

General Exam in Political Theory (major field: day two)

Fall 2008

Please respond at length to one of the questions in part three, and more briefly to the question in part four. Part three is intended to test depth and breadth of knowledge in a particular field of political theory; part four is intended to test specific knowledge of particular texts. There is not a specific expectation for length (so long as you answer the questions adequately), but we expect that the response to part three will be roughly twice as long as the response to part four. Be sure to take time to think through your answers, plan what you will write, and read over what you have written. Quality is more important than quantity. Good luck!

PART THREE: Liberalism and Its Critics

- (1) The quest for moral rules or principles that apply universally and equally to all people remains an enduring liberal ideal. Drawing on the work of at least three thinkers, take a position on the question of whether this ideal remains a plausible and attractive one, and if not, what alternative(s) there might be.

- (2) According to one school of liberal thought, the state should play an active role in providing citizens with the social and material resources that make the pursuit of the good life possible. According to another view, this understanding of the role of the state poses a grave threat to liberal ideals. Drawing on the work of at least three thinkers, take a position on which of these views represents a more plausible and attractive understanding of the liberal tradition.

PART FOUR: Democratic Theory

Schumpeter's theory of democracy has been described as "deflationary." Briefly outline his position and discuss whether the term "deflationary" is appropriate. Why does Habermas think that Schumpeter's view and others like it are unnecessarily pessimistic? Who is right?