

**Comparative Politics
Preliminary Examination
Spring 2004**

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, typed or legibly written version in good English. 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 Section I and TWO questions from Section II. Be careful to write three distinct essays, avoiding substantial overlap between your answers.

Section I: *Thematic Questions* (Answer One)

1. A wide variety of meanings is attached to the term "comparative method." For some authors, the comparative method is similar to the statistical method, except that it deals with a small number of cases. Others question whether a "science" of comparative politics is possible at all, and advocate more interpretive forms of comparative history. Discuss the different meanings attached to the term "comparative method," survey the types of comparative research that result from these different understandings of comparative method, and conclude with a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of these diverse approaches to comparative politics.
2. In the past fifteen years a number of prominent social scientists have revived the state as the prime unit of analysis in politics. The concept of the state is key to many of the sub-topics of comparative politics including discussions of development, advanced industrial societies, democracy and redemocratization, and revolution. Drawing on the literature on the state as well as material from at least one of these other topics, discuss (1) how can the concept of the state help us in comparative politics? and (2) what are the limitations of the concept?
3. What are the tensions between comparative approaches that put the state at the center of analysis and approaches that focus on class? Using evidence from at least two countries, try to demonstrate these tensions. Does your analysis lead you to favor either state or class approaches? A synthesis of the two? Or would you do without both of them?
4. Putting together an argument based on comparative analysis of real cases (not just theory), discuss the relationship between capitalism and democracy.
5. How do contemporary theories of political institutions deal with path dependence? Drawing on empirical evidence from at least two states or regions, discuss to what extent the development of modern political parties, interest groups, or social movements demonstrate path dependence.

Section II: Seminar Questions (Answer Two)

1. In what ways or to what extent is institutional design associated with democratic performance? Do all institutions have equal weight in determining political outputs? Do non-institutional factors have more weight than institutional factors? Provide comparative examples.
2. What are the differences and similarities between institutionalist approaches? What value does each approach add to political research and when? When do these approaches provide unsatisfactory explanations to political phenomena?
3. In the last two decades there has been a shift in the literature in comparative political economy from the study of corporatism and pluralism (Schmitter, P.Katzenstein and others) to analyses of wage bargaining institutions (e.g., the work of Iversen, M.Wallerstein, and others). What explains this shift? In what sense, if any, does this shift constitute social scientific progress?
4. Is it true that, in comparison to most, if not all other countries, there is less class consciousness in the United States? What research supports this conclusion? Of what significance theoretically is the relative absence of class consciousness in the U.S.?
5. In the study of socio-political change how important in your opinion is the debate about the relative importance of structures versus agency? Sketch out, firstly, the history of the debate. Second, offer and discuss a couple of examples of works on the two sides of the argument. Finally, critically evaluate both sides based on these works and offer what you might regard as a resolution to the debate.
6. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 is often claimed to be the moment when Marxist perspectives on politics and political development were finally confined to the proverbial dustbin of history. Do you agree? More specifically, to what extent, if any, are Marxist analyses still useful for explaining the broad contours of socio-political change including what transpired in the Soviet Union?