International Relations

M.A. Qualifying Exam

Spring 2015

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.

- 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 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. Any questions about exam procedures should be directed to the convener.

MA Majors – please answer the question in Part A and **two** questions from Part B.

MA Minors – please answer the question in Part A and **one** question from Part B.
Part A (core question)

An ongoing debate in the field of International Relations is between those who think the internal characteristics of states are the biggest influence on their decisions in international affairs and those who think the international context in which states make political choices is most important. Describe and assess the fault lines in this debate. Who thinks internal characteristics are most important? Who thinks context is most important? How does this disagreement map onto the inter-paradigm debate between Realists, Liberals, Constructivists, and Marxists? In your view, which position is most persuasive and why?

Part B

1) Assess the influence of public opinion on foreign policy. How do Realists, Liberals, and Constructivists think about the public's influence on foreign affairs? How do their predictions about the significance of public opinion match the empirical record?

2) Field and laboratory experiments are increasingly prominent in the scholarship of international relations. Review recent uses of experiments in the field of International Relations. What are the costs and benefits of these methods for understanding international affairs?

3) Most international relations theorists, particularly descendants of the realists, regard the state as the central actor in international relations. Write an essay that explores the alternative perspective that has been presented and defended by theorists who emphasize international relations from a world systems, dependency, and global dominance perspectives. What value, if any, do such alternatives to realist theory provide to help us understand the contemporary world.

4) Write an essay that describes the impacts of wars from World War II to the present on veterans of those wars. Has knowledge of impacts of war on participants grown? Has this knowledge impacted on decisions of states to enter war with other countries? Should theories of war and peace include analyses that include war impacts?

5) Sovereignty is a fundamental principle in the inter-state system. Some argue that states’ exercise of sovereignty is in retreat; others contend that it is expanding, through diasporas abroad, for example. Discuss and evaluate the merits of these debates.

6) Does the shifting distribution of economic power, marked by the rise of non-Western states, create challenges for the existing liberal economic order? Discuss and evaluate arguments suggesting there are challenges and those which do not.

7) International relations scholarship has been devoting increased attention to non-state actors in international politics in the past couple of decades. One category of such actors is nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and a prominent way of thinking about them is as parts of transnational advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Is the network concept an effective way of theorizing about nongovernmental actors? In a
well-crafted essay, discuss the strengths and limitations of thinking about NGOs’ activities in the international system, referring to relevant literature.

8) There is a divide in thinking about global justice in politics – some justice theorists believe that considerations of justice belong within individual governments’ responsibility. Others argue that justice considerations extend beyond borders. Briefly describe the nature of this debate. Which do you find more convincing? In your answer, specifically address whether you think it is possible or practical to expect international institutions to address justice issues. Use examples of specific thinkers and arguments from the literature to support your position.

9) You have been asked to provide an entry on "offensive realism" for the new edition of the Encyclopedia of International Relations. You should discuss the theory and how it differs from so-called "defensive realism" as well as any relevant empirical research. Your entry should be no longer than 10 double-spaced pages including a one page annotated bibliography (which can be single-spaced) of the 5 or so major works on (or critiques of) offensive realism.