**Comparative Politics Major Field Exam**

**Fall 2014**

**Instructions**

Pick one topic from Part I and two topics from Part II.

Be sure that your essays take the form of an argument, that you cite relevant literature, and that you avoid overlap in your choice of topics.  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. In recent years, regression analysis has become prevalent in comparative politics.  Is regression analysis usually necessary for a solid comparative-politics argument, in your view?  Is regression analysis usually necessary, but insufficient?  What other methods (process tracing, discursive or interpretive analysis, game theory, and experiments) do you consider most helpful to the development of robust arguments in comparative politics? Why?

2. “Conceptual stretching” is a risk in both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Discuss three examples of this problem and potential remedies to it.

3. The behavioral revolution has been well ensconced in political science for over six decades. Has this led to cumulative results? Consider the literature in comparative politics: where can the field boast true scientific achievements? What are the constraints of a positivist approach to comparative politics? Are these outweighed by the advantages?

**Part II**

1. "Although we are scholars of comparative politics, we cannot deny the impact of international factors."  Do you agree?  To what extent do international factors matter in our analyses of civil society and/or ethnic cleavages and/or intrastate political violence and/or nationalism?  Do international factors matter more in today's globalized world than in the past, in your view?

2. Which political institutions do you think are most important in promoting economic development and/or political development?  Assess the theoretical and empirical literature linking the institutions and economic growth and/or political development.

3. What do we know about the conditions under which interest groups and social movements have an impact on policy outcomes? Assess the state of scholarship on this topic. What can studies of interest groups and social movements learn from each other?

4. One of the hallmarks of “late development” is greater state involvement in the economy. Compare and contrast three perspectives on what impact rapid economic development has on political institutions. Discuss examples from at least two different regions of the world when crafting your answer.

5. Reports about turmoil in various countries often make reference to “failed states”. This is a term found frequently in the press and in discussions among international relations scholars. Comparativists tend to talk more about the breakdown of regimes or varieties of authoritarianism. Does the literature in comparative politics enrich our understandings of why some states “fail”? Be sure to clarify what you mean by “failure”.

6. Nationalism, ethnic diversity, and a large peasantry can be a volatile mix in good times, let alone in hard times. Discuss.