**Comprehensive Exam in International Relations September 2014**

Major comprehensive exam candidates should answer one question from *each* of the three sections (international political economy, security, and general), as well as one further question from a section of their choosing. Minor comprehensive exam candidates should just answer one question from each of the three sections. Majors have 8 hours; minors have 6 to complete the exam.

**Section I - International Political Economy**

1) What are the political consequences of the extraordinary growth of trade and financial flows over the last three decades?

2) To what extent does international political economy scholarship provide insights into the BRICS? Have the BRICS fundamentally altered the politics of international political economy? If so, how so, if not why not?

3) Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Open Economy Politics approach to international political economy.

4) To what extent has the line between international political economy and comparative political economy become blurred in the past decade? On balance is this a positive or negative development for the field?

**Section II - International Security**

5) To what extent do similar mechanisms (e.g., bargaining failures) account for both civil and international conflict? What, if anything, is distinct about the causes of interstate war?

6) In Clausewitz’s famous dictum, “war is the continuation of politics by other means.”  Discuss the relevance – or irrelevance – of this dictum to the kinds of wars in which the United States has engaged in the post-Cold War period.  
  
7) How have nuclear weapons affected the behavior of states in the international system? And how can such theories be tested empirically given that nuclear weapons have been used only once since their invention? Discuss these questions with reference to at least two different dependent variables.

8) In 2003, the Bush administration chose to withdraw a proposed resolution from UN Security Council consideration that would provide a clear basis for US military action against Iraq after it became clear that the resolution lacked necessary support to win.  The administration then went to war with Iraq claiming that the United States had the authority to act under prior resolutions.  Moreover, the administration sought to assemble a broad coalition of countries (the “Coalition of the Willing”) to back the US effort in Iraq.  What lessons does this episode offer for understanding the role of international institutions, norms, and laws in the state pursuit of security?

**Section III – General**

9) Does the study of individual preferences have a place in the field of International Relations? If so, whose preferences matter and what are the mechanisms that connect them to policy outcomes? Discuss these questions in the context of either war or trade.

10) Some analysts have pointed to an erosion of sovereignty in international politics in recent years. Provide examples of this phenomenon and discuss to what extent the Westphalian system is under challenge. Are we entering a novel period in international politics? Why or why not?

11) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the scholarship addressing institutional design? Are institutions equally important in international political economy and security? Why or why not?

12) How can analysts best understand the trend towards forum proliferation and regime complexity? To what extent does this trend fundamentally shape international politics?