**Comparative Politics Field Exam**

**May 2017**

**Instructions for Students for Whom Comparative Politics is A Major Field**

Choose one essay from Section I and two essays from Section II. Be sure that your essays take the form of an argument, that you cite relevant literature, and that you avoid overlap, so you can demonstrate familiarity with a wide range of comparative politics literatures. Also, be sure to draw examples from countries with which you are familiar in at least some of your answers-- preferably countries from more than one area of the world.

**Instructions for Students for Whom Comparative Politics is A Minor Field**

Choose two questions, at least one of which should be from Section II. Be sure that your essays take the form of an argument, that you cite relevant literature, and that you avoid overlap, so you can demonstrate familiarity with a wide range of comparative politics literatures. Also, be sure to draw examples from countries with which you are familiar in at least some of your answers--preferably countries from more than one area of the world.

**Section I**

1. Many political scientists advocate a “mixed-methods” approach to comparative politics research. What is a mixed-methods approach? Is such an approach always feasible? If feasible, is it always preferable?

2. Is establishing causality necessary for a good comparative politics argument, and how does one go about identifying causal relationships?

3. “Area studies, long held to be a more appropriate focus for historians than for political scientists, have once again come into their own as one of the most useful approaches for comparative politics research.” Discuss, with illustrations from recent comparative literature.

**Section II**

1. What types of institutions should a deeply divided society adopt in order to minimize the likelihood of violent conflict?

2. What is the best book written in comparative politics in the last 10 years? Explain.

3. How well do theories of nationalism help us account for the resurgence of nationalist parties and movements around the world in recent years?

4. Democratization research long focused on explaining transitions from autocracy to democracy, yet an increasing number of scholars now agree that many countries fit into a third category: competitive authoritarianism. Can existing theories of democratization explain competitive authoritarianism as a stable regime type? Focusing on at least two classic explanations for democratization, explain whether and how these arguments can account for countries’ moves toward or away from competitive authoritarianism.

5. To what extent does the rise of far right parties and movements in Europe invalidate theories concerning the consolidation of democracy after the fall/removal of authoritarian regimes? Would you make the same argument about other world areas?

6. How, if at all, do domestic political institutions influence economic policy decisions? Illustrate your answer with examples from several countries.

7. How do the politics of public provision vary across OECD and/or developing countries? What are some of the main factors governing the extent and nature of public provision, and are countries likely to increasingly converge in this regard?