

**American Politics
Preliminary Examination
Spring 2005**

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. 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?
2. Are political representation and leadership irreconcilably in conflict? The concept of "representation" has multiple and competing interpretations. Compare the conception adopted by the Framers of the Constitution with alternative interpretations, and use research on American political behavior, institutions, and public policy to assess the relative merits of each interpretation. Is American politics representative?
3. 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?

PART TWO: SEMINAR QUESTIONS

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

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

1. Evaluate the role of values and norms in American electoral behavior and public opinion. Define them, discuss theoretical expectations from various individual-level models about the role of values and norms, and evaluate the best evidence about their impact.
2. Discuss the nature of the relationships among the mass media, the mass public, and political elites, focusing on the ways in which they influence and shape one another. Be sure to discuss framing, elite cue giving, and the role of political sophistication and expertise.

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 how do you explain the outcome of the 2004 presidential election? Be sure to explain your reasoning with references to relevant political science literatures.
4. Many political scientists have lamented the decline of trust in government and social capital. What are the causes of the decline? Is there any connection between the two trends? Should we be worried about it or are the fears overstated?