

# COMPARATIVE POLITICS COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

MAY 2012

Major Field Instructions: Answer one question from Part I, one question from Part II, and two questions from Part III. You have six hours to complete the examination.

Minor Field Instructions: Answer one question from Part I and either one question from Part II and one question from Part III or two questions from Part III. You have four and one-half hours to complete the examination.

## Section I: General Theory

- A. Some scholars claim that because rational choice was imported from economics it neglects issues like power and coercion that detract from its applicability to comparative politics. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- B. Explore the role of “time” and “sequence” in the schools of thought that emphasize social structure and institutions as important forces shaping political outcomes. Is it possible to understand the political world without taking history into account? Yet if the distinct history of each polity is critical, can we ever derive propositions about politics that are valid across borders?

## Section 2: Comparative Methodology

- A. If the principal task of comparative politics is to identify causal mechanisms, is quantitative analysis better for this task than qualitative research? Why or why not?
- B. In his essay “After KKV” (*World Politics* 2010) James Mahoney observes, “There is a new methodology of qualitative research. This new methodology, well represented by the books under review, encompasses [King, Keohane, and Verba’s] helpful insights while avoiding their most obvious missteps. Critically discuss the major contributions of the new methodology of qualitative research.
- C. What is the central difference between an experiment and an observational study? How does the assignment of units to the treatment and control groups in a randomized experiment differ from the assignment of units to the treatment and control groups in an observational study? What is the consequence of these different assignment mechanisms?

## Section 3: Applied Theory

- A. Which political institution is most important in shaping political outcomes: a nation's electoral system or the number of veto points in the system? Outline the logic behind how

each of these institutions is said to shape politics and make the case for the importance of one over the other by examining evidence from at least two specific countries.

- B. Democracy appears to be a mechanism for peaceful conflict resolution but some scholars argue that in ethnically divided societies democracy increases the likelihood of ethnic conflict. Do you agree? Why or why not? Give specific empirical examples to support your position.
- C. Dan Slater (2010, 4) asks “Why have some authoritarian regimes proven so much more capable of preserving regime stability and forestalling democratization than others?” Critically review the literature analyzing the sources of authoritarian regime stability and instability.
- D. Why have certain East Asian economies (Japan, South Korea, China, and others) grown more quickly than other states at a comparable stage of development (Argentina, Brazil, India, and others)? Discuss in light of relevant theoretical literatures.”
- E. “What the responsible-party model ignores,” comment Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007, 2) “... is that a quite different type of *patronage-based, party-voter linkage* exists in many countries including some advanced industrial democracies. In many political systems citizen-political linkages are based on direct material inducements targeted to individuals and smaller groups of citizens whom politicians know to be highly responsive to such side-payments and willing to surrender their vote for the right price.” Assess the role of patronage-based party-voter linkages on the quality of democracy giving examples from at least three countries.
- F. Charles Tilly famously claimed that states made war and war made the state. Should this claim continue to motivate theorizing about the determinants of state formation?