

Comprehensive Exam

Fall 2020

Comparative Politics

School of Public and International Affairs
University of Georgia

Morning Questions

Instructions: answer **one** of the following questions. Indicate the question number and provide the text of the question at the start of your answer.

1. Congratulations! You've landed a tenure-track job at State University. Part of your teaching requirement is to establish a brand-new undergraduate course "Introduction to Comparative Politics". Describe how you will construct your course, which topics you will cover, how, and why.
2. Name two works in comparative politics that you think have made the most important contributions to the field in terms of introducing new ideas that influenced future research. Explain why you have picked these two works. Discuss their initial contributions to knowledge, the research they have inspired, and how subsequent research may have falsified or verified their insights. What are the key unanswered questions remaining for the research agenda inspired by each work?
3. Comparativists have been studying how and why democracy emerges and survives for decades. Which political, economic, and societal conditions are the most important contributing factors to emergence and survival of democracy? And in what ways does the more recent scholarship on "democratic erosion" challenge existing knowledge on democratic survival?

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Afternoon Questions

Answer **two** of the following questions (make sure you answer all “sub-questions”). Indicate the question number and provide the text of the question at the start of your answer.

1. 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?
2. Comparative politics has a long tradition of associating ethnic diversity with conflict. Similarly, particularly in Western Europe, nationalism is often associated with undemocratic and violent movements. Choose an example of ethnic conflict and relate it to the theoretical literature. Then choose an example of a nationalist struggle that was democratic and non-violent and relate that to the nationalism literature.
3. It is well known that some of the predictions of modernization theory have not come to pass. Provide an assessment of the successes and failures of modernization theory. Why have some developing countries been successful in overcoming developmental challenges while others have faltered?
4. Explanations for political violence typically fall into 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?

5. “Multi-methods” research designs have gained popularity in comparative politics as they supposedly combine the strengths of qualitative and quantitative methods. Has the “multi-methods turn” contributed to progress in the field of comparative politics? Why or why not? In your answer, take a position, make an argument, and draw on key works and strands of research to illustrate your claims and arguments.

6. In what ways have scholars thought about the roles of markets and states in promoting development? How has thinking on this question changed since World War II? What unresolved issues remain? In answering this question, make a clear argument and draw on empirical material from at least two regions in the developing world.

7. The analysis of political institutions plays an increasingly important role in the field of comparative politics. Discuss the alternative ways that political institutions have been deployed as an explanatory variable in comparative politics. Have institutional factors been productively combined with other kinds of explanatory variables, such as socioeconomic structure, culture, transnational forces, or human agency? What are the advantages and disadvantages of combining these different variables? In addressing these questions, you should focus on at least one substantive area of research in comparative politics.