students may not use notes or books, nor may they discuss the examination with anyone while taking it.

Instructions: Please answer one question from Part I and two questions from Part II. Be careful to write three distinct essays, avoiding substantial overlap between your answers.

PART ONE: THEMATIC QUESTIONS

Please write on one (1) thematic question:

1. Since Gunnar Myrdal coined the phrase, many scholars have agreed that an "American Creed" has dominated American political thought since the Revolution, shared in some way by virtually all Americans regardless of their class, race, gender, or partisan politics. Do you agree? If so, what is the creed, and why has it been embraced by writers in different periods, holding different places in American economic, racial, sexual, and political hierarchies? If not, what contrasting "creeds" or ideologies do you see in American political thought, and why do you think these contrasts have so often been missed or minimized?
2. The Framers created the separation of powers to guarantee that no single branch of government can gain too much power over the others. In the past decade, scholars have derived models to explain the interaction that takes place among the three branches of government, and to predict how each of the branches will behave as they interact with one another. Do these models adequately capture the interaction among the branches? More generally, what have these models taught scholars about the separation of powers?
3. In the 1970s, many political scientists concluded that political parties were no longer relevant to understanding American politics. However, there is emerging evidence that pronouncements about the death of parties may have been premature. What is this evidence at the mass, organizational, and legislative levels? How can theories of party and party identification accommodate both rise and decline and rise again of party strength? What, if anything, have scholars argued has replaced parties at the mass, organizational, and legislative levels?

What implications for representation and accountability do variations in party strength have?

PART TWO: SEMINAR QUESTIONS

*Part II. Answer two of the following six questions. You may answer any combination of two of the six questions except the following: you may **not** answer 1 and 2; 3 and 4; or 5 and 6.*

Reminder: do not answer both #1 and #2.

1. Some argue that the social movements of the 1960s were the most important political development in recent history. However, the 1970s and 1980s saw a marked reduction or even absence of social movement activity in the United States. Some social movement theorists argue that it has only been in the late 1980s and early 1990s that we can identify any significant reemergence of such activity under the label of identity politics and "new social movements." Identify and describe the social, political and economic forces which might explain the peaking and waning of social movement activity described above. If you have a different interpretation of the history of social movements since the 1960s, please identify and describe.
2. One of the main challenges in conducting research on interest groups and social movements is showing their impact on policy outcomes. Discuss and evaluate three approaches to assessing the policy impact of groups and movements. Which one do you find the most compelling or useful? Which one do you find the least compelling? Why? What additional operationalizations might be more effective?

Reminder: do not answer both #3 and #4.

3. What drives outcomes in U.S. presidential elections? In your answer, compare the relative strengths of enduring political dispositions, economic evaluations, and campaign (including negative campaign) effects. Given what you know about trends in these three areas what do you expect the outcome of the 2004 presidential election to be? Be sure to explain your reasoning with references to relevant political science literatures.

4. "American democracy is in disarray. Most Americans don't learn about politics and fail to participate in elections." Evaluate this statement by consulting the literatures on attitude constraint, turnout, and political participation.

Reminder: do not answer both #5 and #6.

5. There has been a significant amount of disagreement over how Supreme Court justices reach decisions. Some scholars have argued that justices base their decisions on a set of principles (precedent, intent of framers, etc.) that help to guide them in interpreting the Constitution and arriving at outcomes. In contrast to this legal school of thought, others have asserted that the view of justices as principled decision-makers is completely inaccurate. They argue that personal policy preferences largely determine how the justices decide cases. Still others argue that justices are strategic actors whose decisions are based on their policy goals, their beliefs about other actors' preferences, and institutional rules. First, explain each of these theories in detail, assessing the merits and shortfalls of each (be sure to cite relevant literature for each theory). Second, make an argument about which theory offers the best explanation of how justices decide, as well as which is best for making predictions about their future behavior.
6. Even before *Bush v. Gore* (2000), the Supreme Court played an integral role in the 2000 presidential campaign. Indeed, both candidates warned that the other would pack the Court with extremists who would make bad decisions concerning abortion, states rights, civil rights, and the like. As such, both major party candidates declared that they would put the right type of justices on the Court. This begs the question: how does the president decide whom to nominate to the Supreme Court? Using relevant literature, first explain the nomination process, and what factors the president considers when deciding who to nominate. Second, explain the confirmation process and the factors that the Senate considers when deciding whether to accept a nominee. Can the president nominate anyone he sees fit, or is he constrained in his choices? Why or why not? Which has more power over the confirmation process: the Senate or the president? Why?