

## **Comparative Prelim Exam Rules**

### **Effective Fall 2005**

In the interest in making the comparative prelim at once more manageable and more effective in eliciting thoughtful and creative responses from our graduate students, we have decided that, beginning with the graduate class that enters in Fall 2005, the comparative prelim will have the following format and rules:

- It will be an eight-hour, **open**-note exam.
- Students must answer two questions, one general and one personalized.
- The general questions on the exam will no longer come directly from the “list of thematics.” Instead, the questions will be general questions about the sub-field to which any student trained in comparative politics in our department (or any top 20 department) should be able to respond intelligently and creatively. The questions will not be designed to “test” a student’s knowledge of any particular topic in the comparative literature, but rather, will ask the student to address an overarching debate in the field, for which examples from a variety of topical literatures might be marshaled. Past thematic questions will still be useful in offering a sense of the kinds of questions comparativists should be able to speak to, but will no longer serve as the universe of questions from which actual exam questions are selected *verbatim*.
- The personalized questions will be tailored to the interests of the individual exam takers. Early each term, the comparative field chair will meet briefly with each student taking the exam to discuss their coursework and research interests. Students will be asked to submit 3-5 questions that they would like to appear on the exam. In consultation with other comparative faculty members who have taught these students, and keeping in mind but not strictly bound by the questions submitted by the students themselves, the comparative field chair will write 2 personalized questions for each student to put on the exam. Each student will write on one of these two questions.
- Students who enrolled in the program prior to Fall 2005 but have still to take their comparative prelim will have a choice either to take the exam in the old format (thematic and seminar questions) or in this new format.