

## **Comparative Politics Field Exam**

### **May 2016**

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

Choose one essay from Part 1 and two essays from Part 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 one essay from Part 1 and one essay from Part 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.

#### **Part I**

1. Based on developments in the discipline in the last decade, what do you think is the next “big thing” in methodology and research agendas in comparative politics research? Why do you think this is where the field is headed? Do you believe that this new direction is likely to help the comparative politics discipline overcome previous deficiencies, or not?
2. In recent years, the number of studies in comparative politics that use “historical data,” focusing on the pre-World War II era, has increased. What are the advantages and disadvantages of historical case studies in comparative politics? To make your argument, discuss at least three historical case studies (either books or articles).
3. “Experimental research has irrevocably changed the comparative politics subfield.” Do you agree with this statement? If yes, why? If not, why? What are the advantages and disadvantages of experimental research relative to other methods in comparative politics?

#### **Part II**

1. About fifteen years ago, Adam Przeworski and his colleagues published their book *Democracy and Development*. And, ten years ago, Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson published their *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. What are the main strengths and weaknesses of one or both of these books? How did one or both of these books affect the study of political regimes and democratization in the discipline?

2. How important are international influences in bringing about regime change? Discuss by evaluating the roles of domestic and international actors in ousting authoritarian regimes in two world areas.
3. “In the twenty-first century, international organizations and international economic factors (including globalization, finance, trade, and debt) increasingly constrain domestic political processes and policies.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? You may focus your answer on either international organizations or international economic factors (or both).
4. “Authoritarian regimes can learn, change and adapt just as well as democratic regimes.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? How would a greater focus on authoritarian learning and adaption (or the lack thereof) affect comparativists’ theories of regime stability and change?
5. “Comparativists’ research on ethnic conflict and political violence is too heavily focused on the macro level of analysis and largely overlooks the micro and meso levels.” Do you agree with this statement? What are the advantages and disadvantages of a focus on the macro level?
6. Ten years ago, Stathis Kalyvas published his *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. What are the main strengths and weaknesses of this book? Did Kalyvas successfully take the study of political violence and civil war beyond the traditional emphasis on “greed” and “grievance”? Does his theory or the theory of other scholars better explain the rise of ISIS/ISIL/IS?