

COMPARATIVE POLITICS EXAM SPRING 2010

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. Submit a cover page with your responses that lists the following: ID number, type of exam completed (e.g. MA major, MA minor) and examination area, as well as the semester in which you are taking the exam. 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 the question you are answering. 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. Students are expected to work independently on this examination and not discuss the essay items and responses with others.

MA Majors – please answer one question from each section for a total of four.

MA Minors – please answer three questions. You can select your three from any of the four sections but you cannot select more than one from a section.

Section A.

1. What is “selection bias?” Can it be overcome?
2. Identify and explain some of the major measurement issues in comparative politics. Cite specifically a body of literature that illustrates some these issues and discuss ways in which comparativists attempt to address measurement problems.

Section B.

3. Is there a theoretical/conceptual core to “new institutionalism”? If there is, what is it? If not, why?
4. Why are “ideas” and “discourse” becoming so central to the “new institutionalism” literature?

Section C.

5. Why has there been a resurgence of political cultural theories in comparative politics? What are the main methodologies utilized in this literature?

6. Violence, e.g., ethnic, non-ethnic, civil wars, revolutions and terrorism, has become an important sub-field in comparative politics. Why do you think this has happened? And provide some substantive insights as to how this sub-field is evolving theoretically/conceptually and methodologically.

Section D.

7. There has been significant economic and political change in most of the countries that were ruled by Communist Parties before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Choosing one or more of these countries, explain the path that this transformation has taken. What are some of the approaches and debates that characterize studies of this transformation?

8. At this time of economic recession, the ability of different political systems to promote citizens' material wellbeing is of acute concern. What are some of the key differences in how various advanced industrialized countries organize their economies? What are the advantages and disadvantages to these various approaches?

9. Scholarship on the siting of controversial facility siting has been divided; some experts have found evidence for "environmental racism," while others see the problem in terms of collective action, civil society, and social capital. Which theories do you believe best explain the pattern of unwanted projects in the US and abroad? Make sure to reference at least three different authors in your answer.

10. Elinor Ostrom recently was awarded the Nobel prize for her work on common pool resources; the flip side of this problem has been termed the "tragedy of the commons." What is the theory of the tragedy of the commons? Give some examples in your answer along with potential solutions as suggested by scholarship on cases around the world.