

**American Politics
Preliminary Examination
Spring 2004
Exam #4**

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. Scholars of American politics regularly draw connections between micro-level behavior and macro-level developments. Describe the cross-level connections or inferences that political scientists make in research on American political institutions, public opinion, and political behavior. What are the dangers of cross-level inferences? How have researchers attempted to link the micro- and macro-levels of analysis?
2. The Founding Fathers developed a republican form of government, one in which designated representatives serve on behalf of the general population. Given what political scientists know about representation, how well do you think our current system lives up to this principle? In framing your answer, you might consider a variety of issues: How well do the executive and Congress serve public preferences? Does the proliferation of interest groups promote representation of popular views, and does the apparent decline in the significance of partisanship detract from it? How do the nature and level of political participation serve popular representation? Does the reliance upon less democratic decision-makers (e.g., courts, bureaucracies) produce greater or less service to the public will? Discuss as many of these issues as you feel are necessary to make your case, and be sure to bring scholarly evidence to bear upon your argument.
3. Anthony Downs' *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, has a richness of derived propositions which, as empirical predictions, fail with notable regularity. Downs, for example, errs massively in predicting why or when people choose to vote and regularly in predicting what policy positions parties choose to take. And these

derivations are central to his model. And yet almost four decades after the *Economic Theory*, it is still read and cited. How can that be explained?

PART TWO: SEMINAR QUESTIONS

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

1. Scholars in political psychology assess the theoretical and empirical impact on political attitudes and behavior of factors such as personality, attitudes, demographic characteristics, media framing and persuasion, election campaigns, political expertise, and so on. Some of these factors represent stable, enduring influences on individual citizens, while others are more transitory and ephemeral. How do various scholars see these two different types of forces interacting to shape individuals' attitudes and behavior? What do you think is the best characterization of these forces? Include an analysis of the extant empirical literature as you address these two questions.
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Reminder: do not answer both #2 and #3.

2. Recently, the US Supreme Court overruled its decision in *Bowers v Hardwick* (1986), concerning sodomy. Should the Court have done so? Why or why not? What are the best arguments on both sides of the question, and how can one make a reasoned decision in this case? What does this issue tell us about the nature of constitutional interpretation?
 3. Select one major Supreme Court decision since 1900 you consider a "bad" or "terrible" decision, and one you consider a "good" decision. Explain the reasons for your choices. In your answer make reference to at least two jurisprudential theorists (either on or off the bench).
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Reminder: do not answer both #4 and #5.

4. 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.

5. 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?