**September 2012**

**Comprehensive Examination: International Relations**

**Major Field Exam**: Answer FOUR questions; you have EIGHT hours to do so.

**Minor Field Exam**: Answer THREE questions; you have SIX hours to do so.

All answers will be given equal weight. Be sure to refer to the relevant literature in your answers and watch the time.

1. An emerging debate divides rationalists from their critics concerning communication in the international system. Characterize the debate between rationalists and their critics concerning the roles of communication in the international system and types of communication that are efficacious. In doing so, explain the broader implications of different understandings of communication for substantive theories of world politics. Which approach, on balance, provides the more valuable theory of state interaction?

2.  How well does the form and functioning of international institutions match the intentions of their original creators? Over the last decade, a variety of rational choice and constructivist scholars have advanced different answers to this question. Draw on the existing literature to analyze these debates, and the deeper points of theoretical agreement and disagreement between scholars, over the ways in which international institutions work.

3. States often rely on deterrence to achieve security. Start by discussing the basic requirements for deterrence. Then address the differences between nuclear and conventional deterrence, explore the reasons that states may have difficulty making their threats credible, and consider the options that states can employ to increase the credibility of their threats. Finally, explore why and how states’ efforts to deter can be self-defeating.

4. Where do scholars of international political economy think that state preferences come from? And do their theories of preference formation provide adequate explanations of the preferences that actual states have over international economic relations? In a short essay, draw upon the literature to sketch out the major alternative ways in which international relations scholars think about preferences, while providing a careful comparative assessment of their strengths and weaknesses when used in empirical research.

5. Arms control can sometimes play a valuable role in enabling a state to achieve security; under other conditions building arms is more likely to protect the state. Explain the logic of each approach and explore the conditions that influence their prospects for success.

6. Compare and contrast the study of international political outcomes and foreign policy decisions. Be sure to discuss both theoretical and methodological requirements for studying each phenomenon. In your conclusion, discuss whether the two are mutually necessary, or instead can be studied independently.

7. Much of the early work on international political economy understood market relations in terms of broader power relations. Over time, this has changed, as explanations of economic outcomes increasingly emphasized the functional benefits of economic cooperation over power considerations. In a short essay, draw on the literature to sketch out the relationship between power-based and functionally-based accounts of international economic outcomes over time. Assess the benefits and drawbacks of each approach and conclude by explaining which of these accounts is superior.