

Comprehensive Exam

Fall 2022

Comparative Politics

School of Public and International Affairs

University of Georgia

Morning Questions

Instructions: answer **one** of the following questions. Make sure you answer all parts of the question. Indicate the question number and provide the text of the question at the start of your answer.

1. Multi-method research designs have gained popularity in comparative politics. What are the strengths and limitations of multi-methods research in comparative politics? Has the “multi-methods turn” contributed to progress in the field of comparative politics? Has it helped to address the methodological divide between qualitative and quantitative approaches? Why or why not? Be sure to draw on key works and substantive examples of empirical research to support your arguments. Choosing a current question in the comparative politics literature, briefly discuss how it may benefit from a multi-method research design.
2. Congratulations! You’ve landed a faculty job in comparative politics. 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. Be sure to discuss examples of specific materials you will choose to include or exclude and your reasons for those decisions.

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Afternoon Questions

Instructions: answer **two** of the following questions. Make sure you answer all parts of the question. Indicate the question number and provide the text of the question at the start of each answer.

1. How well have political scientists explored the importance of leaders in the economic development process? What black boxes or unresolved questions persist? Be sure to ground your answer in specific contributions and examples from the scholarly literature.
2. Social media played an important role in the 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. Drawing on theoretical and empirical contributions from the scholarly literature, discuss how the rise of new social media and digital activism calls into question our thinking about social movements in authoritarian regimes.
3. One of the greatest challenges of European politics in the last half decade has been the influx of a large number of immigrants and refugees, especially from the Middle East, North Africa, and Sub-Saharan African countries. According to the comparative politics literature, what precisely are the challenges that this large scale immigration allegedly represents? Different governments adopted very different policies towards migrants. How have scholars explained these differences?
4. Comparativists have been studying how and why democracy emerges and survives for decades. According to the comparative politics literature, 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?
5. People argue that, since the turn of the century, religion has returned to the center of politics around the world. Has it returned or has it never been away?

Draw on theoretical and empirical contributions from the literature to elaborate and support your argument.

6. Research on political behavior generally ascribes outcomes (e.g., turnout and participation, vote choice, strategic behavior) to factors intrinsic to the individual, including ideology, partisanship, and 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?
7. 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. Briefly describe the arguments of these two camps. 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?
8. Previous scholarship has questioned whether it is reasonable to attribute causal effects to political institutions. More pointedly, Przeworski (2004) asks if “one can stick any institutions into some particular conditions and expect that they would function in the same way as they have functioned elsewhere.” Provide your answer to this question. Is it reasonable, based on your reading of the literature, to see institutions as having an independent causal impact? Provide a few examples grounded in existing scholarship to illustrate your points.