

**Comprehensive Exam**  
Spring 2018  
Comparative Politics  
School of Public and International Affairs  
University of Georgia

**Morning**

Instructions: answer one of the following questions.

1. What are the most significant theoretical and empirical contributions to the study of comparative politics over the past 20 years? Discuss at least one theoretical contribution and one empirical contribution, citing specific examples from the literature. Why have these contributions advanced the state of the field? What are some existing weaknesses in the subfield that offer particularly attractive opportunities for further research?

2. “The primary justification for conducting cross-national comparative research is to develop universal generalizations about political institutions, processes, and behavior. However, it is not possible to develop universal generalizations about politics that are valid across space and time. Therefore, the ‘science’ of cross-national comparative research will always be weak and unsatisfying, and researchers would accomplish much more if they were to turn their attention to the study of particular, timely questions in a country or region of special interest.”

To what extent, and in what specific ways, do you agree or disagree with the above statement?

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**Afternoon**

Instructions: answer two of the following questions.

1. Social media played an important role in Arab Spring of 2011. Citizens in China and other authoritarian regimes have also utilized the internet to expand the boundaries of social and political resistance. Do you think that the rise of new social media and digital activism calls into question our thinking about social movements in authoritarian regimes? Explain with examples and relevant studies.
2. Research on political behavior generally ascribes outcomes (turnout and participation, vote choice, strategic behavior, etc.) to factors intrinsic to the individual, including ideology, partisanship, and several demographic factors. To what extent are such outcomes also dependent upon the context to which an individual is subject, such as electoral institutions, the party system, or the competitiveness of the election? Is there any evidence that individual-level and contextual factors work in tandem to explain political behavior?
3. Explanations for political violence typically fall in to one of two camps. One attributes conflict to political grievances that groups harbor against the government, while the other views conflict as the result of structural conditions that create opportunities for rebel groups to organize. Is one of these views more useful for explaining conflict than the other? Does the empirical record support one view more strongly than the other?
4. In recent years, the state has been challenged by a number of developments, including neoliberal ideas, financial internationalization, technological change and regional integration. How, if at all, has state intervention in developed societies changed in response to these challenges? Do we observe more state, less state or a different kind of state? Are these trends universal or is there significant cross-national variation? If you argue that state intervention has changed, be sure to specify the most important causes.
5. What do we know about why democracy emerges and survives? Which political, economic, and societal conditions are the most important contributing factors to the creation and maintenance of representative government and other checks on state power? What arguments and evidence can you cite to support these claims?
6. Do you agree with the following statement: "Spatial models present a useful theory of what motivates vote choice and of how parties compete." Explain your answer.