

## Study Guide

### Comprehensive Exams

Spring 2016  
Comparative Politics  
Department of International Affairs

The exam for majors and minors in Comparative Politics will include a morning session requiring students to answer one out of two general questions. The morning session will include two questions chosen from the five below. All five questions can be covered during the oral examination. Majors will also have to answer two more specific (subfield) questions during an afternoon session of the exam.

1. Some claim that, because rational choice theory was imported from economics, it embodies assumptions that cannot be applied to comparative politics. Do you agree? Why or why not? Support your answer with examples from at least two separate subfields of comparative politics.
2. What would you characterize as the most important theoretical or empirical contribution in comparative politics in the last decade? Why? Defend your answer with reference to the historical and recent development of the field. In explaining the strengths of this contribution, discuss any weaknesses and opportunities for further research.
3. Karl Deutsch famously suggested that nationalism (as an ideology and political movement) and the nation state (as the core territorial unit of the international system) emerged and became dominant primarily because of changes in the nature of mass communication. Are similar changes taking place now threatening this dominance? How, and with what implications?
4. For each of the past four decades (the 70s, 80s, 90s, and 00s), identify the most important article or book published in comparative politics. In terms of the promulgation of knowledge, why is each of these articles particularly important? In addition, how did each article help to shape the state of research in the field?
5. After an exceptionally fortunate year on the job market, you have been asked to chair a brand new department of comparative politics. This department will include five faculty members. Assume you could hire any comparativist (except those happily serving at SPIA). Which five comparativists would you hire and why? In justifying your answer, explain what your goals would be in building a new comparative politics department.