Comparative Politics M.A. Exam
Major and Minor
Spring 2006

Student ID _______________________

Do not print your name on the examination. For identification, please use your student ID number in the Space indicated above.

If comparative politics is your major field, please answer two (2) questions from section A and two questions from section B. You have 48 hours to complete the examination.

If comparative politics is your minor field, please answer three (3) questions, one from Section A and B and the other from either Section A or B. You have forty-eight hours to complete the examination.

Return the exam to Traci when completed. Demonstrate the breadth of your knowledge. Avoid overlapping materials from one question to the next. Also, you should avoid excessive paraphrasing and quotations.

Section A. questions are designed to elicit theoretical and conceptual responses while Section B. questions are designed to engender a more empirical type of analysis.

Section A.

1. David Laitin claims that comparative politics is (has converged) converging towards a tripartite relationship between theorizing, data and method. What is this tripartite convergence that he is speaking of?

2. Critically compare and contrast “rational choice” institutionalism with “historical” institutionalism.

3. Does Comparative Politics have a coherent epistemological basis? If it does, explain what it is. If it does not, explain why not.

4. Explain the relationship between socio-economic development and democratization. Identify some of the salient issues that have arisen in the debate concerning economic modernization and political development

Section B.

1. What is the comparative method? Is there a single one?
2. While the World Bank and many scholars argue that corruption obstructs economic development, such countries as China and South Korea have grown rapidly despite widespread corruption. Some scholars, such as David Kang, have argued that there is a healthy place for political corruption in a developing state. How does political corruption affect economic development?

3. 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?

4. Explain the issue of “selection bias” in qualitative (comparative) research? Then discuss whether or not it can be overcome in the design of a research project.
Do not print your name on the examination. For identification, please use your student ID number in the Space indicated above.

If comparative politics is your major field, please answer two (2) questions from each section. You have eight (8) hours to complete the examination.

If comparative politics is your minor field, please answer two (2) questions, one from each section. You have six (6) hours to complete the examination.

Return the exam to Traci when completed. Demonstrate the breadth of your knowledge. Avoid overlapping materials from one question to the next. Also, you should avoid excessive paraphrasing and quotations.

Section A. questions are designed to elicit theoretical and conceptual responses while Section B. questions are designed to engender a more empirical type of analysis.

Section A.

1. Explain the endogenous and exogenous basis of democratization. Identify and explain the variants in the literature regarding this issue.

2. Theory: modernization (socio-economic) causes democratization. Methodology: the Comparative Method. How would you develop (explicate) the theory in relationship to the methodology?

3. Take a body of literature from Comparative Politics, e.g. New Institutionalism, and provide a critical analysis of the main theoretical and conceptual themes in the literature.

4. How is the concept of preferences and preference formation dealt with in the literature on "new institutionalism"? Are there any noteworthy distinctions between historical, rational choice, and sociological “new institutionalisms” on the issue of preferences and preference formation?
Section B.

1. While during the 1980s the Japanese and German economic models seemed more suited to economic growth than the American, since then Europeans and Japanese have looked on enviously as the U.S. has roared past them in raising productivity, economic output, employment, and even population. In response, Japanese and European leaders have attempted to make markets more flexible. How much have the political economies of other advanced industrialized countries become like that of the U.S.? Are different advanced industrialized countries still different enough that it makes to sense to speak of “varieties of capitalism”?

2. You have been named as an advisor to the new regime in Rwanda. Your responsibility is to briefly explain the major causes of ethnic/religious conflict and to suggest policies that might deal with the problem and be helpful to the new regime. What would you say?

3. In 1980 Communism dominated one-third of the world, but now, at least as an economic approach emphasizing central planning and state ownership of the means of production, it is almost extinct. What have been the challenges of creating democracies in formerly Communist societies and how do these challenges differ from the challenges of democratizing other formerly authoritarian societies?

4. “Analysts trying to explain why some developing countries have grown so much more rapidly than other regularly select a few successful new industrializing countries (NICS) for study. Prior to the debt crisis, which began in 1982, the cases most often examined were Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Brazil, and Mexico. In all these countries, during the periods of most rapid growth, governments exerted extensive control over labor and prevented most expressions of workers discontent.” Thus, their successful export-led strategy depended on cheap skilled labor and a repressed-quiescent-labor force. According to Barbara Geddes, such an inference is fatally flawed. Why? And can anything be done to overcome such a problem?
Comparative Politics Exam
Spring 2005

Student ID# ____________________________

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.

- 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). Return the examination to Traci when completed.

- Clearly label each answer with the number of question you are answering.

- Number your pages consecutively for the entire examination.

- Cite sources throughout your essay, where appropriate, using standard format and provide a bibliography that includes all the materials used in preparing your answers.

- This is an open book examination. Focus on preparing coherent, well-organized essays that demonstrate the breadth and depth of your knowledge. Avoid overlapping material from one question to the next.

MA Minors – please answer two (2) questions, one (1) from each section. You have four (4) hours to complete the exam.

