

**Comprehensive Exam: Political Theory Minor  
May 2016**

**Answer one question from each of the three sections below. No theorist should be discussed in detail more than once in answering the questions. Make sure to demonstrate your mastery of the authors, the texts you choose to discuss, and the conceptual/analytical issues as you answer the questions posed.**

**Section I – Overview**

Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* and Arendt's *The Human Condition* both offer critiques of attempts to provide purely objective accounts of political life. The same may be said of works by Weber, Schmitt, and Foucault. How successful is this modern (or post-modern) critique of the enterprise of political science? Draw on thinkers of your choosing.

Political theorists including Aristotle, Locke, Publius (Madison and Hamilton), Constant, and Nozick argue that private property is an essential element of freedom. Why do they think so? How convincing are their arguments? You may draw on thinkers of your choice in responding, but be sure to discuss at least one skeptic (e.g. Marx) about the connection between private property and freedom.

One commentator has called Plato's *Republic*, Hobbes' *Leviathan* and Marx's *Communist Manifesto* "masterpieces of anger transmuted into hope." That is, they all adopt a mode of expression of this sort: "If only this *were* to come about, how much better a place the world would be!" These works take humans *as they are* but contend that their shared existence could be organized in a radically different way. How accurate is this characterization of these classic works?

**Section II – Comparison**

Machiavelli and Rousseau developed ideals of republicanism in quite distinct historical periods. This may account for some of the divergences in their conceptions of the elements necessary for a republic to thrive. Which thinker's conception of republicanism seems most plausible as a model for republican politics?

John Locke is often read as a covert Hobbesian who moderates the teaching of the *Leviathan* without radically departing from its major premises. In what sense may we consider Locke a follower of Hobbes? In what sense does he depart from Hobbes?

John Rawls is often described as a Kantian. What elements of his account of justice resemble Kant's? What aspects of Kant does Rawls modify or reject?

**Section III – Single Author**

Plato's *Republic* accomplishes the remarkable task of overcoming Homer and expelling the poets from its ideal city, all the while making abundant use of poetry throughout its lengthy dialogue, itself a form of poetry according to Socrates. Explain the logic behind Plato's complex use of poetry to advance his political project.

J.S. Mill argues that his theory of liberty rests upon utilitarian foundations. To what extent does Mill go beyond a grounding in utility in his defense of liberty?

What does Carl Schmitt mean by "the political"? Why does he think it is so important to distinguish the political from other forms of human activity?