

**Comparative Politics
Preliminary Examination
Spring 2005**

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, typed or legibly written version 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.

SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS: Please answer ONE question from Section I and ONE question from Section II. Be careful to write two 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. Most comparativists would agree that "political culture" exists, but there is strong disagreement regarding if/how it should figure in political science research. Where do you come down in this debate? Be sure to refer to a variety of works in the literature that address culture in some way, and discuss the strengths and weaknesses thereof.
3. Putting together an argument based on a comparative analysis of cases (not just theory), discuss the relationship between capitalism and democracy. Note that in your answer, you might choose to integrate thoughts on one or more of the following topics/literatures: development, corporatism, socialism, welfare states, globalization.
4. 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 democratization, and rebellion 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?
5. How important are political parties to democratic quality and stability? What factors account for the emergence, endurance, and effectiveness of parties/party systems? Develop your discussion with examples from at least two regions of the world.

Section II: Seminar Questions (Answer ONE)

1. Area studies has been much derided in political science as providing a weak basis for generating theory. Yet some have argued that area specialization, rather than hampering theory development, actually enhances it. New theories often develop based on observations of the specific historical and political configurations, and theories developed through area expertise have reframed debates. Based on one of the following literatures-comparative political economy of development; socio-political change; or political institutions-critically evaluate the contributions of "contextless" approaches versus those informed by area specialization. Has one or the other contributed more or less to our understanding of the phenomenon in question?
2. There has been much discussion of the quality of representation in European representative institutions. How can we best judge the quality and appropriateness of representative institutions in Europe?
3. Scholars of comparative politics have recently begun to focus more explicitly on issues related to women and gender. How has the study of women and gender contributed to existing debates and literatures in comparative politics? Has the work on women and gender unsettled debates within the literature in important ways, or do most scholars simply "add women and stir?" In your essay, be sure to distinguish between women and gender and to discuss at least two areas of research in comparative politics.
4. Nancy Bermeo's award-winning *Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times* addresses a number of crucial issues in the comparative socio-political change subfield. Critically evaluate her book on the basis of two of the following: its epistemology, its treatment of the structure-agency question, and the politics and process of democratization. (Note: while the question requires that you discuss Bermeo's book, do not neglect to refer to a variety of other relevant works in your essay.)
5. To what extent does the literature on economic voting show that citizens have the cognitive abilities to hold elected officials accountable for their (economic) policy choices?
6. Assess the advantages and disadvantages of the rational-choice institutionalist approach to studying the evolution or performance of institutions. Provide examples.