

Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam in International Relations
Fall 2020
Morning Exam

Answer *one* of the following questions.

1. Plan and outline a graduate seminar that would serve as an appropriate introduction to international relations for all political science graduate students.

- What topics would you cover? Are there any common topics you would omit?
- Which works are the essential readings for the course? Are there any “canonical” readings you would omit?
- Offer detailed justifications for the topics and works included/excluded.

2. IR scholars have traditionally separated international and domestic politics by arguing that international politics take place in an anarchic environment, while domestic politics do not.

- Is this a compelling argument for treating them as separate fields of study? Why or why not?
- What are the advantages or disadvantages of incorporating domestic politics into analyses of international politics?

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Afternoon Exam

Answer *two* of the following questions.

1. Do international institutions play an important role in international relations or not? If so how? If not, why not? Is the role of international institutions sensitive to the issue area? And where do you think the most promising breakthrough in the study of international institutions is likely to occur? Address these questions based on previous theoretical and empirical research in both international conflict and cooperation. Consider as well how the emerging cyber domain can illuminate the processes of institutional formation, maintenance, and dissolution.
2. Assume that explicit assumptions about human decision making are necessary to construct coherent explanations of state behavior. Evaluate rational and cognitive assumptions in terms of their usefulness for building international relations theory and/or for conducting foreign policy analysis.
3. The bargaining model of war is ubiquitous in contemporary studies of international conflict. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this analytical framework. What important insights has it yielded, if any?
4. Information problems are rampant in international conflict and cooperation. Discuss the issue of information problems in at least two areas of international relations. Based on your discussion, please elaborate on how integrating domestic politics and international politics has changed the perspective of the field on this important issue. What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the literature on the issue of information problems?
5. The study of colonialism and empire was foundational to the contemporary (ie Post-WWI) discipline of international relations. Has imperialism always been a driving force of world politics? What are some ways we see the influence of colonialism and racism in international relations today? In your answer be sure to address whether and why the big IR “isms” are inherently racist in history, assumption, and practice. Discuss the implications of these foundations for our theory, policy, and community today.
6. Many contend that non-state actors have grown in their numbers and influence in the last twenty years. How have non-state actors been incorporated into IR theory? Are the growth of these actors in society influencing IR in lasting ways? Focusing on any one type of non-state actor (firms, terrorist organizations, NGOs, etc), what are a few of the big questions left for scholars to understand?
7. One of the fundamental problems of most studies of international relations (and politics in general) is to understand the preferences of actors. How have studies of international conflict addressed this issue? And how have IPE scholars identified the preferences of actors in the area of trade or financial politics? How satisfactory have these solutions been for the studies of conflict and IPE? How would you (or do you) deal with this problem in your own research?