MA Majors – please answer three (3) questions, with at least one (1) question from each section. You have six (6) hours to complete the exam.

PhD Minors – please answer three (3) questions, with at least one (1) question from each section. You have six (6) hours to complete the exam.

PhD Majors – please answer four (4) questions. Two (2) from Section A and two (2) from section B. You have eight (8) hours to complete the exam.
Section A.

1. Identify three ontological frameworks in comparative politics. Then, compare and contrast the conceptual and empirical dimensions of two out of the three.

2. Citing examples compare and contrast the "historical comparative method" of inquiry to the case study, and the cross-national methods in comparative politics. When is the comparative historical method most appropriate?

3. "Selection Bias" has become a hotly discussed topic in comparative politics. What is selection bias? And what is its relationship to small N research? Finally, can it be overcome in small N research designs?

4. Is there a coherent theoretical core in “new institutionalism” literature? If there is, what is it? If there is not, why is this the case?

5. What are some of the basic assumptions that underpin rational choice models?

6. Should the process of establishing democratic regimes be measured on a continuous scale, e.g. from – 10 to 10 or as a dichotomous or trichotomous variable. Situate your response in the broader context of how democracy and democratization are conceptualized and measured.

Section B.

1. A number of scholars have discussed a difference between “communitarian” or “coordinated” and “Anglo-American” or “liberal” versions of capitalism. What are these differences and are they significant? Have the differences substantially diminished in recent years?

2. What is the role of ideas in political change? How can we distinguish the impact of ideas from other factors in determining political change?

3. Most of the post-Communist countries are simultaneously undergoing democratic reforms and economic reforms. What is the relationship between democratization and economic liberalization? Do these two types of reforms reinforce each other, or can they undermine each other?

4. What are the constructivist and primordialist approaches to the study of nations and nationalism? Compare and critically assess the main theoretical claims advanced by these two schools of thought.

5. What if anything has the study of comparative genocide added to our knowledge of the origins and process of genocide?
6. Modernization and the spread of global capitalism were supposed to undermine the basis for ethnic and religious conflict. Citing various studies, how do you explain the contemporary explosion of ethnic and religious conflict?
Comparative Politics Ph.D. Exam
Major and Minor
Spring 2006

Student ID ____________________________

Do not print your name on the examination. For identification, please use your student ID number in the space indicated above.

If comparative politics is your major field, please answer two (2) questions from each section. You have eight (8) hours to complete the examination.

If comparative politics is your minor field, please answer two (2) questions, one from each section. You have six (6) hours to complete the examination.

Return the exam to Traci when completed. Demonstrate the breadth of your knowledge. Avoid overlapping materials from one question to the next. Also, you should avoid excessive paraphrasing and quotations.

Section A. questions are designed to elicit theoretical and conceptual responses while Section B. questions are designed to engender a more empirical type of analysis.

Section A.

1. Explain the endogenous and exogenous basis of democratization. Identify and explain the variants in the literature regarding this issue.

2. Theory: modernization (socio-economic) causes democratization. Methodology: the Comparative Method. How would you develop (explicate) the theory in relationship to the methodology?

3. Take a body of literature from Comparative Politics, e.g. New Institutionalism, and provide a critical analysis of the main theoretical and conceptual themes in the literature.

4. How is the concept of preferences and preference formation dealt with in the literature on “new institutionalism”? Are there any noteworthy distinctions between historical, rational choice, and sociological “new institutionalisms” on the issue of preferences and preference formation?
Section B.

1. While during the 1980s the Japanese and German economic models seemed more suited to economic growth than the American, since then Europeans and Japanese have looked on enviously as the U.S. has roared past them in raising productivity, economic output, employment, and even population. In response, Japanese and European leaders have attempted to make markets more flexible. How much have the political economies of other advanced industrialized countries become like that of the US? Are different advanced industrialized countries still different enough that it makes to sense to speak of “varieties of capitalism”?

2. You have been named as an advisor to the new regime in Rwanda. Your responsibility is to briefly explain the major causes of ethnic/religious conflict and to suggest policies that might deal with the problem and be helpful to the new regime. What would you say?

3. In 1980 Communism dominated one-third of the world, but now, at least as an economic approach emphasizing central planning and state ownership of the means of production, it is almost extinct. What have been the challenges of creating democracies in formerly Communist societies and how do these challenges differ from the challenges of democratizing other formerly authoritarian societies?

4. “Analysts trying to explain why some developing countries have grown so much more rapidly than other regularly select a few successful new industrializing countries (NICs) for study. Prior to the debt crisis, which began in 1982, the cases most often examined were Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Brazil, and Mexico. In all these countries, during the periods of most rapid growth, governments exerted extensive control over labor and prevented most expressions of workers discontent.” Thus, their successful export-led strategy depended on cheap skilled labor and a repressed-quiescent-labor force. According to Barbara Geddes, such an inference is fatally flawed. Why? And can anything be done to overcome such a problem?