

**Comparative Politics
Preliminary Examination**

Winter 2004

Instructions. You must answer four questions. Those who select comparative as a major field must choose one question from each of three lists and answer the special question your adviser has submitted (these are individually tailored and appear at the end). Those who select comparative as a minor field must choose three questions, distributed across at least two lists, and answer the question the adviser has submitted (these are individually tailored and appear at the end).

Answers should be typewritten. Please provide a paper copy to Lili Kivisto 24 hours after you pick up the exam. Please provide an email copy to the sub-field coordinator and to Lili Kivisto when you submit the paper copy.

You may not speak with others (faculty, peers, friends, family members) until all students who take the exam have submitted their work. In most instances that means that you may talk about the exam roughly 8 hours after you submit it.

Please remember that in at least one of your answers you must compare and contrast real cases.

List One: (States & Nations; Political Development; Regimes & Democratization; Second Image)

1. Modernization theory was a dominant paradigm for the study of developing countries during the 1950s and 1960s. What were the major strengths and weaknesses of modernization theory, and which of its elements, if any, have stood the test of time—meaning are they helpful in understanding politics and society in developing countries at the present time? Some observers suggest that present-day studies of globalization reflect in large measure a revival of modernization theory, having a very similar conceptual and analytic focus and possessing many of the same strengths and weaknesses. Evaluate this suggestion.

2. Discuss political science research that treats political system (or regime type) in developing countries as either an independent variable or a dependent variable. Review and evaluate the hypotheses, research design, and findings of several studies that seek to explain why certain types of political systems (or regimes) emerge or persist and/or what difference it makes. Suggest some testable and potentially important hypotheses that are not addressed in the studies you cite.

3. Many theories about the rise of the modern state are evolutionary in character. What are the key components of an evolutionary argument? Why are these theories (at least some of them) criticized for their functional character? What's wrong with functional theories, if anything? Are there any theories of state formation that adequately address the claims of the critics?

4. Domestic politics shape the positions governments take on a variety of foreign policy matters. Identify and outline at least three major theories about the way domestic politics matters. Compare and contrast these arguments, then explain the conditions under which each provides the most explanatory leverage.

List Two: (Constitutions, Interest Groups & Interest Intermediation, Political Parties & Elections; Accountability)

1. You have received a telephone call from Afghanistan. The caller, a policy maker, asks you to explain the pros and cons of parliamentarism v. presidentialism and to advise whether a premier-presidential system would capture the benefits of both parliamentary and presidential systems while taming the problems commonly associated with them. Reply, drawing on both theory and empirics in your answer.

2. The Federalist Papers proposed several institutional devices for preventing tyranny of the majority, among them bicameralism, separation of powers, federalism, and an independent judiciary. Choose one of these proposals and discuss the circumstances under which it would have the effects envisioned, referring to evidence from the study of comparative politics.

3. You are a head of government. Why should you care how labor and business are organized in your country? In your answer, give your reader a sense of cross-national differences in the organization of these groups. Also discuss the practical consequences of these different patterns for someone engaged in making economic policy. Finally, what kinds of changes domestically or globally may alter the systems of labor and business organization in your country and why?

4. Electoral rules may help us account for the character of political party systems. Discuss some of the causal relationships that lie behind this statement, then point to some of the other conditions that mediate the effects of electoral rules on party behavior. In your answer refer to at least three real-world examples.

List Three: (Political Culture, Participation, Violence, Identity Politics)

1. "There is a long and honorable tradition in political science that political culture fundamentally shapes the institutions of a state. Recent empirical research across many countries, especially those undergoing major transitions, strongly suggests, however, that

it is institutions that fundamentally govern that which we term political culture. Get the institutions right and the political culture will follow.” Assess, using two or more countries with which you are familiar as the basis for your comments.

2. “Grievance and frustration are major sources of violence.” Respond to this statement, drawing on writing in comparative politics.
3. Comparative political scientists have had considerable success explaining cross-national variation in electoral participation rates (i.e., in voting). What aspects of electoral law, electoral systems, parties, and/or party systems contribute to these explanations? What is the logic that drives these relationships? Be sure to define all terms.
4. “The study of ethnicity has failed to produce explanatory theories that have a high level of generality. In fact, it is so difficult to identify strong alternative theories in this literature that ‘identity politics’ rarely assumes a position of importance on most introductory comparative politics reading lists.” Respond to this claim. Do you agree or disagree and why? Your answer should refer to the contributions of several scholars in this area of research. If you agree with the statement, you should identify some of the reasons why theory development is so difficult.

List Four: (Policy, States& Markets, Good Government)

1. In recent years, many observers of developing areas have argued that two decades of experimentation with neoliberalism in Latin American and Africa have not born fruit in the form of economic growth. The electorates in places like Brazil and Argentina seem to agree, rejecting politicians who advocate neoliberal nostrums of privatization, lower tariffs, and increased foreign investment. Discuss the theoretical claims that link neoliberalism with robust economic growth, and evaluate such claims against empirical evidence from at least two countries located in different continents. To the extent that economic growth was anemic in the countries you focus on, why do you think this happens? Was it because there is something flawed in the theory that links open markets/neoliberalism with economic growth, or was it due to some other external factors?
2. John Maynard Keynes once observed that, “the ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly believed.” Under what circumstances do economic ideas influence government policies? Using one or more examples of important economic ideas that had a major impact on policy in a number of countries (e.g., Keynesianism, neoliberalism, dependency, import substitution industrialization, etc.) discuss how economic ideas spread, when they become persuasive and powerful, and how they get adopted into policy.

3. Some scholars suggest that differences in prosperity arise from the arrangement of “veto players” in a political system. What do these arguments say? For what kinds of outcomes can they account? Offer at least one criticism of this intellectual approach, anticipate the authors’ response, and take a position yourself.

Individual Questions

Gaye: Discuss the place of religion in the political life of at least two countries. What broader analytical insights are suggested by differences and/or similarities between these countries with respect to the relationship between religion and politics? To what extent do these insights either reinforce, challenge, or complement and extend important findings from the social science literature on religion and politics? (Tessler)