Ph.D Minor Examination in Political Theory  Fall, 2005

Answer THREE questions, ONE from each section (History, Epistemology, Contemporary). You have FOUR hours to completed this CLOSED-BOOK exam.

HISTORY

1. Discuss some of the major issues in Marx’s thought, including the following: alienation and commodity fetishism, historical materialism, and the theory of surplus value (here including exploitation). Evaluate and critique.

2. Choose any nineteenth-century thinker with an individualist perspective and show how that thinker resolved the problem of the individual’s political participation. Do you consider that thinker’s solution to have been successful? Explain.

EPISTEMOLOGY

1. You have been elected chair of the political theory section of the APSA. You have to prepare a model syllabus for an undergraduate course in political theory. Using one figure that you would include and one that you would exclude, discuss the criteria you would employ in your decision-making (and rules that you would not). How controversial are they? Conclude with a thought about what difference such choices and guidelines make.

2. Compare and contrast the basic epistemological/philosophical assumptions of Marx and Nietzsche.

3. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative approaches to political science, using the examples of a specific method from each of the two major divisions and commenting on the kinds of knowledge yielded by the methods that you have chosen.

CONTEMPORARY

1. Emma Goldman has been called by some an "anti-feminist." How shall we understand this claim? Why was Goldman unable to support many of the mainstream feminist efforts to end women’s oppression? Do aspects of anarchist theory conflict with the methods and goals of feminists? Would you call her a feminist?

2. Compare and/or contrast Weber’s writings on bureaucracy to Foucault’s on the modern disciplinary apparatus.

3. Examine, compare and evaluate the critiques of racism and colonialism in two of the following: Du Bois, Fanon, Said, and Gilroy.
Political Theory M.A. (Minor Exam, Spring 2005)

Please answer one from each section. You have up to six hours to complete the exam. This is a closed-book test.

HISTORY
1. Reflect on the varieties and development of nineteenth-century British liberalism by comparing and contrasting at least two theorists of that time and place.

2. Compare two important figures in political thought on one of the following topics: equality, oppression, power, or human nature. Pick figures that make for interesting comparisons, mention similarities as well as differences, and conclude with some evaluation of each.

EPISTEMOLOGY
1. Compare and contrast a qualitative approach to studying politics (e.g., social construction) to quantitative or positivistic approaches to studying politics. What, if anything, does the qualitative approach that you chose reveal that quantitative or positivistic approaches do not? Provide real or imagined examples of research to illustrate your analysis.

2. Consider the question of race and identity in feminist theory. Does one’s race affect how we read a text, or how the text speaks to us, or how we think about the centrality of gender over other identities in feminist theorizing? For whom is gender prior to race? Respond to these questions drawing on at least two of the following theorists: Simone de Beauvoir, Elsa Barkley Brown, Shulamith Firestone, Norma Alarcón, Nancy Hartsock, Patricia Williams, Heidi Hartman, Nancy Fraser, and Catharine MacKinnon.

CONTEMPORARY
1. Does existentialist philosophy have anything to contribute to political theory? Choose a twentieth-century thinker who is associated with existentialism to illustrate your response.

2. Iris Young suggests that we need to take seriously the material existence of our bodies, the means by which we experience some key human pleasures and miseries. Taking our embodied selves as a starting point, reflect on the notion that the male body is the norm in our society, woman’s body is seen as peculiar, and woman appears essentially to man as a sexual being.