

Comparative Politics  
Spring 2009

**Directions:**

- Please put your Student ID number at the top of each page of your examination. **DO NOT** write your name anywhere on the examination.
- Number your pages consecutively for the entire examination.
- Cite sources throughout your essay, where appropriate, using standard format and provide a single bibliography that includes all the materials used in preparing your answers.
- Clearly label each answer with the number of question you are answering.
- Submit a cover page with your responses that lists the following: ID number, type of exam completed (e.g. MA major, MA minor, PhD major, PhD minor) and examination area. Please list the semester the examination is taken as well.
- Budget your time carefully, including time to think and organize while preparing and writing the answers. Focus on preparing coherent, well-organized essays that not only demonstrate your mastery of the literature, but also indicate how the literature expands our collective knowledge.
- Avoid overlapping materials from one question to the next. Also avoid excessive paraphrasing and quotations.

MA Minors – please answer three questions, with no more than two questions from either Section A or B.

MA Majors – please answer two questions from Section A and two from Section B.

### **Section A.**

1. What is the comparative method and why is it considered part of a qualitative research tradition rather than a quantitative one?
2. What are the virtues and drawbacks of close historical comparison of country cases?
3. In her work on revolutions, Skocpol cites Japan, Prussia, and England as exceptions to the pattern of revolutions in France, Russia, and China. Why does she need to discuss these exceptions? Do they vitiate or enhance her main thesis? This is a question designed to tease out your knowledge of methodological issues in comparative politics. Thus, in answering it, you need to explain some aspects of those methodological issues.
4. How can we best understand the importance of particular individual political leaders? Can individual leaders make a major difference in politics?
5. Critically compare and contrast “rational choice” institutionalism with “historical” institutionalism.

### **Section B.**

1. How different are the measures different advanced industrialized economies take to reduce economic inequality within the domestic economy? What explains the differences? Are different states converging on their approaches to inequality? You may want to address the “Varieties of Capitalism” literature in answering this question.
2. Issues concerning measurement validity for both quantitative and qualitative research have emerged as an important topic in comparative analysis. What are these issues? What literature in comparative politics has been cited frequently in relationship to measurement validity problems?
3. Rehashing an old debate, what is the status the “Lipset democratization thesis” in comparative politics (this should be written as a short literature review of competing perspectives regarding the “thesis.”)
4. Modernization and the spread of global capitalism were supposed to undermine the basis for ethnic and religious conflict. How do you explain the contemporary explosion of ethnic and religious conflict?

5. How might we expect politics to change in a time of severe global economic downturn? What theories and/or historical examples are useful for thinking about this question?
6. What explains the rapid economic growth of Northeast Asia (the region encompassing the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Japan and Korea)? Are there any general political factors that explain growth across this region? Are there any lessons from the region that are applicable to countries in other regions?